

CHURCH MEMBERS HANDBOOK OF THEOLOGY

by Norvell Robertson

Norvell's practical theological guide for church members providing foundational Christian doctrine in an accessible format, equipping laypeople with essential theological knowledge for understanding and living the faith.

16 Chapters

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION. The venerable author has requested us to write an introduction to the work which follows. It gives us pleasure to comply with the wish of one who stands out on the edge of the eternal world. We can not forbear to say that, as we read the work in manuscript, we were profoundly impressed with the conviction that the utterances were those of a heart already ripe for heaven. In the volume to which the reader is now introduced, it will be found that the author has dug down to the solid rocks on which his own faith rested. From a sketch in our possession, which will appear in some future edition of this work, we learn that for about forty-five years the author has believed, loved, and preached the great doctrines discussed in this book. A timid, shrinking man, the author has found his purest joy in the sweet quietude of a country home and pastorate. He has had no ambition to cross the line of that charmed circle in which he has moved for about a half century. However, at the urgent solicitation of many friends, he now consents, in the close of life, to furnish to others a discussion of those facts which have been the foundation of his own happiness.

Many persons have thought that such a book as the present one is needed. The passing generation has been made well acquainted with rites and ceremonies. The baptismal controversy has been revived. The Lord's Supper also has been the subject of a discussion which has swept over the whole land. Nor has church polity failed to command a share of public attention. And all this is well. The storm purifies the atmosphere and clears the skies. The danger is not that men will give too much attention to these things--this is impossible--but the danger is that they will feel too little interest in things of even greater importance. Many persons have correct views of the ordinances of God's house, while at the same time their knowledge of the plan of salvation is not only very limited, but quite defective. A great number of books have been written with the design of securing uniformity of practice among the churches, but, so far as I know, very little has been done to secure "one faith." It is insisted that our church-members must be informed on the subject of baptism, and that they must guard with sleepless vigilance the great memorial ordinance. The custodians of the truth, it is claimed that they should preserve the apostolic form of church-government. And to all this we give our hearty approval. But there is something higher; such, at least, is the conviction of the author, and he deems it of great importance that, in this age, men should give more attention to the study of the plan of salvation. This plan ought to be understood; we can better afford to be ignorant of any thing else. Our happiness here depends on it, and, what is a matter of graver importance, our future destiny will be determined by our acquaintance with this system of truth. The author has not discussed a great variety of subjects, but he has treated of just such as involve all the highest interests of every immortal being. The work opens with a chapter on man's moral nature. The depravity of the heart is but partially understood by many, and flatly denied by others. The human will is another subject about which there is much confusion of thought. Regeneration of heart, without which no one can see God in peace, is a fact in regard to which there has been the wildest discussion. There is perhaps no truth about which men differ more widely. Nor are we well agreed about faith, repentance, and

justification. Though these are a part of every pious man's experience, there is need that we shall be more perfectly taught. The perseverance of the saints is not well understood, even by those who accept the blessed doctrine. The eternal security of the Church is a matter of doubt with some; and among those who accept the promise of her final triumph, there are so many fears and doubts that the hope is robbed of half the joy it would impart. But man's perverse will rebels most sternly against the great, grand facts of predestination and election. God's sovereign will, and His sovereign disposition of things according to that will, are facts which rise high above our feeble comprehension; and because they are so sublime and awful, we push them aside, as affording no joy to the heart. More frequently we utterly deny the facts because we can not understand them. We venture to hope that these "hard doctrines," as discussed in this book, will be a source of consolation to the Christian's heart. And then this volume very properly closes with a discussion of the atonement. The world is full of books on this subject. When we consider the fact that men have the Bible to guide them, we should think there would be perfect agreement here. But such is not the case. We have here the greatest diversity of views; the theories about salvation are without number. The author has kindly stated the views of others, and has given the reasons why he differs from them. In this way he has modestly brought out his own theory. Such is an outline of the book the reader is now requested to examine. This book, it must be confessed, contains nothing new. The design has not been to uncover golden veins of new thought, but to bring down to the masses, in simple language, the forms of thought with which the student and minister are quite familiar. This has been a work of great difficulty, but it is believed that no term or word has been employed which a man of ordinary intelligence can not understand; and while this is true, we trust there is nothing in the work which can be offensive to the good taste of the scholar and theologian. The design has been to place a theological hand-book in possession of every church member. The author has not gone over the whole field usually embraced in a system of theology. It was not thought necessary to do this. Those subjects only have been treated about which there was most difficulty; and they have been discussed in such a way, it is hoped, as will strengthen the hearts of the pious, and contribute largely to secure correctness and uniformity of faith among God's children. This result secured, both author and publisher will be satisfied. A word more in regard to the history of the author. Norvell Robertson was born in Warren County, Ga., Nov. 14, 1796. His father, also named Norvell, was a Virginian by birth. On reaching manhood, he moved South and settled in Georgia. In the year 1804 he was called by his church to the work of the ministry. For fifty-one years he was an earnest and faithful Baptist preacher. He was called home to his reward in his ninety-first year. His ministerial life was spent in the States of Georgia and Mississippi. The son moved at an early day to Lawrence County, Mississippi; was converted in 1830, and a year later he was baptized by his father into the fellowship of Leaf River Baptist Church. Bethany Church, in the neighborhood of which he was teaching, and to which he moved his membership, a few months after this set him at liberty to preach. The same church, in January, 1833, set him apart, by ordination, to the full work of the gospel ministry. Twelve months later he was called to the pastoral care of this church, and has continued in the same position for about forty-one years. Nothing could ever tempt him to leave this country church. In 1835 he married Miss N. J. Cannon, who has been a faithful and worthy companion. Three little infants have gone up from the family circle to the paradise of God. Of the seven remaining children, the father has baptized all but one.

Father Robertson, as he is familiarly called by those who know him, has never enjoyed good health. The weight of years is pressing heavily upon him; and this work is very likely the last

contribution we shall ever have from his pen. That it may be greatly blessed of God, and that the author may live to see the fruit of his labor, is the prayer of his Brother in Christ Jesus,

W. D. MAYFIELD.

Memphis, Tenn., November 1, 1874.

01 On Man's Moral Nature

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER I. ON MAN'S MORAL NATURE.

There is scarcely any important doctrine taught in the Bible that has not been made the subject of controversy. While great numbers acknowledge the Divine authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, and earnestly contend for their supreme authority in all matters relating to God and His will--profess implicit subjection to their teaching, and contend for them as the only and perfect standard of truth and error, in all matters of faith and practice--still there are wide differences of opinion and endless controversies among them, and have been in all the ages of the Christian dispensation. To say that this is owing to any obscurity or ambiguity in Divine Revelation is to charge God foolishly, The sacred Scriptures were designed to give us the knowledge of God and His Will; and if they are not competent to convey to us the true knowledge of the character and will of God, they fail to answer the purpose for which they were intended. And there is no alternative--we are left without a guide. That we may obtain some knowledge of God, and our relations to Him, as the rightful subjects of His moral government, without revelation, is true enough. But of that knowledge which is necessary to our acceptance with Him, and which will secure our salvation, we can learn nothing--absolutely nothing--but what we learn from the written word. And from the inspired record we may, if we will, learn all that is necessary for our faith, our duty, and our eternal destiny. From works of creation, and the ordinary course of Divine Providence, in connection with man's intellectual and moral constitution, we may learn enough of God and our relations to Him to make us accountable subjects of His government; but we can not by these means gain the least degree of knowledge of the way of eternal life. The Holy Scriptures are the only source from which we can derive the least degree of light upon the subject of our salvation. Without the Bible we can never attain to a saving knowledge of the true God and eternal life; neither can we, without it, ever acquire a right knowledge of ourselves, and our true character in the sight of God; nor can we rightly understand the relation in which we stand to Him. Ignorance and error will characterize all our speculations upon these subjects, any further than they are based upon the clear light of God's revealed truth. But the instructions of the word of God upon these subjects are clear and explicit, and if we fall into any essential error, it is not for want of adequate instructions, but because we are indisposed to receive implicitly the plain teachings of the Bible. Many there are who would disdain to seek spiritual light in a Romish confessional; but they will explore the fields of natural science in search of spiritual truth. The latter would certainly be the more pleasant employment to a truly rational mind; but what is the difference in the final event? We may be led by the hand of blind superstition till we fall into the ditch, or we may be beguiled into it by the false light of philosophy. I do not say this with a view to depreciate natural science; no man can hold it in higher esteem than I do; but the way of salvation is to be found in the infallible word of God, and nowhere else. To verify the truth of those remarks, nothing more would be necessary than to mention a few

celebrated names found recorded in modern history--men upon whose minds the sun of science has shed its brightest rays; but what do those men say of the true light--the light that shines in a dark place? The word of God is truth. What He says of Himself is truth, though it may not entirely coincide with our views of what He ought to be; but He alone knows Himself. What He says of us, is truth, for He knows us far better than we know ourselves; yet the character He gives us may not be quite agreeable to the opinion we entertain of ourselves. And what God says of His purposes and His will is true; but we can know nothing at all of His purposes, except what He has revealed in His word.

We should deal honestly with ourselves, and not be afraid to know the very worst of our condition as condemned sinners before God; and we should also deal honestly with ourselves, and be willing to know and confess the very worst of our character as sinful in our nature. It would be good for us to know the whole extent of our alienation from God, and our want of a perfect conformity of heart to the law and will of God. But men are unwilling to believe that they sustain that character in the sight of God which is given to them in the Holy Scriptures. Almost every man thinks he possesses some good qualities. Some will estimate their moral worth very high, while others will entertain a more humble opinion of their personal goodness; but all have claims, in their own esteem, to a degree, less or more, to something which is commendable in the sight of God. Now, if they would confine their pretensions to what is generally termed moral goodness--such qualities as are good in themselves, and justly commendable in the estimation of the social community--there ought to be no controversy on the subject. Their claims in this respect would be just, on every principle of sound reason, and fully supported by the sacred scriptures. But we suppose there are very few, if any, who are so blind to their own imperfections as to imagine that they are morally perfect, and wholly free from any principles, or dispositions, or inclinations to things that are evil. And when men regard themselves as being possessed of a degree of moral virtue, and know that they are sustained in their opinion by the public sentiment, they readily conclude that there is in them, by nature, a degree of moral goodness in the sight of God. They, therefore, persuade themselves that the good moral traits in their character, and the good moral actions they perform, are somewhat meritorious in the sight of God, and must, to some extent, secure His favor--when at the same time, in all probability, they would be just as good as they are, and act just as well as they do, if they believed that God never sees their actions. A man may perform an act of kindness, because prompted by the feelings of common humanity. Or he may do it in order to gain or preserve the respect and confidence of the community in which he lives. Or he may respect himself as a rational man, too much to debase himself in his own esteem by beastliness. And all this is well in its place, but it may be done while God is not in all his thoughts; and an Atheist would do no less. On the subject of human depravity there have been conflicting opinions among writers and preachers in almost every age since the days of the apostles; and this will probably continue to be the case for ages to come, or till the brightness of the millennial day shall dispel the darkness of error in a much greater degree than in the present age. I am not vain enough to hope that I shall be able to settle this controversy; but if I can suggest any thought to the mind of the reader that will be profitable, I shall not think my time and labor wasted.

One great reason why men, even good men, differ so much in their views of the doctrine, is because they affix different ideas to the words employed to express it. One gives the term depravity a much greater extent of application than another. That human nature is depraved in

some measure, I believe all admit. None will contend that man is, by nature, absolutely perfect--that he is perfect in holiness; and none ought to contend that man is utterly incapable in every respect of doing a good moral action. All may admit that there is in us, by nature, a tendency to things that are sinful, and freely subscribe to the doctrine that human nature is, to some extent, morally corrupt. In forming a judgment upon this subject, there is one thing that should never be overlooked, if we desire to know the truth: we are all naturally inclined to think we are better than we are. This has the effect to warp the judgment, and lead to an erroneous conclusion. Every man should keep a jealous guard over this self-partiality. This is the occasion of innumerable errors, and is a dangerous foe to our spiritual interest. It is one of the strongest weapons in Satan's armor; or like an open gate in a fortress, at which the enemy can enter at any time, and therefore should be guarded with unceasing vigilance.

Holiness and sinfulness are directly contrary to each other: and our conceptions of the former are so very imperfect, that we have very imperfect and erroneous views of the latter. Hence we form false notions of the degree of our alienation from God--that is the degree of our moral depravity. In order to ascertain as nearly as we well can, to what extent we may properly apply the principle of depravity--that is, the sinfulness of our nature to the human soul--it is necessary that we observe the proper distinction between those attributes of the mind which are purely intellectual or mental, and those which we term moral. As this distinction is important in the present inquiry, I must dwell a little on this point. I will specify: Mental perception is that faculty or power of the mind by which we are able to distinguish the difference between things--by which we know that a part is less than the whole--by which we know that two is more than one. This we call an intellectual or mental attribute or faculty. By exercising the power of the understanding we acquire knowledge on any subject; by the powers of the memory we retain that knowledge; by the judgment we compare the relative weight of evidence on any question, and are able to decide in matters of truth and error, right and wrong. These we term intellectual or mental attributes: they are also sometimes called physical powers, to distinguish them from the moral attributes; though the word physical is more generally applied to the organization and activities of the body, in distinction from those of the mind. But perhaps I ought here to notify or remind some of my readers that as God has no bodily attributes (because He has no bodily organizations), we are under a kind of necessity to distinguish His attributes by the terms physical and moral. Thus His power and wisdom are called physical attributes, and His love and goodness are moral attributes. But in respect to those attributes of the mind which we term moral, it is necessary to specify only a few--justice, kindness, truth, chastity, etc. If a man is deficient in any of these he is not considered a good man. A man is not blamable simply for thinking, but he is blameworthy for evil-thinking; he is not blamable merely for speaking, but for evil-speaking he is culpable. Mere desire is not, in itself, sinful, but unlawful desire is sinful.

There are duties which we owe to God which we do not owe to man; but all the duties we owe to one another, even all duties, are included in our duty to God. We may fail in the discharge of our peculiar duties to God, and yet not sin against our fellow-men; but if we fail to fulfill any duty we owe to others, or to ourselves, we sin against God. Hence moral depravity is always to be considered in relation to God. The word holiness includes all that is good, and the word sinfulness includes all that is not good. No action, or word, or thought of man is destitute of moral character in the sight of God; every thought is either holy or sinful in His sight. And any thought, or word, or

action of man that does not possess the character of holiness in the sight of God, is sinful. There must be in it the element of positive holiness, or it is not good in His sight, but is necessarily sinful.

It is highly important, as I have said, that we keep this distinction between the mental and moral nature of man in view. Because I hold that the mental or intellectual powers of man are not depraved. They are not subjects of moral character. In themselves they are neither morally good nor morally bad. They have no inherent tendencies or proclivities to good or evil, but are, as it were, the instruments of our moral nature, and always obey its dictates. On the supposition that man is an order of beings inferior to angels, yet Adam was, in his created character, as holy as Gabriel; and Satan may be even now, in his intellectual powers, as great as Gabriel, yet no one will say that he is not totally depraved in his moral nature. The unjust steward exhibited great intellectual power in devising the means of support, after he was displaced from his office, and his Lord commended him because he acted wisely; but no one would commend him for acting dishonestly. It was his duty to exercise his mental powers the best he could, but the sinfulness of his conduct is to be referred to his depraved moral principles. The assassin plunges the dagger into the heart of his enemy:--there is no moral depravity in the dagger, for it is not, and can not be, the subject of moral character; there is no depravity in the arm that forced the dagger, for the very same reason; and for the same reason, there is no moral depravity in the mental discernment and correct judgment that directed the instrument to the vital organ, for all these might have been employed in a similar act, in a lawful way; but the moral corruption attaches to the malicious disposition of the heart, which influenced the will to commit the deed. The sheriff who executes a criminal, employs the intellectual powers of his mind as diligently as the assassin; but this he does because it is his duty. He does it, not to gratify an evil disposition, but to fulfill a lawful obligation. He does right, and the righteousness of the act is founded in the motives which induce him to perform it.

I must be indulged to dwell a little longer on this point, because, for want of observing this distinction, the doctrine of human depravity is often misapplied and perverted to the cause of error. If the teacher does not, yet the hearer applies the doctrine to those actings of the mind which it is the moral duty of every man to exercise; and, on the other hand, they will exempt from sinfulness those dispositions and inclinations which are the very seat of moral depravity, and source of all sinful thoughts, words, and actions. Being desirous to exhibit the subject as plainly as I possibly can, I will have recourse to another exemplification : "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Now let us notice the term 'canst not:' We learn here that God can not endure the sight of iniquity. This is not said merely by way of emphasis; the prophet speaks Divine truth. But what is the reason that God can not look upon sin ? He looks upon and sees all things, and sees every thing just as it is. But on account of the infinite holiness of His nature He can not endure the sight of sin with the least degree of toleration. It is not from any imperfection in his power, but owing to the perfection of His holiness. It is contrary to His nature, and therefore He can not behold evil otherwise than with abhorrence and indignation. But again: It is said of some, "Having eyes full of adultery that can not cease from sin." Here we have a similar mode of expression--they can not cease from sin. Such persons are not blind. They have ability to employ their eyes in reading the word of God, that they may learn and do His will. They might use their eyes for holy purposes, as well as for lascivious purposes, but by reason of the unholiness or depravity of their nature they can not cease from sin. God always acts, and must act, in perfect

conformity with His holy nature, and therefore can not sin; and man always acts in conformity with his unholy nature, and therefore can not cease from sin. Strictly speaking, neither the faculties of the mind nor the members of the body are depraved; but both are governed and controlled by his carnal and worldly heart. Both may yield themselves as instruments of righteousness unto holiness, or they may yield themselves as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; and by reason of the depravity of man's moral nature, they do the latter--"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." In the foregoing remarks I would not be understood to advance the doctrine that the mental powers of man have sustained no injury by our apostasy from God, and that the intellectual faculties are in every respect as perfect as they were in creation, and while man continued in a state of primeval holiness. I think far otherwise. I believe that man possesses now all the original mental faculties with which he was endowed in his creation; but, by reason of sin, and the alienation of his moral nature from God, these faculties are greatly impaired. Indeed, I entertain the opinion that the powers of the human mind are, in consequence of sin, impaired to a far greater extent than is generally supposed, and than many would be willing to admit. If sin had never found entrance among the human family, I have scarcely a doubt that every man would now possess a degree of knowledge in things, both natural and Divine, incomparably greater than any man has ever attained in this world to the present day--only he would have known nothing of God's method of saving sinners, because that would not have been revealed. A man may possess every member of the body, not one lacking, but a leg may be broken, an arm paralyzed, the eyes diseased or injured, so that he is incapable of those exercises which properly pertain to a perfect human body; so the powers of his mind have suffered such a decree of detriment that he is now little more than the ruins of what he was when he first surveyed the works of his God. In consequence of moral depravity, the understanding is darkened, mental perception is weakened, the judgment is perverted, etc. But they are not morally depraved, because they are not, properly speaking, the subjects of moral character. A staff may be broken so as to be of little use, but the timber may still be sound; so is our intellectual nature--it is physically impaired, but not morally depraved. An egg may be whole, not a fracture in it, but it may be rotten; so is our moral nature. The distinction between a natural ability and a moral ability is not merely technical or artificial, as some affect to believe; it is a real distinction, as much so as the distinction between a man's desire to take his child in his arms, and the muscular strength by which he performs the deed. And he that can not see the distinction, should not set himself up as a teacher--even a teacher of babes. The terms "power," "ability," "inability," and other words of similar force, being often used indefinitely, and with considerable latitude of application, may contribute somewhat to that confusion and indistinctness of thought which appear to embarrass the minds of persons on this subject. They do not consider that that may be possible in one respect which is impossible in another respect. If I should say a man has ability to think and judge--meaning the mind of the man--it would be true; but if I should affirm this of a man, meaning the mere body of the man, it would be false; for it is impossible for mere matter to think and judge. The confirmed atheist has as much natural ability to repeat the Lord's Prayer as any of His apostles had, but he has absolutely no ability to pray that prayer "with the spirit and the understanding." The natural man may have as much natural ability to sing as the holiest saint on earth; and he would sing the ballad of "Death and Dr. Hornbook" with as much spiritual devotion as he would the fifty-first Psalm. The distinction between the intellectual powers of man and his moral powers, is as real as the distinction between his bodily powers and the powers of his mind. That the will is the ruling faculty of the mind in man, needs no proof; and that

the will is not subject to reason, is evident, from both experience and observation, to every one who has given a tolerable degree of attention to the subject. Man often sets knowingly in opposition to every dictate of sound reason. He knows what is right, but the will is influenced by the passions, the appetites, avarice, pride, revenge, etc., and determines his actions contrary to his judgment, and in opposition even to the dictates of his conscience.

I have taken the ground that the purely mental powers of man are not susceptible of moral depravity, and therefore are not depraved, though they are impaired; and that depravity is confined to the moral faculties. I know not how far the intelligent reader will concur in this view. I might have said a great deal more on this particular point, but I should not have said so much, but for the bearing the subject must have upon other important doctrines which must necessarily come under consideration in the progress of this work. I desist on this point, but on the general subject of human depravity something more is required.

02 On the Origin of Human Depravity

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER II. ON THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

We will now briefly inquire how it is that we are the subjects of a depraved nature. There are many who seem to think that man is now, in respect to the purity of his nature, just as he was when he was first created. But it would be preposterous, and even blasphemous, to say that a holy God created man with an unholy nature, and then pronounced him good. We must seek for the origin of our moral corruption in some other direction; for there is no unholiness in the Divine nature--therefore He could not impart sinfulness to His creatures. One has a black skin, and another has a white skin: how does this come to pass? The answer is obvious; we derive our natural complexion from our parents. There is a universal law of nature that "like produces like." Every vegetable that grows out of the earth, and every animal that inhabits it, derives its own peculiar nature from the parent--not by imitation, not by instruction, nor by example, but by natural descent. If, therefore, we account for our own peculiar nature in the same way, we reason in conformity with a universal law of nature; and there can be no solid reason assigned why man should be an exception to this law, and the only exception. Hence it is not philosophical to ascribe our depravity to any other than a natural cause. And if we could trace the moral nature of our parentage upward to the first man, we should not be able to find the origin of our depravity anywhere this side of that source. And further, if we direct our inquiries to any other department of creation, we shall search in vain for this moral malady. By what means it was that our first parents became infected with moral depravity, is another question, and may possibly engage our attention hereafter. Certainly, it was not by creation.

We must take ourselves just as we now are; and our own sins we must charge to our own selves, for the righteous Judge will certainly charge them to us. We possess mental abilities by which we are able to distinguish between right and wrong--between good and evil; and if we choose the evil and refuse the good, it is plain that we are justly liable to the necessary consequences of our own voluntary and sinful choice. The path of duty is made plain, and we are forewarned of the consequences of disobedience; and it matters not how we became possessed of a disobedient spirit, if we voluntarily choose the way that leads to death, it is just that we abide the consequences. And what is this depravity, less or more, than a prevailing disposition or inclination to that which is evil? The power to discern between right and wrong is not extinguished in the mind of any human being where insanity has not supervened. The most ignorant and besotted savages understand the difference sufficiently to render them amenable to justice. And the most debased tribes of our species have their laws, or established customs, for the punishment of evil-doers. Our perception of this distinction is a part of our natural knowledge, and has its foundation in the fact that we are intelligent beings. We do not need the light of revelation to enable us to know enough of the principles of right and wrong, to render us accountable, for we

know enough for that by the light of nature. Some persons have clearer perceptions of this principle than others; and we who have the benefit of the light of Divine revelation are under additional responsibilities, corresponding with our superior advantages. And justice must award a punishment in proportion to the increased degree of our guilt. Our knowledge of the Divine will is sufficient to render us responsible agents; and our unwillingness to do that will, makes our condemnation just. We disobey because we are unwilling to obey. This is the very reason why we do those things that are forbidden. Of Total Depravity.

It will be recollected that I have said that few, if any, will pretend that man is absolutely perfect in holiness. It will be admitted that man is, to some extent, naturally inclined to things that are unholy in the sight of God. This point being conceded, we proceed to inquire whether man is "totally depraved," as we commonly express the idea. The question of man's total depravity has been a subject of dispute among the learned and the unlearned almost from time immemorial. We are hardly in a condition to render an impartial verdict, because man is a party interested in the decision. It is a rule in equity that a man is not to be the judge in his own cause.

I chose to reserve this important question, till I had submitted some thoughts on the general subject of human nature, that the reader might be the better prepared to understand my views on the subject of total depravity. Is man totally depraved? Is he so utterly alienated in heart from God and holiness that he is incapable of rendering to God any acceptable worship and service? The evidence is such as forces me to take the affirmative. I believe that all of man's nature that is susceptible of spiritual corruption is depraved. If the word of God does not support this doctrine, then I will consent that the controversy shall hinge on the principles of human reasoning, and logical inferences from general truths. But if the plain statements of the Holy Scriptures, fairly interpreted, will decide the question, I will not hold myself bound to follow an opponent through all his abstruse speculations, and answer all the disingenuous quibbles he may choose to interpose. I shall address my arguments to those who acknowledge implicitly the supreme authority of Divine inspiration.

1. I lay it down as a fundamental principle that the depravity of which we are speaking relates wholly to things spiritual, and must be considered exclusively in respect to our relations to God. Consequently,

Whatever may pertain to our nature that may be regarded as good in itself, and whatever good dispositions we may possess or entertain toward our fellow creatures, excepting as above stated, is not competent evidence against total depravity.

2. Again: I lay it down as a fundamental truth, that if there is not in our nature a principle of holiness--positive holiness, even "holiness to the Lord"--then our depravity is total. For, That holiness which is required is an active and operative principle, that must produce holy fruits; it is not a mere negative virtue; the mere absence of sinfulness. Even if it were possible--which it is not--that there could be such a neutral character as a human being without sinfulness, and without holiness, he would sustain no moral relation to God whatever. If there is not the element of activity in our holiness, there can be no acceptable obedience, for obedience consists in doing the will of God.

We will now proceed to examine the direct evidence contained in the word of God.

"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:1-3) What is the doctrine of this passage of Scripture? "You who were dead in trespasses and in sins." Can evidence be more decisive than this? It is hardly possible to find language that will teach total depravity in a more determinate and unqualified manner than this does. No stronger term can be found in any language than the word dead. And the adjuncts, in trespasses and sins, fully show the nature of the death intended by the Holy Spirit. To modify the meaning of the word, is to attempt, to improve the diction of the Divine Witness. If the inspired writer did not mean all that his language imports, he surely could have adopted a different mode of expression, without using terms which would necessarily be false. The language is not hortative nor poetical, but a grave statement of a most solemn and important truth. If man is not spiritually dead, he is spiritually alive. This is self-evident. There can be no intermediate ground for a debater to contend upon. Dead to all that is holy and spiritual. "In trespasses and in sins." This phrase fixes and defines the term dead. Not deprived of the use of our mental powers, or the exercise of our moral affections, but wholly under the power of our carnal nature; or, in other words, totally depraved. Living, not in the holiness of the Spirit, but the lusts of the flesh. "And the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the other." Before we are born of the Spirit, we "fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind." And these desires, not merely coming short of conformity to the Spirit of holiness, but being contrary to it. Who will say, that he who fulfills that which is contrary to holiness, possesses the spirit of holiness? While in a state of nature, and dead in trespasses and sins, we walk "according to the course of this world." Is the course of this world holy in any respect or in any degree? If it is, the world is in the right road to heaven. But it is "according to the prince of the power of the air"--that is, Satan. Does the Spirit of God dwell in the man that walks according to--that is, in conformity with--the will Satan? Also, it is the same spirit that "now works in the children of disobedience," elsewhere said to be the children of the devil. They are "of their father the devil, and the desires of their father they will do." The saints at Ephesus had been "by nature the children of wrath." Because they were by nature the children of disobedience, they are, therefore, said to be by nature the children of wrath.

Besides all this, if we are disposed to be consistent in our interpretation of the text, we are bound to consider the term dead in sin with reference to the antithesis, "quickened," or made alive. If, spiritually, we are dead, we are not alive; and if we are alive, we are not dead; and, therefore, do not need to be made alive. If we are not spiritually dead, there is no consistency in the apostle's instruction, and no propriety in his language. This passage of Scripture alone ought to be decisive on the question, and satisfactory to every obedient mind. That the doctrine it teaches is at war with the natural pride of man's heart, is true enough; but I believe the same may be said of every fundamental doctrine revealed in the Bible. Such is the innate hostility of the unrenewed heart against God and His truth.

We will proceed to consider some other scriptures, with but little comment. The same form of expression as that we have just considered is used in the fifth verse of the same chapter, and again in Colossians 2:13. In Ephesians 4:18, we read, "Being alienated from the life of God," etc.

Here the same doctrine is taught in different words, but in plain language. The fact that the apostle adopts a different phraseology to convey the same idea makes the point all the more definite, and precludes evasion. The apostle John, in his first epistle (1 John 5:19), speaking of the unbelieving world, says: "The whole world lieth in wickedness;" or, "in the wicked one," as in the margin. Can it be properly said of those that "lie in wickedness," that they have the life of God in them? The apostle is speaking of the whole world, as distinguished from those who are "of God." There is no room here for evasion. Again (1 John 3:14): "We know that we have passed from death unto life," etc. And Jesus says: "But is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24) You may consult the context; I omit it because there is but one point to which I design to direct your attention. We find here a passing from death unto life. These words must be understood in a positive sense, for they do not admit of being used in a comparative sense. Except, then, we are dissatisfied with the truth they teach, we are bound to understand them as meaning positive death and positive life. If, therefore, we possess by nature a particle of spiritual life, there is no propriety in saying we pass from death unto life. If any should say these terms are used in different applications, and that it is necessary to ascertain to what subject they are applied, I freely admit it. These terms are sometimes employed figuratively, and applied to different subjects. But in every place in the above quotations, they are manifestly used in a spiritual sense. The terms are strictly correlative, and placed in opposition to each other; and must be understood according to the antithesis, or they convey no definite idea, and give us no instruction. That state of life into which we pass by the transition, is a life that previously, while in the state of death, had no existence in us. The kind of life to which John refers in his epistle, is made so plain by the connection, that no unbiased mind can be at a loss for his meaning. Before the transition we are spiritually dead, and after it we are spiritually alive. While spiritually dead we are as incapable of doing any thing spiritually good, as the dead body of a man is of performing any useful action.

I will now cite you to other scriptures which clearly teach the same doctrine, and, without much comment, leave them to your own reflection: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (God). (Hebrews 11:6) Now faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and we can not have the faith until the Spirit is given to us. Again, "They that are in the flesh can not please God." (Romans 8:8) "They that are in the flesh--" that is, they that are in a state of nature; for this is the sense in which Paul generally uses the phrase, and the context shows that this is the apostle's meaning. Whatever ability we may ascribe to the natural man, these scriptures certify that he is not able to please God. And a good reason for it is, that whatever pleases the natural man does not please God. And here we see the extent of the natural ability of man to do that which is spiritually good--he can not please God. In the third chapter of Romans it is said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Examine this chapter from the ninth to the eighteenth verse, and see if you can subvert the doctrine of total depravity. Again, our Savior says, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you." (John 5:42) How much more can a man be depraved, than to be totally destitute of the love of God? "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Romans 8:7) "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Romans 7:18) To these testimonies others might be added; but if they are not satisfactory without additional evidence, it appears to me the fault must be in the judge and not in the witnesses. Let the candid reader review the foregoing quotations, and sum up the characteristics there ascribed to human nature, and I do not see how he can avoid the conclusion that man's moral nature is totally depraved. The word of God is a "sure word," and "true from the beginning." If we will be guided by its light, it will always lead us to true knowledge; but if our

aversion to the doctrines it reveals is such that we choose to walk in the darkness of our own speculations, we shall eventually see the end of our wanderings. In addition to the direct proofs exhibited in the foregoing quotations, the doctrine under discussion is susceptible of strong, and, as I think, unanswerable proof, by induction from the general doctrines of the gospel, as received by all who can rationally claim a title to be called evangelical. Doctrines which most Christians profess, and which are contended for by Christians generally--those in this country, at least--even by those who do not subscribe to the tenet of total depravity, are inconsistent with the opposite opinion.

We are taught that before we can have any Scripture ground to believe that we are converted, or in a saved state, we must be the subjects of a great change--a real change of heart; and that this is something more than a mere outward reformation; that this inward change is the special work of the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental principle, and is generally accepted as such. If I were engaged in writing a strictly polemic discourse I should have no need to take advantage of this acknowledgment, but I would content myself with coming at once to the Divine record. Thus our Savior said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." We are said to be "born of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the author, or agent, of this new birth. Hence we are said to be "begotten of God." These scriptures with many others teach that a real change must be effected in our moral nature, in order to our becoming the proper subjects of the kingdom of Christ. For such expressions surely can not imply any thing less. And hence it is insisted on so earnestly by all our evangelical preachers and writers, and occupies a prominent place in so many of our confessions of faith. The necessity of conversion, as it is generally called, is urged with a zeal and pertinacity almost worthy of its importance. And this work of conversion is always attributed to the Holy Spirit. We are constantly taught that we must be born of the Spirit, else we can not be the children of God; and that this change is beyond the power of man, and is wrought by the power of God. In perfect agreement with this view, ministers and all Christians offer up their fervent prayers to God, that He would convert sinners from the error of their way. The Holy Scriptures abundantly ascribe this work to God. And the Lord himself speaks of it as his own work, and promises to perform it: "I will put my Spirit within you." "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." "I will give you a new heart." Thus we read--"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." It is the Holy Ghost which convinces us of sin, of righteousness, etc.

Now if man is not totally depraved, there is a part in him that does not need this change, and is not a subject of renewing grace. And his salvation is partly of nature and partly of grace. It is partly of God, and partly of himself. It is held by some that by the death of Christ, the Spirit is spread in every man's heart, by which he is able to reinstate himself in the favor of God. But this is destitute of Scripture proof--it is a mere assumption ; and, in fact, it is virtually taking for granted the main point in debate. They that take this ground must substantiate their position by adequate proofs from the Bible, which, I am sure, is a task they will never be able to perform. But till the proofs are fairly given we can not admit any arguments drawn from that source. Whether the death of Christ, of itself, could do it, is exceedingly doubtful; and that it did not do it, is, I think, very clear, for the whole tenor of Bible instruction is in opposition to such an idea. The ground usually taken is, that man is by nature possessed of a portion of spiritual life, or strength, or grace, or whatever it may be rightly called, which, if he will improve, or properly use and cultivate, he may become a Christian and a true child of God. Now if I were to concede the whole ground taken here, I might

still contend that man is totally unable to bring himself into a state of grace, or even to do any thing which would be pleasing and acceptable to God, because the whole burden of this argument is made to rest upon the condition "if he will"--and the Scripture declares that he will not. So this lever is altogether too weak to overturn the doctrine of total depravity. On the doctrine of the will I hope to discourse before we have done with the subject of depravity. For the present, however, I wish to inquire what that germ or seed of grace is, that we have by nature--that every man brings into the world with him--or which, at some period of life previous to accountability, is given to every man. Great stress is laid upon it by some. It is made one of the strongest pillars upon which is built the scheme of our salvation, as taught in some systems of theology. If the doctrine is true, it behooves every man to understand it, for it devolves upon us an immense responsibility over and above all that the law imposes. If it is not true, the contrary must be true, and the doctrine of total depravity can not be assailed from that quarter. But even if their doctrine is true--if it can not be made available to our salvation--we should beware that we do not make a false and dangerous use of it, by resting more weight upon it than it is able to bear. It is, therefore, of great importance that we should know what it is, what it is worth, and what it can do for us. An erroneous estimate of its nature, use, and value, may be an occasion of fatal and ruinous mistakes. We inquire, then, Is this principle true spiritual life? If it is, we stand in no need of what we call conversion, but only of growth in grace. If it is that eternal life which the gospel reveals, what need is there to come to Christ that we may have life? And why exhort sinners to repent and be converted, seeing we are converted already, or do not need conversion? Is this principle the love of God, or does it implant the love of God in the heart? If this is what is meant, all is right with us. We have by nature the love of God in the soul. And all men love God if their doctrine is true. But both Scripture and facts testify the contrary. Again, Does this grace or power work in us repentance toward God? If it does, all men are under pardon; for pardon is secured to all that repent. And I would ask further, Is this ability, or spiritual principle, or whatever we may properly term it, the Spirit of Christ? Those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells, are the children of God, and, consequently, the heirs of God. If it is not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of His, but are declared to be reprobates. Does it give as a hearty good-will to serve God in newness of life? Does it make us new creatures? If it does none of these things for us, it is no easy matter to see what its office is, or what is its nature, or wherein we are the better of it. The advocates of this doctrine, I believe, hold that, notwithstanding this ability possessed by all men, we must have wrought in us by the Holy Spirit a work of grace, without which we can not be saved. But the Holy Spirit is fully able to work in us any change and every grace we need, or possibly can need, as in any respect essential to our salvation, even though we are utterly destitute of any thing that is good. And if we can not be saved without a work of the Divine Spirit when we have this natural ability, and may be saved by the power of the Holy Ghost when we are totally depraved, how do we derive any advantage from it? I have given a good deal of reflection to this subject, and, so far as I can see, the legitimate tendency of this scheme is, that it increases our responsibilities without giving us any additional ability to meet them. And besides this, it is calculated to foster in the heart of the unconverted sinner a spirit of self-deception, by inducing the belief that his condition before God is better than what it really is; and all the while, as we have shown, the doctrine can not be reconciled with the obvious meaning of a great number of scriptures.

It is quite a possible thing for a man to mistake the workings of the natural conscience for the operations of the Holy Spirit. And this misapprehension, I suspect, has contributed a great deal to

uphold the erroneous opinion that there is in man naturally a radical principle of spiritual goodness. It will not be denied that we may be misled by ignorance; and very few, I suppose, would doubt that we are liable to be deceived by the mere excitements of our moral sensations but many will think it almost impossible that we may be misguided by conscience. But this is an error; for "the mind and conscience are defiled." Perhaps conscience is the best faculty of the soul in our present condition, as regards matters of right and wrong; but if it is not enlightened, and subdued into conformity with the word of God, it is not only an unsafe, but a dangerous guide in spiritual things. It is often false as an instructor; it is inefficient as a monitor, and unfaithful as a reprove. Look at the heathen nations in their absurd and superstitious rites and observances of their idolatrous worship, in which they are as conscientiously sincere as the most devoted Christian is in his obedience to the laws of Jesus Christ, and surely if a man is not as blind as they are he will see that conscience is not to be trusted to lead us to heaven. The parent burns the infant child as a sacrifice to procure the favor of his god. If this is right, certainly the Bible is not good authority; if it is not right, then the dictates of conscience are no certain criteria by which to judge of things spiritual. But without referring to the heathen, even in the land of Bibles there are superstitions as irrational, and absurd, and as sinful as those of the heathen. The ceremonies and observances enjoined by ecclesiastical despotism are respected by the conscience of the deluded votary, as much as the prescriptions of the Bible are by the enlightened believer. Paul acted as much in obedience to the authority of his conscience when persecuting the saints, as when he was preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified to the Corinthians. If conscience does not lead according to the light of the Divine word, it is blind; and the consequences may be as fatal to follow a blind conscience, as to follow a blind Pharisee, or any other blind guide. He that knows his duty, and will not do it, is without excuse; and to plead ignorance, when we possess the means of knowing the truth, is to plead one sin in excuse for another. The God with whom we have to do will take no excuse.

Before I leave this subject I wish to present it to your reflection, very briefly, in two general points of view, leaving it with you to make the special applications. The first is this: If we institute a comparison (I might say a contrast) between the holy and spiritual nature of the Divine Law on the one hand, and the exercises and inworkings of the natural heart of man on the other hand, it will clearly appear that in every respect in which a comparison can be made, the unsanctified heart is averse to the spiritual purity of the obligation which the law imposes. When all the thoughts and imaginations of the unregenerate heart are set in the strong light of the perfect spiritual holiness of God's law it will be found that in that heart "there is no good thing"--nothing that the law will approve. I can not now go into the details of this argument, but if the position is defensible, as I have no doubt it is, it precludes the necessity of any other evidence, either to prove or disprove the total corruption of man's moral nature. The other general principle to which I referred above is the treatment which the gospel receives when proposed to the natural mind of man. Notwithstanding man's ruined state--notwithstanding his desperate necessity, exposed to inevitable perdition--yet, when the gospel in its infinite worth and its unbounded freeness is presented to the sinner's acceptance, it is willfully and persistently rejected by the natural heart. This is depravity with manifold aggravation.

These two categories comprehend all existing relations between God and man; and in respect to both, the facts demonstrate that there is in the unrenewed heart an inveterate opposition to both.

In the investigation and discussion of this doctrine, we have no need, in strictness, to go out of the domain of law; but the open refusal of salvation by free grace, everywhere illustrated by facts, exhibits the truth in a most obvious and prominent light.

03 Of the Human Will

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER III. OF THE HUMAN WILL.

We shall attempt now to treat a little on the subject of the will of man.

There has been a world-full of discussion lavished upon this subject; and many wise and good things have been said on it; and also some very foolish and absurd notions have been put forth, as dogmatically as if they had been legitimate deductions from self-evident principles. I do not pretend to be able to throw any additional light upon the subject beyond what has been done by writers on moral science, or to exhibit it to the greater advantage of the reader; but I do hope to avoid nonsense and gross absurdity. The will is said to be "the power of choosing." I shall not undertake to give a better definition; but I will lay down one or two propositions which I would have the reader to keep constantly in view. And first, Every responsible action of man is performed in obedience to his will. I will omit the obvious corollary. Secondly, I will state that in every case where the will of man is not in perfect unison and agreement with the revealed will of God, it is sinful--man's will is rebellious. And this is as true in its application to what we believe, as it is to what we do.

We will proceed in our inquiries according to the definition of will as given by writers on moral science, and which we have stated above, to wit, that the will is the power of choosing. It is that faculty of the mind by which we determine or decide what we will do in any given case. One man wills, or chooses, to be a farmer; another chooses, or wills, to be a merchant. Sometimes a man is undecided in his mind as to what course he will pursue; for instance, he can not determine whether he will go abroad the next day, or stay at home. There may be a reason why he would choose to remain at home; and there may also be a reason why he would choose to attend to some business abroad. His will is, as it were, on a balance; but some consideration presents itself to the mind which induces him to determine one way or the other; and thus it is his will to do that which he does. This is plain to every mind.

It is very common for a man to say that in a particular instance he acted "against his will." It is lawful to use such language, because his meaning is always understood; but, in strict propriety of language, it is not true. He acted against his inclination;--he desired to act otherwise, but he knows that some more important or urgent consideration induced him to choose, or will, to perform the action. We find this mode of expression used by inspired writers. All that is necessary here, is simply to note that there is a distinction between the inclination or desire, and the will. The desire and the will are often in agreement, but sometimes they are in opposition to each other.

It is proper to remark also that we are always responsible for whatever consequences may result from the choice we make, especially if we know, or have the means of knowing, that such

consequences will or may ensue. If a man voluntarily exposes himself to the contagion of small-pox, he is himself responsible for the disease or death that may follow. And if a man chooses to follow a sinful course of life, whatever he may suffer in consequence is just. The question, Is the human will free? has long been a subject of dispute. I do not claim to understand metaphysical science well enough to put the question to rest, but will submit my own views as clearly as I well can. But permit me, by the way, to make one incidental remark: I feel perfectly sure in my own mind that if God had no will, or had never revealed any part of His will to man, there never would have been one-half the controversy on the subject that has been. I admit that it is this consideration which gives the subject its greatest importance; but if there was no disposition in man to subordinate the will of God to his own will, many of those speculations about force, and contingency, and necessity, and irresponsibility, that have been advanced as sound philosophy, would never have been thought of. It is only when the question is viewed in reference to our more immediate relations to God that men differ so widely. When men speak of free-will, in what sense are we to understand the term free? If it is meant that the will of man is never forced in its decisions by physical power, there certainly ought to be no debate. I believe that to be morally impossible. And yet much of what has been urged in favor of the freedom of the will has been directed against this very principle. If the will is not free in this respect, it is not will; and to spend labor in proving this freedom of the will, is no better than laboring to prove that a circle is round. If a figure is not round it is not a circle, for roundness is an essential property of a circle. And I believe that freedom is equally an essential property of the will; so that if it is not free, it is not will. I think it may be rationally doubted whether the will is, in fact, an object of physical power. On the other hand, let us suppose that the moral nature of man was so constituted that no reasons, or motives, or influences, could have any effect on his mind to direct his will in deciding what he would do; so that his will (so to speak) was incapable of being moved or determined in any direction. If so, then he would have no will; no such faculty as the will would exist in the human mind. But we know that man is not thus constituted. We know that we constantly choose one thing in preference to another, while at the same time we are perfectly at liberty to choose either.

It is evident, therefore, that the will is under some kind of government--that it is under control or is guided by some consideration; and it is equally evident, that it is not under a government of physical force--it is not under a government of compulsion. But the law that governs the will, is a law of moral influence; and when we choose to do a bad action, it is because we choose to yield to a bad moral influence. One thing is certain, the determinations of the will are always to be referred to moral law. By moral law they will be judged.

I shall here lay down a postulate: The will is always governed by one and the same law. This may be thought by some to be a new idea; but if the position is not true, I solicit refutation. And if this is a sound principle, and we can ascertain with certainty, in any case, what that law or principle is that influences the will to a decision, we then know by what law the will is governed in all cases. Now there can be no difficulty in ascertaining this in many instances. We know there are motives which influence our minds to choose that which we do choose. We may say the motive governs the will; but we may be influenced by a motive which is good in itself, to do an act that is very wrong.

We will illustrate by a figure the principle we assume: A man walks out a distance from his habitation, and, casting his eyes upward, discovers a storm rising, which will certainly overtake

him before he can reach home; but there is a vacant house not very distant, and he hastens to it. Is he, or any one else, at a loss to know what induced him to go thither? The storm increases in violence and becomes quite fearful, and he chooses or wills to remain under his shelter. No one can fail to see the motive which governs his will. But the tempest becomes furious, and the house begins to shake and crack--he immediately leaps out into the open field, and the house is dashed to the ground. Although a moment before it was his will to remain in his place of retreat, his will is changed in a trice. No man of common sense can fail to see that in all these movements his will was governed by motives, and by nothing else. On no other view of the subject can it be strictly proper and true to say that the will is free. And every man when he decides or chooses to adopt some particular course of proceeding, or chooses to perform any particular action, is conscious of a reason or motive that determines his choice--a motive which was quite apparent to his mind at the time. And it is folly and irrational to go beyond the motive, in search of a power or faculty of the mind which governs or controls the will independently of motives. So much has been said on the supposed connection between the Divine decrees and the freedom of the human will, that I reckon I should hardly be excused if I were to be entirely silent on the subject. But if it were not for a particular reason, I would treat the question with the neglect that I think it deserves. And the reader would probably not feel quite satisfied to be respectfully referred to what wiser men have said on the subject.

It has been contended that if God has decreed any event which involves the actions of men, those actions are necessitated by the decree; and the inference is, that in such cases, men can not justly be held responsible for their acts. There have been men who have boldly affirmed that such decrees make God the author of sin. There are others who believe that all events in the universe were decreed--fore-ordained by the Creator before the foundation of the world--and hence they infer that all the actions of men are performed under an absolute and inexorable necessity. Thus, to refer to a very common example, it is held that God decreed the fall of Adam, and, therefore, he sinned by necessity; he was obliged to sin, and could not help it. I say he sinned, speaking on the supposition that his disobedience was sin. On the main question of the perfect freedom of man's will, considered in regard to God's infallible decree, there is a profound and unapproachable secret. And unless I were able to bring this secret to the open light of our understanding, it would probably be impossible to satisfy curiosity. And where knowledge is impossible, it is not wise to waste inquiry; and speculation is presumptuous. In many things God's judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out. This should rebuke our arrogant speculations, and teach us to confine our inquiries within the bounds of attainable knowledge.

Any attempt to show, by reasoning, that man is not responsible for his voluntary actions, is not only vain, but impious. That point is settled by the express testimony of God's word; and an attempt to establish the contrary, is virtually an attempt to prove that God's word is false.

We will now submit a few thoughts on the subject, keeping within the limits of legitimate inquiry. And we ask, Does a Divine decree necessitate the actions of men? If we look at this question in the light of cause and effect, we are baffled at the first step. When we see an effect, and would seek for the cause which produced it, we always expect to find a certain appropriate connection between the cause and effect, which will show the relation. But in this case we look in vain. No such relation can be discovered, because there is no such visible connection as would lead to the discovery. I think it may be rationally doubted whether such decree, considered merely in itself,

can be a cause. There must be a power to execute the decree before any effect can be produced. Every effect is the result of power--and of power in exercise. Hence we are not to look to the decree, but to the power which carries the decree into accomplishment. If we go to a Divine decree to find the cause of our voluntary actions, we go immeasurably above all visible operative causes; but even then we do not go high enough to compass the argument. For does God will an event because He has decreed it ? or does He decree the event because it is His will that it shall transpire? The answer is too prominent to demand reflection. Whether a Divine decree necessitates the voluntary actions of men or not, there is no man who can see any such connection between them as will make those actions a necessity. And it is not rational to affirm such a connection when we can not discover it. But it is alleged that if God decrees an event, the event is made certain; for we can not counteract his decrees. We admit that if God decrees that any particular event shall infallibly come to pass, that event is certain--absolutely certain. But the decree does not make it certain ; it would be just as certain if there was no decree. Moreover, the certainty of the event has no influence over man's will; at least no one can see any necessary connection between the certainty of the event and the determinations of man's will. When any man can demonstrate that a Divine decree forced him to choose to commit a sinful act, he shall be at liberty to use it in argument. The object of those who reason from the decrees, seems to be to invalidate the doctrine of free-agency; but they can never succeed on their scheme. To give their views even the appearance of plausibility, they have to identify power and decree, but they are far from being the same. There is no power, either physical or moral, in a decree; and, therefore, a decree can have no effect on the human will. That the will is under some kind of government, is too manifest to admit of doubt; but the government to which it is subject must be moral influence, for it is not accessible to physical force. Let us suppose two travelers--one a theological philosopher, the other a plain man, but little acquainted with scientific speculations: Their road leads through a country where water is scarce, and they become very thirsty; at length they come to a spring of excellent water. The learned metaphysician dips his vessel, and says: "It was unconditionally decreed before the foundation of the world that I should drink this good water, and, therefore, under the force of that inevitable decree, I choose to drink it "--and then drinks. Our common man likewise dips his vessel, and says: "I am suffering with thirst, my appetite craves this good water, and influenced by the benefit and gratification I expect to derive from it, I choose to drink." Then, turning to his philosophical companion, says: "And I believe it was for the same reason, and influenced by the same motives, that you chose to drink; and that supposed decree to which you referred had nothing to do with your choice; for, as to any thing you knew, it might have been decreed that you should not drink." Which of these two is the better philosopher? They were both free--they both had full liberty to drink, and they both had physical power to abstain, and the will of both was governed by the same law. I shall soon have occasion to consider this subject briefly in another point of view. But before I do this, it is necessary to notice a ground that is taken by some over-zealous advocates of free-agency. So far as it respects the doctrine that the human will is free--free from any force or constraining power that necessitates the actions of men--I have no controversy with them. I hold the doctrine as firmly as they do, as my preceding remarks upon the subject sufficiently verify. But I see no necessity for attempting to establish a free-agency that goes beyond the will; neither do I believe the thing is possible. A simple statement of their doctrine is about this: That man's will is free, and that he possesses in himself a power over his will to govern or direct its determinations.

I believe they do not attempt to define this power, or to explain its nature, but it is certain that they mean something more than that influence which motives of any kind are naturally calculated to exert on the will; for if this were all they mean, they would have no use for it in the argument. It may not be very easy to deal with such a subtle notion by mere abstract reasoning; but I think there is no necessity for any thing more than a mere practical application of the doctrine to any given case. If the idea were confined to the illiterate and ignorant class of mankind, I would not deign to notice it; but when it is gravely set forth by men of reputation for learning and theological wisdom, it seems to require some attention. The idea is a mere assumption, unsupported by reason, or facts, or any principle recognized by the acknowledged maxims of science. The assumption is this: That man is possessed of a free-will, and also that he possesses within himself an independent power over his will, so that his will is subject to the dictation of this supposed power. If you adopt this theory, it behooves you to show at least that it is consistent with itself. You must show how it is that the will is free, and yet subject to the arbitrary dictate of an independent power--a power that lies deeper in the human mind than the will itself does. If we possess such a power, and it is not called forth into exercise, to direct the decisions of the will, it is not power at all, in any proper sense of the word. But the actual exercise of this power is admitted, and contended for; for, on any other condition it would not be assumed. Let us follow in the direction of this argument and see the consequences--taking Lot, the nephew of Abraham, as an example.

Lot chose, or willed, to go to Sodom; it was his will to go there. He was at liberty to go or to do otherwise; and he was as able to remain where he was as to go; but it was his free-will to go. We will call this his first will, because it was in compliance with this will that he went. Now it is assumed that he had a power over this will, or this act of his will, by the exercise of which he would have been able to will (or choose) differently. This power we will call (for distinction's sake) the first power. And (according to this theory) Lot could have exercised it over his will, and determined not to go. But as he did not, it must have been because he would not. This would require a second will back of the power--a will to exercise the power; for if he had no will to exercise the power, it would be the same as if he had not the power. And further, this would necessitate a second power to govern this second will; and a third will to exercise the second power; and so on forever, for there could be no end to these alternations. And thus Lot would be like a horse working a tread-mill--always stepping on his inclined plane, and yet never move from his first position. But the mind instinctively recoils from the pursuit of this fleeting abstraction. And the man who adopts this theory would employ himself as rationally and as successfully in running to outgo his shadow. Regardless of the sneer that the above undignified and tabular form of presenting the argument may provoke, I desired if I could to make it plain to the minds of plain readers. And intending no injustice to the reputation of those who have advanced this groundless doctrine of the human will, I shall not withhold the opinion that it is resorted to as a mere hiding-place to escape the consequences of arguments too palpable and forcible to be resisted. And whether Lot did right or wrong, and whether he willed right or wrong, we know what it was that governed his will: "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every-where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan." (Genesis 13:10-11) This is very plain philosophy, and shows by what means the human will is governed in all cases.

I have one more idea to offer in relation to this power over the will, and then I will proceed to the last point of view in which I design to consider the subject of the human will. I will not detain the reader long in this place. If I were as conversant with the writings of moral philosophers as I could wish to be, I think it probable that I could appeal to the authority of great names in what I shall now advance; but the extent of my reading is so limited, that I can not avail myself of such support as I might derive from such a privilege.

I invite your attention to the relative order of will and power, as exercised in voluntary actions. Does a man will, that is, choose, or resolve, to perform any act under the influence of that power by which he performs it? In every instance the will, or determination of the mind, to do any act precedes the exertion of the power by which it is done. To place a power over the will, or, which is the same thing, to make the will subject to power, is to invert the established order of nature. Power is necessarily exercised in obedience to will, or it is exercised at random. I will not dwell on this argument; but the principle upon which the argument is founded is utterly subversive of the theory that man possesses in himself a power over his will. But there is a point of view in which the subject of free-agency assumes an importance that challenges the close and candid consideration of every man. And now, in the last place, I design to take a little notice of the subject in that most important respect. It is in a practical view that free-agency involves considerations of the most serious and responsible nature. That every man acts freely in obedience to the dictates of his own will, without any constraint or coercive force exerted upon his will, is so evident that there ought never to have been any question on the subject. It is known by consciousness. Every man knows that he is a free-agent, and acts freely according to his own will, or choice, and this is decisive, and properly precludes all controversy. But although man is not a mere machine, which of necessity moves, just as it is moved by force, yet it leaves the question open, whether he is not the willing slave of his unholy affections and carnal worldly propensities. I speak of the natural man. We are not driven by physical force in the ways of sin, but we are allured by temptations and enticements which we have not the moral strength to resist. The things of this world are so congenial to the fleshly appetites, the pride and selfishness of men's hearts, that they yield a willing submission to these influences. The love of this world is dominant in the human heart and the love of God, not being there to counteract it, sin reigns, and holds in easy control of the will; so that man, though free, is led captive by Satan at his will. This is a most deplorable bondage; for, being free-agents, we are subject to all the momentous responsibilities of free-agency, and justly liable to the fearful consequences of our voluntary sins, and yet we have not the moral heroism to fight successfully against the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And the end of these things is death. What we need is the Spirit of grace to deliver the will from its slavish subjection to the unholy inclinations of our carnal hearts.

04 Regeneration

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER IV.

REGENERATION.

Conversion, regeneration, being born again, and other terms, are used indifferently to express the same thing. In the Scriptures, I believe the word conversion, or convert, is generally applied to that change of practical life which follows regeneration; but preachers and writers use it constantly as synonymous with regeneration; and I shall not interfere with the practice. That a radical change wrought in the heart and mind of the natural man is essential to salvation, is a doctrine generally received and taught by the professed followers of Christ; and if there are any who teach or believe otherwise, it is safe, to infer that they have never themselves been the subjects of such change; and if they do not renounce their error before, they will be convinced, when "he that is filthy will be filthy still." It is so plainly taught in the word of God, that to deny it implies a total want of reverence for Divine authority. Of this change we now design to discourse. In reading the Old Testament (as we usually call it) we discover that God made two great promises to us as sinners; which two promises comprehend all that pertains to the whole plan and work of our salvation from the beginning to the end. The first promise is, that He would give us His Son to be our Redeemer. This Gift respects us as condemned sinners, under the curse of His law. This Gift was an absolute necessity, for without it our salvation was impossible. I will not detain you here by exhibiting the proofs. I take it for granted that you admit it. This promise has been fulfilled. This great Gift has been bestowed. And now it is not only useless, but it is highly sinful in us to attempt to do any thing in order to remove the curse and condemnation from us, for Christ "has redeemed us from the curse of the law." And it would be casting the utmost contempt upon the perfect atonement made by Him, to do any thing by way of making satisfaction for our sins. The Son of God has done this work, and there was none but Him in heaven or earth that could do it. The other great Gift which the Lord promised was the Holy Spirit as a Sanctifier, to give us spiritual life, to enlighten our minds, and, in a word, to make us new creatures. The necessity of this Gift, in order to our salvation, was as absolute and imperative as the other. There was no salvation without it, and there was none else but the Holy Spirit that could do it. The work of redemption or atonement is now a finished work, and was performed by Jesus Christ for us. But the work of regeneration is not a finished work, nor is it even begun in the natural man. This work is a work wrought within us by the Divine Spirit, and this work is now the subject of our present consideration.

I will state, in the first place, that there is no holiness in any created being but that which was given to it by the Holy Spirit. And I state further, that man--the natural man--is totally destitute of holiness. I employ the term holiness, not in a typical or relative sense, but in its strict and proper meaning. In its proper use, the word can not be applied to any but an intelligent nature. We must

not think of holiness as a merely negative idea, implying simply sinlessness. In such meaning as this, it might be applied to a tree or to a block of marble. But it can have no just application but to intelligent creatures. No other can be a subject of holiness. Whatever created thing is not in its own nature capable of being sinful, can not be a subject of holiness. Holiness is a living, active, and operative principle; and wherever it exists, there is spiritual life. Man, in a state of nature, is said to be dead in sin; because he is utterly destitute of holiness, and, therefore, destitute of spiritual life. And as there can be no spiritual life without holiness, it follows of necessity that there can be no spiritual happiness. Hence it is said, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." There must be a similarity of character--a oneness of moral nature between us and a holy God, or we can have no communion with Him. There would be no reciprocal affection, but a natural inherent aversion. And this aversion must be mutual, for God can not do otherwise than hate the sinfulness of our nature; and we, without the spirit of holiness, can not do otherwise than hate the holiness of the Divine nature. Hence we see the natural man's great and imperative necessity. It is an effectual change of his moral nature. But nothing can change its own nature; therefore man can not meet this necessity. And as all holiness is derived from the Holy Spirit, there is none that can do this but He only. That change, therefore, which must be produced in the soul, is the work of God; and hence it is expressed in terms that necessarily require the power of a Divine agent. It is called a creation--"created anew." Creation is a work peculiar to God, and is frequently referred to in the Scriptures as one of the strongest proofs of His infinite power. We are said to be "begotten of God," and "born of the Spirit." Previous to this change we are the "children of wrath"--"the children of disobedience." Indeed, we are said to be "the children of the devil." Subsequently we are called "the children of God"--"obedient children." A greater contrast than this is hardly conceivable. While in a state of nature we are "dead in trespasses and sins;" but in this change we are "quickened"--"made alive." It is the Spirit that "giveth life." To give life, is an act which belongs exclusively to Divine power. God gives us of His Spirit, and this spirit of holiness which God gives us is said to be the Spirit of Christ. By it, we are made one with Christ in spirit; and this is that bond of union by which we are united to Him. And hence Christ is said to dwell in us by His Spirit. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." Until we have the spirit of life, we are blind and can not see spiritual things, because they are spiritually discerned; but being made alive, we see the things of God. All that we have, and all that we are in ourselves, we derive from Adam; but the spirit of life we derive from God through Jesus Christ. And until the Spirit of life is given to us, we are wholly destitute of the spirit of holiness, and can not do any thing that is spiritually good. The Holy Spirit does not give us any new faculty of the soul, but so sanctifies those which we possess in our present constitution, as to give them a new character, and also a new direction to their exercises. The manner or mode in which the Divine Spirit operates on the mind in effecting this change, is beyond our comprehension; as much so as the manner in which He produced light out of the original darkness. We can not see the wind, but we may see its effects, and the results of its powerful operation.

There are great diversities in the exercises of the mind in different persons, when first quickened by the Spirit; and those differences will often continue in some degree throughout the whole course of their religious life. But there are certain characteristics of the operations of the Spirit, which are uniform and pertain to all. The differences are circumstantial, and to account for them in a treatise on the subject would be impracticable, if not impossible. In particular instances much depends (as I think) on nervous temperament--much on the degree of general knowledge

previously acquired, in respect to the law of God and in the way of salvation as revealed in the gospel; perhaps a good deal depends on the religious character of our ordinary companionship, and much on the instructive nature of the preaching we are most accustomed to hear, and perhaps not a little on the comparative wickedness of our previous habits of life. And we shall not undertake to trace in detail the exercises of the mind of a newly-awakened sinner, in a systematic order, but merely notice some things on the subject. Our remarks will be partly doctrinal and partly experimental. The mind of man is naturally affected by the character of the objects which it contemplates, and by the particular relation which they sustain to him. All experience proves this, with respect to things both natural and divine. When, therefore, spiritual life is implanted in the soul, he can begin to discern spiritual things, though he is but an infant in spiritual capacity. Now, man is the creature of law. He was created at first subject to law, and he remains, and ever will remain, subject to law. And in Bible lands he is taught from infancy to understand something of God as his rightful sovereign; and of the nature of that law which He has ordained for man's observance. And we are all conscious of the fact of our being transgressors; and we have some idea of that penalty which the law will inflict upon us in the world to come. Of all this we have some rational knowledge while yet in a state of nature. Some have a greater degree and some a less of this knowledge, before the Divine Spirit has given us spiritual life. And this knowledge ought to induce us to love God and to repent of our sins, but it never does it; for the law can not give life. Thus every man has a rational understanding that through the law is the ministration of death. Consequently, when the eyes of the understanding are opened we naturally turn our thoughts to the law, and to our sins, and to the dangerous state we are in, as exposed to the dreadful penalty due to our sins. Where there is spiritual life, there is also spiritual sensation. And when we discover our true condition, though only in a partial degree, we can not but feel concerned for the event. For the matter is of such immense importance, that to be entirely indifferent about the consequences is a moral impossibility. At the same time our relations to the things of this world are so intimate, so numerous, and so various; and the duties arising out of these relations are so manifold, and often so urgent, that the mind be more or less diverted from the consideration of spiritual and eternal things, and employed upon the things of time and sense. But in every thing that God does He always has a fixed and specific design, which He intends eventually to accomplish. And when He gives the Spirit of life to a dead sinner, He will maintain that life; for he will not be frustrated or defeated in the execution of his purposes. He will be glorified in His work, and will not begin to build when he is not both able and willing to finish. If a sinner thus brought to his senses should resolve to fight against it, and endeavor to put away thoughts of his condition, because such thoughts are troublesome to him, and disturb his peace, he would not be able to succeed. Our physical constitution is such that we can not take burning coals in our hands without feeling the effects of the fire. And spiritual life is such that a man possessing it can not remain very long at rest when he is conscious that the wrath of God hangs over him. And knowing that he is a subject of law, and that the language of the law is "Do and live;" and, as he has always expected to live by this doing, he sets himself about the work, and perhaps will "do many things" which are enjoined upon him but sooner or later he will find that to "do all things which are written in the book of the law" is a task beyond the achievement of his moral powers. Meantime he too much overlooks the important fact that it is now too late to "do and live." He is condemned already, and nothing that he can do, nor all that he can do, will ever remove that condemnation. The dreadful sentence of death has already gone out against him for sins already committed; and whatever he

may do, or can do, it is impossible for him to undo what he has done. Being enlightened by the Spirit, he will discover something of the sinfulness of his own heart, and of the holiness and justice of the law ; and that he is too weak to render that perfect obedience to the law which it requires, and is therefore daily increasing the measure of his guilt. We must find deliverance somewhere else, or certain destruction must ensue. Satisfaction for past sins can not be made by present duties, and beyond what duty requires it is impossible for us to go. The unconverted sinner obeys the law--so far as he obeys at all--from a slavish dread of its penalty; for he has no love of holiness for its own sake. And the newly awakened sinner seeks to obey and serve the Lord, hoping thereby to make himself a Christian. Both labor in vain. But the soul enlightened by the Holy Spirit will obtain clearer views of the law, in proportion to the increasing degrees of light that he acquires. And the more he contemplates the law, the more he will see the holiness of its nature and the extent and sacredness of its obligation; and, at the same time, by the same light, he will discover more clearly the imperfections of his obedience. And thus he learns, indeed, that the "commandment is exceeding broad;" and in due time, he will find that it is in vain to hope that he can ever attain to a righteousness that will satisfy a law which will approve of nothing short of perfect holiness. All the while Christ is set forth before him as a "propitiation through faith in His blood;" and why does he not look to him and obtain remission of sins? I shall not say that it is easy to answer this question. The soul is still oppressed with a burden of guilt; and he is still very much in the dark, and does not understand the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. He does not see how God can love so unholy a creature as he is. His mind is so much engrossed with thoughts of his present sinfulness, and reflection upon his past sins--and a condemning law, ever present, denouncing judgment against him--that he can not direct his thoughts much to the only remedy for his disease. And if his mind is turned in that direction, a sense of his unworthiness, and a want of what he thinks is a necessary preparation or qualification for obtaining mercy, keeps him in a state of despondence. What the sinner needs now is faith in Christ.

05 The Doctrine of Faith

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER V. THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH.

Proceeding in the train of reflection which we have been pursuing, we design now to discuss the subject of faith. It is only necessary to read the New Testament with a little attention to discover the great importance of faith; hence every Christian and every man should endeavor to obtain a clear and correct understanding of the subject.

Much has been said of the order in respect to time in which the graces of the Spirit are given to us; some contending that repentance must precede faith, and others insisting that faith precedes repentance. Perhaps I may not have devoted as much attention to this question as I ought. But according to my theory (if you will bear with the expression) the question is of no very great importance. The light in which I view the subject is this: All those exercises of the mind which have been denominated graces of the Spirit, are the fruits of the Spirit. And when the spirit of life is given to us, it includes potentially every grace of the Spirit. And the order in which these graces (as we call them) are brought into exercise, may depend, in some measure, upon circumstances. Slavish fears of the wrath to come are natural, and not spiritual; and may operate as powerfully upon the unregenerate soul as upon one who is really under the operation of the Spirit of grace. But these, whether in the believer or in the unbeliever, are sinful; and it is a great pity they should ever be mistaken for conversion. When the mind is enlightened by the Spirit, we instinctively look at our sins, and the mind naturally adverts to the consequences which must follow; and as the mind will be affected by the object which it contemplates, the apprehension of impending judgment will arouse our slavish fears. But the spirit which is given us includes a principle of divine love--love to holiness; and so far as this principle operates to produce sorrow for our sins, it is spiritual. It is safe to say, that where there is no love to holiness, there is no spiritual repentance. And it is not easy to see how a man can repent of sin, without such a faith in the word of God as will produce that kind of sorrow for sin which corresponds with the kind of faith which he exercises. If I am correct in my opinion--and I feel a good degree of assurance that I am--there is in the natural man nothing that is spiritually good. And when the Holy Spirit is given to us, He works in us all those principles and affections which constitute true Christian character. This He does by the word of truth as a means: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And whatever particular truth is contemplated by the mind, will affect the heart according to the specific nature of that truth, and will produce or excite repentance, faith, hope, etc., just as the peculiar nature of that truth is adapted to inspire. And without extending our inquiries any farther on the priority of these graces, we will now speak more particularly of faith. As we use the word in ordinary discourse, faith is one of the most simple and common acts of the human mind. Faith is belief. If a man tells me that the sun is farther from the earth than the moon, and I believe his word, this believing is faith. This is the meaning of the word in respect to every thing we believe on any subject whatever. And to

attach to any word which often occurs in the Bible a meaning different from that which it bears in other writings, or in its ordinary use, is an unjustifiable perversion of the sacred record. To adopt a rule of interpretation based upon such a principle would make the Bible of no use as a book of divine instruction. In the use of the word faith there is some latitude of application, as is the case of many other words; but we shall pass this for the present without particular notice.

Faith, properly so called, always rests upon evidence; hence to believe without evidence, is not rational; and in respect to our relations to God, it is extremely dangerous. The strength of our faith is, or at least should be, in proportion to the strength of the evidence upon which it rests. But even the impartial and judicious inquirer may sometimes fail rightly to appreciate the strength of the evidence, and, consequently, his faith will be weak, or perhaps erroneous. The sources of evidence are various, but there is one source of evidence which is infallible. When we have the evidence of God's word, the subject admits of no controversy. The testimony of the Holy Scriptures may be corroborated by other evidence, but it stands in no need of it, and no rebutting evidence should ever be admitted. God's word is all-sufficient to establish any truth. The faith which is founded upon the word of God is sometimes called divine faith, because God is the testifier. Faith in the gospel, which is saving faith, is often denominated evangelical faith; and as no man has this faith but by the Spirit of God, it is often properly called spiritual faith. Our faith should embrace all that God has revealed. But there are some things revealed in Scripture which are not essential to salvation ; and, though it is our duty to believe them, yet our salvation does not depend upon our faith in these things. But if a man willingly tolerates himself in disbelieving any truth contained in God's word, it warrants a strong presumption that his mind has never been reduced to that humble and obedient frame, without which he will never exercise a saving faith in the gospel. The moral law--that is, the law of ten commands--is a proper object of faith. But we are not to believe the law for the same purpose that we believe the gospel. But if we do not believe that the law is of Divine authority; if we do not believe that it is holy, just, and good; if we do not believe that it imposes an obligation to obedience, and do not believe its penalty will be executed, I am unable to see how its precepts can be brought to bear upon the hearts and consciences of men. But we must not believe in the law as a medium of mercy, but as an instrument of death. There is no mercy in the law to the guilty; it is all curse and condemnation. If any should ask, If a sinner would now keep the law perfectly, might he not obtain life? I answer, No: he can not obtain life by any such means. If a man never had sinned, and would then keep the law perfectly, he should "live;" but to those that have sinned, the law speaks nothing but "judgment and fiery indignation." A sinner can no more "escape the damnation of hell" by any obedience he can render to the law, than he can quench the fires of hell in that way. If we entertain any faith in the law that leads us to hope that it will relax in the smallest degree its severity, or make allowance for our imperfections and the weakness of our nature, or for temptations and enticements, it is a false faith, because it is based on a false foundation, and the hope that rests upon it is a vain hope. We must believe the law will give us death, and nothing else.

I wish to avoid all unnecessary distinctions, but I think it will not be amiss to make one or two remarks here that may be useful on some occasions. We should carefully distinguish between faith and presumption. Faith is founded upon evidence, but belief without evidence is presumption. A very sound philosopher has said that "to believe without evidence is the part of a fool." And perhaps there are few who are not in some things liable to this imputation. There is always danger

of this in respect to things which we wish to be true.

Another distinction which should not be overlooked, is the difference between faith and delusion. To believe on false evidence is delusion. The nature of these two errors differs but little, and the effect is the same. There is, probably, more danger here than there is in the other case, because many false teachers have gone out into the world. The last error is more prevalent in the enlightened nations of the earth than the first. In view of the past history and present condition of the human race, my heart grieves--and grieves intensely--while I reflect upon the unnumbered thousands of my fellow-mortals who, by these errors, have been led, and are now deceived, to their eternal ruin. There are, no doubt, now, many millions in the habitations of eternal despair who, while in this world, pleased themselves with the belief that they were the special favorites of heaven, and scarce felt a doubt that death would usher them into the abodes of heavenly glory. And there are millions now, under the same spirit of delusion, traveling the same path, vainly flattering themselves that they are in the highway to eternal life, but the end of their way is death.

It is a part of the experience of almost every child of God, that he has occasional fears that he is in a deceived state and cherishing false hopes. Such fears are not very pleasant, but they are very useful. They prompt us to a more careful and critical examination of the subject, and thus lead to more enlarged knowledge of the way of salvation.

Jesus Christ is the object of saving faith: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." But we are not at liberty to make Him what we would have Him, and then believe on him according to what we have made Him. We must believe on Him just as he is set forth in the gospel; and the evidence upon which we must found our faith is the word of God. To believe on Him thus is not presumption, for we have the sure word of God as the foundation of our faith. Neither is such faith delusion, for the evidence upon which we believe is truth--infallible truth--for it is the testimony of Him that can not lie, and will not deceive. The testimony of God in the gospel may relate to a particular matter of fact; or it may be a declaration of some great doctrinal truth; or it may be a promise to bestow upon us some great blessing or benefit. But whatever may be the subject of His testimony, it ought to be sufficient for us that God has said it; and His word ought to be received with implicit confidence. If God has said it, no evidence to the contrary should be admitted; and the testimony of a thousand holy angels to the same point could add nothing to the certainty of its truth. That Jesus Christ died, is a simple fact, not denied by any who admit that the Bible is a true historical record, whether they believe it to be of Divine authority or not. The Jews and Mohammedans believe it; and even many avowed infidels believe it on the same ground that they believe any other historical fact. But such faith is not believing that Christ died for sinners. We must believe in the death of Christ as a doctrine--a great doctrinal truth. This doctrine we can not understand too well, for it is the foundation of saving faith. He that believes this doctrine is "passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation." I shall endeavor to exhibit this subject as plainly as I can. The sum of this doctrine, in a simple but comprehensive form, is expressed by the apostle in a few words, and is comprised in this sentence: "Christ died for our sins." He that believes this, has saving faith. It is true, this sentence comprehends a great deal. Let us, then, examine it, and see what particular doctrines are taught, either expressly or by necessary implication. This doctrine embraces the atonement, which we regard as the most fundamental doctrine revealed in the gospel, and underlies the whole scheme, or plan of man's salvation. So essential is the atonement, that it is not going too far to say that God could not save sinners without it; but as we

design to treat on atonement more at large in another place, we propose now to consider it only in connection with the subject of faith. That Christ died for our sins, necessarily presupposes that we have sinned. If we had not sinned, no atonement would have been necessary. But as we have sinned, and thereby brought ourselves under the condemnation of the law, it was indispensable, in order to our salvation, that the condemnation should be removed; else the sentence must be executed, and the penalty inflicted upon us. God could not extend saving mercy to us at the expense of His justice; and justice required that sin should be punished. The claims of justice must therefore be satisfied. I make no distinction here between law and justice, for in this point of view they are the same. The penalty of that law which we have violated is death. He that sins, if it be but once, is doomed to death; for God will by no means clear the guilty--that is, no sin shall go unpunished. We have sinned and subjected ourselves to death. This truth, so positively taught in Scripture, is plainly involved in the text above cited; and no man can believe the text without believing that he is justly under sentence of death. Now the text says, "Christ died for our sins." And what is now proposed to our faith is: Did the death of Christ make a sufficient and perfect satisfaction for our sins? If it did, sin can no longer obstruct the saving mercy of God. The way is open, both for us to go to God for pardon, and for Him to come to us with pardon. And let no man charge me with ultraism when I say that He is as willing to bestow pardon as we are to receive it. The death of Christ is the only ground upon which we can be saved from our sins, and it has pleased God so to ordain that when we believe in this atonement, we shall have a personal interest in all its blessings. If the death of the Son of God did not make a complete and perfect satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins, there is no salvation for us; and if it did, we should depend upon that alone. Let us take nothing else with that into our faith, as the ground of our trust. "Christ died for our sins;" and it is in consideration of this alone that God forgives sins. If we look to any obedience to the law rendered by us; or to any religious duties performed by us; or to any good dispositions in ourselves; or to any willingness or good desires which we have; or to any qualification or frames of mind wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, such as repentance, faith, love, etc., as being necessary to make satisfaction for our sins, or as the ground of our acceptance with God, we are placing our faith in a wrong object, and undervaluing the infinite worth and sufficiency of that perfect satisfaction which Christ rendered to Divine justice on behalf of sinners. The death of Christ itself, independently of every thing else, satisfied the Divine law; in consideration of that satisfaction the Father declared from heaven that He is well pleased. And when we believe in it, we shall be well pleased. This is life. eternal. It is by Christ's death that we have eternal life and God has promised all that believe it that He will remember their sins no more. Let Jesus Christ crucified be the corner-stone upon which we build our faith, and then it is not possible for our faith to be too strong, nor for our trust in it to be too single. Let us not complicate it with any thing else, nor encumber it with conditions. Though there are many other truths revealed in the gospel, which it is right and proper that we should believe, yet, when we believe this great and fundamental truth, we have a personal interest in all its benefits. If we truly believe in it, then we desire it--we glory in it--we trust in it--and Christ crucified becomes to us all in all. The Son of God assumed our nature that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And we may say:

"The cursed tree hath blessing in't, My sweetest balm it bears." (Dr. Watts.) That Christ died for our sins, is that great doctrinal truth that we must believe. It is "the gospel," which, if a sinner believes, he shall be saved, for Jesus Christ has said it.

Now let us direct our attention a little to faith in the promise.

Whether I am singular in the opinion or not, I believe it is possible for a man to have a firm and saving belief in the great doctrine which we have been considering; and yet for want of more light and a clearer understanding of the gospel, he may be so much in the dark as not to be satisfied that he has a personal interest in Christ. But I say Christ is his Savior, whether he is able to realize his interest in Him or not. What, then, is necessary in order to set him free? There is but one thing necessary, and that is, for him to believe the promise. Salvation is promised to every one that believes the doctrine--to every one that believes that Christ died to save sinners; and God will certainly verify the truth of this promise. We are saved through the belief of the truth; and the essential truth to be believed is, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." And it hardly can have escaped the notice of any attentive reader of the New Testament, that the Scriptures seem to dwell upon this idea with peculiar emphasis. Our Savior himself taught this great essential truth so frequently, and with so much energy and constancy, as to show the great importance which He attached to it, and which He would have us to attach to it, declaring that whoever believes this truth shall be saved. For whenever faith in Christ is enjoined or spoken of in connection with salvation, we must understand it as having reference to His atonement, for without this He is no Savior. And who has read the writings of the apostles and evangelists, and their preaching, as recorded in the New Testament, without observing with what earnestness and fervor they exhibit this doctrine?

I desire to simplify the subject as much as I possibly can, that you may understand it. I will state both the doctrine to be believed and the promise of salvation to the believer: The doctrine--"Christ died for our sins." (1 Corinthians 15:1-58) The promise--"He that believes shall be saved." (Mark 16:1-20) Paul says the first statement is the gospel; and Jesus Christ says he that believes the gospel shall be saved. How plain, how definite, is the instruction of the Divine word! What glorious simplicity is here! The simplicity of the gospel is one of its chief glories. We find the same, in substance, taught in many other places, and in a variety of forms. Thus: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Whom (Jesus Christ) God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." And again, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to ever one that believeth." Do you believe that the righteousness of Christ is the only thing to justify you before God? If you do, that righteousness is yours. If I have failed to make this matter plain, it is not for the want of effort, but for want of skill. It has not been my design, in stating it thus, to annul or depreciate any other doctrine or any duty found in the Bible; but I want the reader to understand that to believe that the death of the Son of God is the only ground upon which a sinner is accepted in the sight of God, is saving faith. So long as the believer rests upon this ground he is strong, and I think he will feel strong--not strong in his own strength, but in the strength of the foundation upon which he stands. Trusting in this, he may well say, "Who shall lay any thing to my charge?" "It is Christ that died." Freely admitting that repentance towards God, love to God, and all else that the Scriptures teach and require, are important and necessary, yet the faith by which we are accepted, justified, and saved, is faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ as dying for sinners. As the only way by which we can be accepted of God is through the death of the Lord Jesus, so the only faith necessary to obtain that acceptance is to believe in it. We have any desirable number of promises in the Scriptures, that if we believe this doctrine we shall be saved. By this faith we, have fellowship with Christ, and become the children of God. By it we are justified; by it we have peace

with God. If we have this faith we "have passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation." A firm and undoubting belief of this doctrine is the full assurance of faith; and a full and undoubting belief of the promise annexed to this faith, gives the full assurance of hope. Why, then, do not believers rejoice in Christ always? This rejoicing is certainly the privilege of every believer; and if they do not daily rejoice in Christ, it is because they do not rightly improve the privilege to which they are entitled. Satan may tempt the believer to doubt the sufficiency of the atonement, and in this way perplex his mind with darkness and disquiet; but I think it is much oftener the case that from some cause or other he is led to doubt the promise. The truth and certainty of God's promises ought never to be doubted, because "He is faithful that promised." All the "promises of God are in Christ yea and amen," to the glory of God by us. But Satan has many advantages. The mind may labor under dejection, arising from some peculiar derangement of health; or we may be constitutionally disposed to view things, especially future events, in a dubious and unpropitious aspect. Outward afflictions and adverse providences--dark prospects with regard to ourselves or our relative interests--many such things may induce a gloomy or desponding state of mind. Satan may take advantage of these things, to cast in doubts and misgivings with respect to our interest in Christ, and thus hinder us of that joy in believing which it is at all times the privilege of every believer to cherish and maintain. But oftener, by far, is the peace and joy of the believer marred by his own disobedience and unfaithfulness. Christians are too much of their time off their guard, and hence are often betrayed into sin. Consequently, a sense of guilt oppresses the conscience--hope is wavering, and his faith in the promise falters; and he that could once "hope against hope" can now hardly hope at all. If he had walked in the light, he would have rejoiced in the light; but he walked in darkness and found darkness as a recompense. He may think that he ought to "believe down" his fears--and so perhaps be ought--but he finds his faith not equal to the work. A Christian may leave off a known duty by degrees; and, by the same slow degrees, he will lose his spiritual-mindedness. And though the neglect may be as a thorn in the foot all the time, yet he will become so accustomed to its slight ranklings that he will find comparatively very little inconvenience from it, till the resumption of the neglected duty will appear to be a task beyond his strength; and less matter, if he does not begin to persuade himself that the duty is not really obligatory on him. And he will not be at a loss for excuses. At length conscience, having been so long stifled, will scarcely whisper its reproofs, and he makes up his mind to bear the burden. But, in the meantime, where is his spiritual joy? What has become of his lively hopes? He has lost that sweet and holy delight which meditation upon the love of Jesus once inspired. Possibly he may not be greatly oppressed with painful doubts and fears; but he is sensible there is something wanting; and he is often ready to say, "Oh! that it were with me as in months past." The face of the Lord always shines on the path of duty; but "he that regards lying vanities, sins against his own soul." He should remember the Lord's judgment against the "lukewarm," for he is but too near that fearful condition. I might enlarge here to a great extent, but I must set limits to myself somewhere. And I would say to my brethren that it is much better to avoid these hampering doubts and fears, than to incur the necessity of finding a way out of them. And in order to avoid them, consider a few things which I will submit to your reflection. And,

1. First be constant, punctual and, as much as possible, fervent in prayer. Pray, and pray earnestly, for the salvation of sinners. Pray for the purity and prosperity of the Church. Pray for your brethren. Do not forget to pray for the Lord's ministers, and especially for the one who labors for you. When you come to the mercy-seat, you are as near to your Heavenly Father as you can

get, and as far from your spiritual enemies as you can get. It is a safe retreat for a Christian. Doubts and fears can not live near to Christ, for His presence dispels darkness. By the exercise of prayer you maintain the spirit of prayer; and to lose the spirit of prayer, only in a partial degree, is a sad loss indeed. Prayer "gives exercise to faith and love." It is possible that you, like some others, have seen a time when you would have been glad to know that it was your privilege to pray; and it is more than likely you have seen the time when you not only could pray, but could not help praying. The poet has well said, that-- "Satan trembles when he sees The weakest saint upon his knees."

Well, brethren, make Satan afraid, for if you do not, you may well be afraid of him.

2. Whatever will promote growth in grace, will also be a good shield to you from perplexing doubts. Therefore one of the safeguards against these sinful doubts (for they are sinful) is to be well established in the truth. With a view to this, you should make yourself thoroughly and intimately acquainted with the word of God, as much so as you possibly can. This will give you enlarged views of the plan of salvation; and you will better understand the great and precious promises that God has given us; and you will be able more readily and more effectually to apply them to your own case. For when you are able to realize your interest in the promises, those misgivings and uneasy forebodings respecting your final acceptance will, in a great measure, abate, and your re-invigorated faith will get the victory over Satan's temptations. It is not to be wondered at, if Christians hobble and grope in the dark, with little enjoyment of religion--believing but little, and feeling but little, and doing but little--if the word of God is neglected. It is a deep well, but not so deep but that we may draw up the water if we are thirsty. A good degree of knowledge in the Scriptures will make you strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It is "a lamp to our feet, and a light in our path." It is an armory which will furnish you with every necessary spiritual weapon to maintain your warfare against the powers of darkness--the snares of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Scriptures are "able to make you wise unto salvation;" and they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness," that you may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. You can scarcely be placed in any condition in life, or be in any state of mind, but you may find something in the Bible appropriate to your peculiar need; and if you will store your mind with the rich treasures of the Divine word, you will have the needed supply at hand. When I reflect upon the treatment the word of God receives from mankind, I am made to be astonished at His long-suffering mercy. "I have written to him the great things of my law, and they were accounted a strange thing." Just as we treat the word of God, so would we treat Him; and if not, how will we make the contrary appear? We love God no more than we love His word.

3. Even though it may be labor in vain, duty compels me to suggest another means of promoting spiritual strength and a more assured hope in the hearts of my brethren. It is religious conversation. Perhaps with many this is the least acceptable topic in the whole series. But whether this remedy be tasteful or nauseous, faithfulness demands its exhibition. Our doubting and distrust is displeasing to God, because it is an impeachment of His faithfulness; and He would have us to "trust and not be afraid." No means, therefore, should be neglected that promises growth in grace and spirituality. None of us are ignorant of that element of our moral nature which we call sympathy; and we ought to consider its power over the heart, and enlist it in the service of God. This sympathy is that handle (so to speak) of the soul of which religious conversation takes hold,

and which is so easily wielded to mutual edification. And as idle and worldly discourse has a natural tendency to produce levity and worldly-mindedness, so religious conversation has a natural tendency to foster a spiritual state of mind. Why, then, do we so much indulge in the former, and neglect the latter? It is enough to make one "weep in secret places," to reflect how little the subject of religion is made the theme of social conversation among those who profess to believe that it is the greatest and best of all subjects. Does not practice condemn profession? What excuse can we offer for thus neglecting one of the best means of promoting the interests of vital religion that a Christian can command, and a means that every Christian is able to use in a greater or less degree? The topics of religious conversation are so numerous, so rich, and so various, that we need never be at a loss for subject-matter that will make religious intercourse both pleasant and profitable; and many of the topics are so entirely within the comprehension of those who are the least informed in religious matters, that opportunities of being mutually helpful are constantly occurring, and they ought not to pass without improvement; for in many instances the Christian thereby acquires additional knowledge in the word of God; and even when this is not the case, Christians are edified in love and comfort--their spiritual strength is renewed, and growth in grace is promoted. Social religious discourse whets the appetite for spiritual instruction. The remembrance of their having taken sweet counsel together, is a subject of pleasing reflection; and after they separate, they can have a good repast on "the fragments that are left." Moreover, it tends to promote brotherly love and confidence. It also brings Christians to the unity of the spirit, and strengthens the bonds of peace. By this means many a drooping spirit has been revived, many a feeble knee has been strengthened, and many a blessing has descended upon the head of those who have thus been the instruments of edifying the children of God; for He never forgets these cups of cold water given to his thirsty children. And further, it honors Christ, and has been the means of converting sinners. Within the memory of the writer, religious conversation held a prominent place among Christians where two or three were providentially gathered together: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

There is now more refinement among Christians, but I fear there is less devotion. The time has been when our Christian fathers were deprived of this blessed privilege, except as they were wont to meet in the secret retreats of the forest, or in unfrequented nooks and corners; and if political despotism should ever again debar us of these means of spiritual improvement, we should more correctly appreciate the privileges and advantages we now so ungratefully slight. And who can say that such a time will never come? If the progress of error for twenty years in the future should be proportionally as rapid as it has been during the past twenty years, there is abundant reason for the most alarming apprehension. A reformation is greatly needed; and if it is practicable, where shall it begin? It ought to begin everywhere, and among every grade of society. The work is now, probably, ten times more difficult than it would have been twenty years ago, and the necessity for it, perhaps, is ten times more urgent than it was then.

I am now impatient to pursue this line of thought; but knowing that I have already exceeded the limits of the request of my brethren, I must leave out what further I had prepared on this topic. But I will add that religious themes ought to have the preference of all others; and almost any other subject is preferred to religion. "Where there is no wood, the fire goeth out;" and where the means of grace are neglected, spiritual affections decay.

Before I proceed farther I must trouble the reader with an apology. I was requested by my brethren to write a doctrinal treatise. That I have, in the preceding remarks, indulged myself in practical admonitions, I freely admit, and I constantly find myself leading off in that direction. The intimate and inseparable connection between doctrinal truth and practical piety is such that I found myself unable to treat that part of the subject in any other way. But I have more yet to say on the general subject of faith. When we consider the importance of the office of faith in the economy of our salvation, and the relations which it sustains to the other graces of the Spirit, and also to the greatest covenant blessings, we can not fail to see the propriety of arriving at as full and correct an understanding of the subject as we possibly can. The question, Am I a believer? has agitated the mind of many a child of God. And indeed it is a question of transcendent importance. The most momentous interests of man, in this world, and that which is to come, are involved in it. This question is an appropriate subject of inquiry during our whole pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan--if you will bear with this mode of expression. For as, in the order of nature, day and night alternately succeed each other, and are set "the one over against the other," so it is, in most cases, with the true believer. He may have his joyful hours and his cheerful days, but, with comparatively few exceptions, we must remember the days of darkness, for they may be many. We will now inquire a little into the cause of these vicissitudes. And we need not seek for the cause anywhere else but in ourselves; for it is the privilege of God's children to "rejoice in the Lord always." We are prone to put stumbling-blocks in our own way, and therefore it is no wonder if we find impediments while endeavoring to climb the mount of vision, where we may overlook the Jordan and view the promised inheritance. As preparatory to the consideration of this question, let us notice some things that baffle your efforts to come to a satisfactory decision in regard to your true condition. Perhaps one will say, If I could be sure that I am converted! This question may be virtually the same as the other; but it is far more difficult to arrive at a satisfactory decision; and, besides this, there is much greater danger of falling into a fatal mistake as to the fact. It is grievous to think how many there are who believe themselves to be converted, when, in fact, their hearts are as far from Christ as the heart of an infidel. What is the process by which such a one solves the mighty problem? He looks into his own heart to find what he wants; he takes the feelings of his own heart as evidence, and decides by this evidence that he is a Christian, and the result is that "a deceived heart has turned him aside." The whole process of examination begins and ends in himself; while he forgets, or has never known, that "the heart is deceitful above all things." Not a glance has ever been cast upon Christ. With many, the natural passions or affections of the mind are operated upon, as it were, mechanically or sympathetically, and the feelings of the heart are wrought up to a high state of excitement, and all this is supposed to be the operations of the Divine Spirit; and this being taken for granted, a false peace brings relief. Thus the subject of these exercises feels a strong assurance of his being in a converted state. And it may be that being pleased with a notion that he is an object of God's love, and cheered with the hope of gaining heaven at last, and encouraged by the confidence that others have in him, he may live out a life in a tolerably straight line, and, after all, die an utter stranger to Christ and the power of His cross. But in many instances these conversions, as they are supposed to be, prove their spurious character in a very short time. Such a one having obtained deliverance from the agonies of a goading conscience, glories in his peace: and he may really have peace; but to have peace with a deceived conscience, is a very different thing from having "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is an unhappy condition to have no peace, but it is incomparably worse to cherish a false peace. Christ is our

peace, who has broken down the wall of partition which separated us from the favor of God. To seek peace, therefore, from the workings and exercises of our own minds, is a very unsafe expedient. And if we draw peace from a false source, what else may we expect but that it will be a false peace? If your trust for acceptance is in Christ alone, look directly to Him--to Him alone, to His all-fullness--if you would desire assured peace. For why should you wish to draw your peace through the tube (so to speak) of your feelings and the evidences of your conversion? Why not rather go at once to the fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, and drink peace and consolation, as nearly as possible, from where it issues from the throne of God and the Lamb?

I have been using the word conversion in that sense in which it is usually employed in preaching and conversation. It has been so long and so generally used to signify that change which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and which is also called regeneration, that I thought it best to retain it, especially as I do not see any good that would be gained by disturbing the ordinary meaning of the term in a treatise like this. But more directly to meet the inquiry of one who is really concerned about his state, and desirous to obtain a more established hope, I would say that your faith must be placed on a right object--and that object must be Christ. He is the only proper object of saving faith. Again: Your faith must rest upon right evidence--and that evidence must be the word of God. By these criteria you may proceed to try your faith. If your faith (such faith as you have) leads you to renounce all confidence in yourself, and to trust in Christ alone for salvation, you have one of the first and best evidences that your faith is genuine, evangelical faith. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and if you are not feelingly convinced that you are a sinner--a lost sinner, and justly condemned by the law of God--I should think you are not very anxious to have the question decided as to whether you are a believer or not. Jesus says He came to seek and to save the lost; and if you are a lost sinner--so lost, that you can not be saved except Christ saves you--and it is to Him you look, and in Him alone that you trust--I repeat it, you have one of the first and best evidences that you are a true believer.

Just in this place I will say one thing, which you may always keep in mind when you would examine your faith. It is this: It is impossible, according to the laws of the human mind, for us to trust in any thing in which we have no faith. Upon this ground I say that if you trust in Christ, you believe in Him. For if you did not believe in Him as the Savior of sinners, you, as a sinner, could not trust in Him as your Savior. "Blessed are all they that trust in Him." "They that trust in him shall never be ashamed." If, therefore our faith is in Him, it is directed to the only proper object. It is that very faith by which sinners are saved. We will, therefore, revert to the other criterion.

True faith is founded upon the word of God. If you trust in Christ for salvation because God has promised salvation to all that believe in Christ, your faith rests upon the right evidence. You need want no other evidence, for "the word of our God shall stand forever." Possessing these two prime characteristics of saving faith, you are fully warranted in deciding that your faith is the faith of God's children. There are some who look to their own obedience, upright conduct and religious life, or to the warmth and fervor of their religious affections, and perhaps to many other such things, as a kind of refuge from their fears, and build a hope of their gracious state and their acceptance with God upon these; but although true faith will produce such fruits, yet these are too variable, too fluctuating, and often too deceptive for the soul to rest upon. If your faith is such as it ought to be, and in proper exercise, your mind will fly to Christ as your only place of security. And this is the genuine actings of a true faith. "In Thee do I put my trust;" and your heart will say,

"Christ crucified" is my resting place. "It is Christ that died." If your faith will lay hold on this truth, and you can use it rightly, you may triumph over all opposition.

Before I proceed to the last paragraph intended for this chapter, perhaps I ought to remind the reader that in the Scriptures, and also in ordinary discourse, the word faith is used in the same sense as the word trust; and likewise the word trust is used to signify the same as the word faith. Either word will often convey the idea intended by the writer. There is, however, a shade of difference between these two exercises of the mind, though they are generally exercised in connection. Faith respects the truth believed; trust has respect to the promise made to the believer. Faith looks to God's veracity; trust regards God's faithfulness. The language of faith is, God is a God of truth; the language of trust is, God is a faithful God. Faith embraces things both past and future; trust mostly contemplates the future. I could easily exemplify the distinction by referring to certain scriptures, but by this time you probably think I have been unnecessarily minute. I will only add that when you commune with your own heart with a view to ascertain whether or not you are a real believer, you will probably find it easier to discover your trust than your faith; but if your trust is in Christ, your faith is there, too, whether you discover it or not.

If I set reasonable limits to my whole task, I must also set limits to the particular parts of it. I will, therefore, present you with only one more test by which to judge whether your faith is truly evangelical; you may decide by the value which you set upon Christ. To the unbeliever Christ is "as a root out of a dry ground." He has no form nor comeliness; he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. Having no real sense of his need of such a Savior, he does not know how to estimate His worth. The unbeliever has some notion that he can not be saved without Him; but he looks upon Him as having died to put sinners in a condition to save themselves, rather than as being their only, their whole Savior. He will readily admit that he can not be saved without Christ, and that there must be an important use for Him in the work of salvation; but, at the same time, he really does not know what use to make of Him for himself. The unbeliever supposes that Christ died to make a way whereby a sinner may be saved if he will try; but has very little more than a vague and indefinite notion of what Christ accomplished by His death; and if Jesus would keep him out of hell, he would have very little further use for Him. To say the truth, he has such imperfect or erroneous views of the necessity that Christ should die for sinners, that he must of necessity have very imperfect conceptions of the benefits secured by His death. He has imperfect views of the holiness and justice of that law which he has violated times without number; he has inadequate views of that ruined condition into which he has brought himself by his transgressions; he has very imperfect ideas of the sinfulness of his nature, and consequently he does not realize the greatness of his need of such a Mediator as the "Man Christ Jesus;" and not being impressed with the fact of his being a lost sinner, he is incapable of duly estimating the excellency of Christ Jesus the Lord. Very different is it with the true believer. He regards Christ as his All in All. To him, Christ is the Chief among all the thousands, and altogether desirable. He knows that he is lost in himself, and that without Christ he is lost forever. He sees that Jesus is just such a Savior as he needs--even a Savior of sinners. To him Christ is precious--infinitely precious; so that if Christ is his, he has the very thing that he needs, as well as the thing that he desires. The language of his heart is, "Lord, if Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and in proportion as he is able to understand and appreciate the evidence that Christ is willing to save him, will be the measure of his hope and comfort. Take from him "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," and he has nothing left.

With him, Christ is the "sure foundation," and he is resolved to build upon no other. Even before he was brought to feel that he was not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof, he had found that sin is "an evil thing and bitter;" but now, more than ever, he hates sin, and grieves in his heart that so much still remains of his former depravity. Yet he would discard the idea of being saved by his own holiness, for he sees that salvation is in Christ alone:

"None but Jesus--none but Jesus, Can do helpless sinners good."

If the believer could know with positive certainty that he would be finally saved, it would still be the desire of his soul to live free from sin.

06 Repentance

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER VI.

REPENTANCE. The discussion of the doctrine of faith leads us in course to the subject of repentance. There has been some difference of opinion among Christians as to which precedes--faith or repentance. I do not esteem the question one of much importance, and therefore shall not detain the reader with an investigation. My own views of the subject preclude the necessity of determining the priority of these graces. They, with all other gracious exercises of the mind, are immediate fruits of the Spirit; and when God gives us His Spirit, every grace of the Spirit is virtually included in that one gift. But I think we may safely conclude, that where there is no love to God there is no spiritual repentance towards God. I chose to discuss the subject of faith first, not because of the order of time in which these graces are first exercised, but for reasons which I deemed of greater importance.

It is, however, a matter of great importance to distinguish, if we can, between true evangelical repentance and other exercises of the mind which have nothing truly spiritual in them. On this rock thousands have split, and thousands more are in danger. The question, therefore, has strong claims on our earnest consideration. With a view to lend the reader some little assistance in judging between that which is true and that which is spurious, we will say that the mind may be in a state of great perturbation, and the natural affections wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, produced by a powerful exhortation, or some providential visitation--many tears may flow, and strong resolves may be formed--and all this without the work of the Holy Spirit. In many instances this turbulence and pungent distress do not last much longer than the occasion which produced them; and when they do survive the occasion, they subside by degrees and leave the heart no better than it was before. It was a natural, not a spiritual, operation. Some persons, in time of sickness, and under apprehension of approaching death, become greatly alarmed, and, reflecting on a past life of sin, and careless indifference about their future destiny, endure the most bitter regret, and set many firm resolutions, that, if their lives should be spared, they will never more return to their former sinful course of life, but become religious and try to serve the Lord. Under these impressions they will pray, and request the prayers of others. But when restored to health they give clear evidence that the love of sin is not subdued. In these strong sensations there is more love of life than love of holiness. It is remorse, not repentance. I can assign no reason why the Holy Spirit may not visit a person with His life-giving power in a time of sickness as well as in health; but, when He does, it will eventually bring forth fruit unto God, and not be like seed sown upon stony ground.

I have also known persons to fall into a state of mental dejection, and remain so for months. They seem to be deeply engaged in serious thought, and to have no relish for worldly pleasures; rather

inclined to solitude, and more disposed to shun than to seek cheerful company. In their general deportment they are agreeable, sedate, and blameless. Such cases are always thought to be quite hopeful--and, indeed, ought to be judged favorably; but too often it all passes away, and leaves but little evidence that the Holy Spirit was the author of these rather unusual sensations. I can not account for these exercises of the mind, but I think the solution of the problem belongs to philosophy, and not to theology. The real fruits of true repentance are not manifest.

Once more: We occasionally meet with persons who, when quite young, while their hearts were tender, were the subjects of very serious religious impressions; and these feelings would continue for a length of time--perhaps for years; and possibly, at times, they would be almost ready to hope they were truly reconciled to God. Some such have made a public profession; but whether they have or not, when they have gone thus far, their friends entertain very favorable hopes of them--and they have not been altogether without hope themselves. It is not easy to form a satisfactory judgment of such persons. Time will commonly reveal the truth. Some such persons, as they increase in years, are drawn off by the spirit of the world, and their true character becomes more doubtful, giving too much ground for unfavorable inferences. But it is not so with all; and it is seldom that such persons make a sudden and violent transition from a hopeful path into the broad road of open wickedness. They do not forsake the house of God and the means of grace, but manifest more indifference, and are occasionally betrayed into sin. Their religious sensibilities are not paralyzed, but somewhat stupefied; their religious impressions will frequently be revived, but remain undetermined. Whether such persons are the subjects of true spiritual repentance, I will not take upon myself to decide; but if these pages should ever fall under the eye of such a character, I would earnestly entreat his regard. Your situation is one of extreme peril; you are poised, as it were, on a pinnacle; you have been vibrating on this balance long enough, and a mere circumstance may turn the scale against you, and leave you in an abyss of darkness, out of which you may never emerge. Whether you are young or old, your danger is near, for there is but a step between you and death. If you judge the world to come to be of any importance, you should not remain an hour longer in your present state of uncertainty and indecision; and whether you are converted or unconverted, let me urge you by all the solemnity with which eternity can invest your danger, that you give yourself no rest till you find security in the blood that cleanses from all sin.

We repeat, that where there is no love to God there can be no true repentance towards God. The natural man being dead in trespasses and sins, having in his heart no love to God, and destitute of the spirit of life, is morally incapable of repentance; and, in fact, he is equally incapable of every spiritual affection. But when the Lord gives him His spirit, he has spiritual life, and possesses the full capacity and all the susceptibilities of the new man; and the question as to which precedes, whether faith or repentance, is to be referred rather to the time when they are first brought into sensible exercise. For all purposes of edification, the question of priority may well be dispensed with. Some men (even learned divines) say that every man has faith, and every man has repentance. If no more were intended by such assertions, than that every man believes something, and every man regrets some of his actions, no one would dispute it; but it would be very silly talk, for who needs such information? But if it is meant (and such I suppose to be their meaning) that every man has repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, it is a flat contradiction of the word of God. In any other sense than this, the language would be mere quibbling. If a man has adopted a religious creed that necessarily involves such unscriptural

doctrines, he may very reasonably suspect its soundness.

True spiritual repentance is a holy exercise of the heart; but the mere fear of future punishment is slavish, and may be as strong in devils as in men; and, as I have said before, these fears are sinful, and have nothing of a holy character in them. It would, therefore, be a good work, if I were able to perform it, to exhibit the distinction between the two in so clear a manner that it could be well understood; but to succeed in such exact discrimination, would require abilities above what I claim to possess. But if I can throw any light on the general subject, it is incumbent upon me to do so. And if I could know that these pages would never be seen by any person whose duty it may be to make a public use of any hint he might receive from the perusal, I would relieve myself of a portion of the present effort. In accordance with what I have been saying, holiness is an essential attribute of true repentance. Any thing called repentance which does not possess this characteristic, is not repentance in the evangelical sense of the term. We say, then, that the holiness of repentance must have, and does have, respect to the holiness of God. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is by the light of the Spirit that the soul is brought to see the holiness of the Divine character; and contrasting this with the sinfulness of his heart and life, it produces in his soul a sincere sorrow that he has sinned against a holy God, and a desire after holiness in himself. This desire of holiness proves that there is in his heart a love of holiness; for if he did not love holiness, it is not possible that he could desire it. By this we see that the love of God is the life of repentance. Wherever there is a love of holiness, there is a corresponding abhorrence of sin, and a consequent desire to avoid it; for it is the same affection exercised in relation to the two different objects. The principle is the same. And he that earnestly desires holiness, need not doubt that he loves God, for these affections can not be separated. Moreover, they will abide with us through life. Sorrow for our sins may cease with us when we are perfectly delivered from the power of sin, but the love of holiness will continue forever.

Hating sin and desiring holiness, we have said, are virtually the same thing, and are the essential element of spiritual repentance. Without a portion of this element there is no acceptable repentance. Hence it is evident that holiness is that attribute of the Divine nature to which repentance has particular respect. And our obligation to be holy arises from the relation in which we stand to this attribute: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." This attribute requires perfect holiness of every intelligent creature. God has this attribute in infinite perfection; and in Him it is immutable, and never can change--it never can be increased or diminished. And as the obligation upon us to be holy, has its foundation in the holiness of God, this obligation can never be changed or relaxed. The holiness of God is commensurate with the whole of His infinite nature; and, in like manner, our obligation to be holy is commensurate with the whole of our nature. To fulfill this obligation by attaining to this degree of holiness, should be our highest ambition and our constant endeavor; and although we may never, in this life, reach this high attainment, yet we should press toward this mark, that we may gain the prize of our high calling. And never for a moment should we be satisfied with what we have gained, nor cease our efforts till we are crowned with the object of our earnest aspirations.

We will now consider the subject of repentance more especially in its relation to the Divine law. Of course we have already anticipated this aspect of the subject to a considerable extent. The moral law is an expression of the obligation we are under to be holy; and the commandment before quoted, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy," comprehends the whole obligation of the

moral law. It has been said that this law is a transcript of the moral perfections of the Lawgiver; and it is with great propriety so called, for in it we see the moral nature of that God to whom we are accountable. The holiness and justice of God are the two attributes which are most prominently set forth to us in the Divine law, and hence holiness and justice, are the two attributes of the law, which more immediately bear upon us. "The law is holy, and just, and good;" and it is its holiness and justice which constitute its goodness. The holiness of the law devolves upon us the obligation to be holy; hence it has special respect to obedience, and the penitent sinner feels the obligation. The justice of the law prescribes and inflicts the appropriate penalty; hence it has special respect to disobedience. The obligation to obey the precept, or holy commandment, refers to God acting in His office as the Supreme Lawgiver. The administration of the penalty refers to God as acting in His office as the Supreme Judge.

Without pursuing this line of discrimination any further, we are now prepared to inquire what bearing these two fundamental principles have on the subject of repentance. And each reader may judge of the spiritual character of his own repentance, by comparing it with these two prime characteristics of the Divine law. The proper use of true repentance is to bring the alienated heart back to the holiness of the law; and this will be its effect in so far as it affects any thing in relation to God--at least so far as it affects any thing acceptable to Him. When the Divine Spirit first quickens the dead soul, it is then spiritually alive, and here begins the exercises of repentance. But between this quickening and the time when the subject of it obtains peace and hope, a period of time elapses, longer or shorter, during which the new-born soul is in a state of spiritual infancy--even the first stage of infancy. During this period of darkness, weakness, and comparative spiritual ignorance, the sinner's thoughts are exercised chiefly by considerations drawn from the law; and in the first stages his mind is directed mostly to the justice of the law and its most awful penalty--Death, which, if once inflicted, is death forever. The mind being enlightened, he is enabled more correctly to appreciate his dangerous condition. This prompts him to action; but in his efforts to escape the punishment due to his sins, he resorts to ineffectual, and indeed impossible expedients, for he seeks to obtain the favor of God by various observances and performances, which it is not necessary to detail in this place. But we will turn to the other branch of the subject. The sinner now, for the first time, is able to discover, in some degree, the beauty and excellency of holiness, for this may be seen in the perfect holiness of the law; and though his attention may be occupied more with reflections on the justice and righteous curse of the law, yet holiness becomes an object of desire, and he sees that it is desirable for its own sake. He strives for it, for his heart is drawn in that direction. He is now in the right path--the way that leads to holiness. This is repentance--true repentance. But during this season of trial and anxiety, the mind is in a state of confusion and darkness. There is a mixture of those feelings of terror and slavish fear which his view of the justice of the law produces on the one hand; and on the other hand, of those desires of holiness and reconciliation with God, produced by his views of the holiness of the law. And even if the dread of wrath and eternal perdition should engross more of his thoughts than the desire of holiness, yet this desire is there, a living principle in the heart; and though the former is not spiritual, but the fruit of unbelief, the latter is truly spiritual, being the fruit of God's implanted grace. Contemplating the purity of the Divine character, and in the light of this holiness viewing the sinfulness and vileness of his own heart and actions, he is filled with grief, and the contrast calls forth many a sigh. He can not see how such a holy Being can look upon him with complacency. His whole desire reaches after the holiness of the law; but all his efforts at conformity fall so

immeasurably short, that though he will not forego the desire nor cease his efforts, yet he is forced to relinquish all hope of success. These are the exercises of genuine repentance, for holiness is the object in view. But at the same time the justice of the law presses the load of guilt upon his conscience, and seems to demand satisfaction for his sins, and he sees no sure way to avoid the approaching storm. Every expedient to which he resorts is no better than if Lot had left Sodom and run to Gomorrah, for the justice of the law drives him from every false refuge. These distresses are not spiritual, for the object is to satisfy the justice of the law, which he can never do. He resorts to wrong methods to escape the penalty of the law, while there is a right method set before him which he neglects to pursue. Thus these mixed exercises of legal fears and spiritual desires attend the penitent sinner, till he is led to Christ, the Savior of sinners. Here he finds a secure retreat from the curse of the law; and trusting in Him, his conscience is relieved of the burden of guilt--peace finds way into his heart, and hope springs up in his bosom. And now his repentance is purified from those guilty fears and servile labors which polluted it before. But his desire of holiness and abhorrence of sin are more intense than ever, and these are the true characteristics of spiritual repentance. This kind of repentance he desires should exercise his heart while life shall last; and the desire will be realized. The tempest which agitated his soul having passed away, the Sun of Righteousness seems to shed the beams of peace on his heart from a serene sky. But the clouds are apt to return, after the rain; and these alterations of light and darkness, hope and fear, will continue to encumber the progress of repentance, as well as to mar his peace, for a length of time; and in many instances, I think, till the portals of the temple above are so far opened to his faith, as to show him the palm of final victory. For the true believer who is set free from the condemnation of the law, is not free from sinful doubts and slavish fears. If you ask the reason of this, the answer is to be found by adverting to these same essential properties of the Divine law; for though free from condemnation, he still retains in himself all the original corruptions of the flesh and evil propensities of his depraved nature. He is also still assaulted with the same temptations; and as he is still under the same unchangeable obligation to obey the holy requirement of the law, he finds himself inadequate to the great performance, and by falling short he contracts guilt upon the conscience. With this guilt he brings himself before the justice of the law, which can do nothing but declare the penalty, and inflict it. The guilt, therefore, remains on his conscience, and excites sinful doubts and slavish fears. But he goes to the wrong place. He should never take his guilt to the justice of the law, for that will fasten the guilt more sorely upon the conscience. Let him go with his guilty conscience to the Cross. That, and that only, has power to remove guilt. And he must ultimately come there, if he would obtain a holy peace. Then he can "look upon Him whom he has pierced, and mourn." This is gospel repentance.

There are some false notions entertained by some persons--probably a great many--with regard to repentance, which I would be glad to remove. This work may not be easily done, because these notions are old and deep-rooted ideas in the natural mind, and they are not so frequently disturbed by the preacher as they ought to be. I can not, therefore, feel quite satisfied to dismiss the present subject without an attempt to eradicate these erroneous conceptions from the mind of the reader, if they have entertainment there. We are told that pardon is promised to the repenting sinner--that if we repent we shall be forgiven. This is true. It is scriptural truth. But if we thence infer that repentance is a condition to be performed by us, by which we obtain a title to the blessing of pardon, the inference is not true, it is not scriptural. It is an error, and a mischievous error. This, my dear reader, puts you upon the task of working out your pardon. Your pardon is not free, which is

directly contrary to the truth of the gospel. Or (on the same principle) you may suppose that repentance is a kind of chastisement to which you are required to submit as a prerequisite to your receiving remission of sins. This is not repentance, it is penance. The superstitious devotee of the Romish delusion will scourge himself till the blood runs, or walk barefoot on the frozen and pointed rocks, and do ever so much more by way of punishing himself for his sin. This he calls penance. You say this is absurd and foolish, and withal it is sinful. You speak rightly. But he acts on the self-same principle that influences you, in supposing that repentance is a course of suffering that you must undergo, as a prerequisite to your receiving pardoning mercy. That repentance is not a task to be performed by us, or a burden laid upon us as a condition upon which we obtain forgiveness, is evident upon another consideration, which, if you have experienced true repentance, will be able to apprehend. If you could certainly know that God had forgiven your sins, you would still desire to repent of them, and you would still repent of them. Your heart would still be exercised with sincere sorrow and pious grief that you had sinned against the Lord. You would look upon Him whom you had pierced, and grieve for your sins. And this is as pure spiritual repentance as is ever experienced by those who love the Lord Jesus.

Repentance effects nothing in the matter of our justification, for it does not belong to juridical proceedings. To suppose that by repenting of our sins we may deliver ourselves from the punishment legally due to our sins, is a great error. The law does not require repentance, and will not accept it; therefore the fear of the penalty of the law can not be repentance. True repentance is not towards hell, but towards God, and is an exercise of our love to Him. Neither the fears of hell, nor yet the fires of hell, can ever implant the love of God in the heart.

Repentance belongs to work of sanctification. As I said before, the use of repentance is to bring the alienated heart of the sinner back to the holiness of the law. It is an essential part of that purifying process carried on in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which we call progressive sanctification. Repentance keeps the conscience of the Christian tender, and makes him watchful to avoid sin: and, particularly in its first exercises, it prepares the heart of the anxious sinner to receive with gratitude and joy the tokens of God's forgiving grace; for it provokes no real gratitude, and inspires no real joy in the heart of the careless, impenitent sinner, to be told that Christ died for sinners, and that God is ready to forgive sins for His sake; but to the soul that hates sin and grieves in his heart for his sins, it is sweeter than music. To him it is gospel--good tidings. Repentance also keeps in exercise the spirit of prayer. How can we in sincerity go to our Heavenly Father and confess our sins, if we are not sorry that we have sinned against Him? What an empty, heartless confession we should make! Such formal, lifeless confessions are often made, no doubt, when we draw near to Him with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him. And too often the words express much more than the heart feels. But there is a desire in every Christian's heart to come to God with more in his heart than words can express. As examples of penitential prayer, read the fifty-first Psalm and that elaborate prayer of the prophet Daniel. (See Daniel 9:1-27) These were made on special and extraordinary occasions. But as an example of the exercises of true repentance, suited to every Christian, and at all times, compare your experiences with those of the apostle Paul, recorded in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the church at Rome. Here is a scriptural example which the Holy Spirit has given us, by which we may judge of our spiritual character and condition. It is true, some learned doctors have tried to rob Christians of the edification they may derive from this instructive portion of experimental instruction; but I think it is easy to show that their interpretation

can never be made to accord with the word of God. Further, repentance produces a good effect in subduing our pride--both spiritual and natural pride; and thus it keeps in exercise that lovely grace of humility, one of the brightest ornaments of Christian character. All the graces of the Spirit are so intimately connected with each other, that one can not well be in active exercise without promoting the activity of all the others. Our love to God manifests itself in repentance, as well as in joy; hence repentance and spiritual joy are not inconsistent with each other, for both may subsist together at the same time.

07a Justification

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER VII.

JUSTIFICATION.

HAVING engaged your attention to the primary graces of the Spirit, I would now have you take a view of what may be called covenant blessings. And the first of these to which I would direct your attention is justification. No subject of more importance to us can employ our thoughts. We shall all be brought, in a coming day, before the tribunal of the Judge of all the earth. There we shall hear the doom of eternal condemnation, or the sentence of our filial justification. Then we shall receive the award of eternal life, or be consigned to a state of eternal death. He that is unholy and unjust will be unholy and unjust forever, and he that is righteous and holy will remain so forever. How immensely important, then, that we see to it, even now, that we are prepared to stand before the Judge, not only without dismay, but with exceeding joy. And there is a way however guilty we may be, there is a way whereby we may be made to appear faultless before the throne of judgment. And it is my heart's desire, and shall be my earnest endeavor, to set this way before you in the clearest light that I possibly can, so that you may be able to say with the old patriarch, "Behold now I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified." In speaking on this doctrine it is not possible to exceed the solemnity of the subject, or to clothe it in language beyond what its importance demands; but in my judgment simplicity of expression is preferable to artificial embellishment. Those over-strained efforts at eloquence and poetic sentimentalism which so much characterize the literature of the present age, on so solemn a subject as this would be rather injurious than beneficial to the student. And the subject stands in no need of them.

Justification is a different thing from election, and from adoption, and from sanctification. It is also different from regeneration and repentance; and has no necessary connection with any of the graces of the Spirit, except that one by which we appropriate the blessing of justification to ourselves personally. Hence the propriety of considering this doctrine separately and independently of all the other doctrines of the gospel, and all the graces of the Spirit, except, as before said, the one grace of faith, by which we lay hold, as it were, of that which is the matter or ground upon which our justification is based. But in this view it is necessary that I make a remark on the subject of pardon. Some understand pardon and justification to be the same thing. I think there is, in some respects, a distinction, and I could easily show wherein they may be distinguished. But I do not wish to embarrass the reader; and as I doubt whether in making these distinctions, I should render any particular service to a majority of those for whose edification I am laboring, I will just say, that he that is justified is also pardoned. These blessings are never disjoined. Justification proceeds from God the Judge; pardon comes from God the Sovereign. And he that believes in Jesus Christ, has both pardon and justification, and receives, both in the

way that is, by faith.

Justification is a well known and definite term in the administration of judicial law; and is applied to a person who is arraigned before the court for having committed a crime, and on trial it is found that he is not guilty, whereupon the judge acquits him that is, he justifies him. Thus the term stands opposed to condemnation: "Thou shalt justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." This simple idea, so plain in itself, and so easily apprehended, is sufficient to give us a clear conception of what justification means. The accused person is either condemned or justified. In common discourse we more frequently use the word acquitted; but whether we say acquitted, or justified, or discharged, we mean the same thing. Without employing figures for illustration, we will just say that whatever will satisfy the demand of the law, will justify the accused party. But that demand must be satisfied. And this fundamental idea should be kept constantly in view in all our discussions and investigations of the subject of justification.

Whatever the nature of the law may be whether it be Divine or human, whether moral or positive whether it requires little or much that which will fully satisfy its demands will justify him who is under the particular law by which he is to be judged, and nothing else will do it; so that there is but one plea that will justify under any law, and that one plea will justify under every variety of law, and will apply to every variety of accusation.

Now, happily, we have a word in our language that will express that plea. That word is RIGHTEOUSNESS. This word, when used in reference to judicial law, comprehends all that that law can require, and will meet the law successfully in every point. The word righteous, in common discourse, is often used in a general and indefinite sense, in which it has a comparative meaning, and is used in this comparative sense in many places in the Scriptures. But when used in a judicial sense, it is a word of absolute and determinate meaning, and admits of no modification; and it is in its strict judicial signification that we use it in its application to justification.

Viewing the subject in this light, we see just what a man must have that he may be justified by any law before which he may be arraigned; he must have a righteousness, such a righteousness as that particular law requires; and that which will constitute such a righteousness is a perfect obedience to all the requirements of the law. Nothing short of a perfect obedience will answer the purpose. For if in any thing he fails if his obedience is not absolutely perfect it can not support the plea of righteousness, which is the only plea that will justify him before the law. Thus, when we shall stand before God in judgment, if we have not a positive righteousness consisting of a perfect obedience to His holy law, our condemnation is certain is inevitable.

I am not skillful in constructing figures for illustration, but as I am very desirous that you should understand this important subject as clearly as possible, I will submit to your consideration a few examples, presenting the subject in different points of view. But I request you to keep in mind the particular point now immediately under discussion that is, a righteousness that will satisfy law, and consequently will justify him who has the righteousness; or, in other words the question may be stated thus: What kind of obedience will constitute a justifying righteousness? for we can have no salvation without it. The first example I will offer is the obedience of Moses on a special occasion. The Lord showed him the pattern of a tabernacle which He would have built, and said to him, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." This commandment was God's law to Moses (in that particular case). And Moses made all things

according to the pattern. This was his obedience a perfect obedience and therefore a perfect righteousness under that law justifying righteousness. If Moses had disobeyed any number of other commands, and had incurred the penalties of disobedience annexed to them, yet he was righteous and justified so far as that one law extended.

I will take a second example from the case of King Saul, when God, by his prophet Samuel, commanded him to go and utterly destroy the Amalekites, with their flocks and herds, and every thing they possessed. This command was the law under which Saul was to act, and which he was under obligation to obey. Nothing was left to his discretion. Saul went with his army and made the whole country a scene of desolation. But he spared Agag the king, and reserved the best of the flocks and herds (as he said) for sacrifices to the Lord, and returned victorious to Gilgal. When called to account by the prophet, he said, " I have performed the commandment of the Lord. " Here we have Saul's plea he pleads obedience. But his obedience was not perfect; it fell short of the whole requirement, and therefore was not righteousness. So far as his compliance with the law extended, it might be well enough, but he did not execute the whole commandment, and it was not a perfect obedience. We may properly speak of an imperfect obedience, but in strictness of language it is not proper to speak of an imperfect righteousness, in a judicial sense, for it is a self-contradiction, and therefore an impossibility. Saul's obedience coming short of perfection, did not amount to a righteousness, and consequently would not justify him. It would seem, indeed, that if any excuse could be admitted, Saul's was as good as any excuse could be, for his object was to serve the Lord, which was in itself a religious duty. But no excuse is admissible; there must be a punctual fulfillment of the whole law, or the plea of righteousness can not be supported. Saul failed to perform a perfect obedience, and the Judge of Israel pronounced sentence against him he lost the kingdom. And how many thousands there are in these days that hope to obtain the kingdom of heaven, while they know that they have not performed a perfect obedience to the Divine law, and therefore have not an acceptable righteousness! Their sincere desires their honest endeavors, and their good intentions may all be well enough, so far as they go, but they come far short of a perfect righteousness; and for want of this, in the judgment-day they will be doomed to eternal banishment. Being solicitous that you should form as clear and correct a view of this important subject as possible, I must call your attention to it in another point of view, which I will attempt to exemplify by the law of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. King Jeroboam commanded his subjects, the ten tribes of Israel, to worship the calves which he had set up in Bethel and Dan, and they obeyed his order; "they willingly walked after the commandment." They (the people generally) rendered a perfect obedience to this law of Jeroboam and their perfect obedience was a righteousness sufficient to justify them before that law. But they were under God's law also. and their obedience to their king was a most flagrant act of disobedience to the Divine law their obligation to the Divine law was paramount, and they should have disregarded the law of the king; and like the three Hebrew children answered the king of Babylon, they should have said to Jeroboam, "Be it known unto thee, O king! we will not." Before the tribunal of Jeroboam they had a righteousness which would justify them, but this very righteousness would condemn them at the bar of God. So will it be with every one of the many thousands who are very punctual to observe the prescriptions of their church; or the teachings of the ministers when they are not in accordance with the word of God. You have the word of God, which shows you His will, and the way by which you may obtain justification in His sight, and if you choose to follow the teaching of the Church, or any other prescriptive authority, it is at your peril, and "be sure your sin will find you out." But this example

may be applied also in another point of view, still illustrating the same fundamental principle. There is reason to fear that many flatter themselves with the idea that if they are honest and just in all their dealings with others if they injure no one in person, or property, or reputation; if they abide by the truth, and are peaceable and generous; if they do their duty to their family and relatives; if they fulfill all political and social obligations; and especially if, in addition to all this, they abstain from the grosser vices with all this in their behalf; they will surely escape condemnation. But let such a one consider that if he should come up to the full measure of doing in all things to others as he would they should do to him, and of loving his neighbor as himself, he would still be under obligation to love God with all his heart; and except he has a righteousness that will satisfy both of these demands, he can not stand approved before God in judgment. In order to exemplify an important principle in respect to justification, I will engage your attention for a few moments to the first introduction of sin into our moral world. It is not my intention to enter into the subject of our relations to Adam, but merely to use the facts as they are recorded, for the purpose of illustration. When Adam was created and became a living soul, the Creator pronounced him good, which He would not have done if Adam had not been perfectly holy according to his created nature. This could not have been said of him in truth if he had been in any respect or in any degree unholy. That Adam was a subject of the moral law, I have no doubt; but he was in no danger of violating that law, for the spirit of the moral law was in his heart he delighted in it it was his glory and his joy. It was the law of his nature, as well as a law to his will. He loved it so well that he could have no disposition to transgress, and therefore was morally incapable of violating it; and he would have continued to be out of danger of disobeying this law, if he had obeyed another law a positive law which imposed an obligation upon him. I have adverted to Adam's relation to the moral law, not for the purpose of making any use of it in this place, but that you may keep it entirely out of mind in our present illustration. That special law to which I now direct your notice was that which prohibited the use of the fruit of a certain tree. The law was this: "Thou shalt not eat of it." Nothing can be more simple, plain, and definite than this law. Every child understands it. So long as Adam forbore to eat, he rendered a perfect obedience to this law, and of course had a perfect righteousness in his relation to it that would justify him, and save him from the penalty. It was the only law that could bring its authority to bear upon his will; and so far as it respected his physical ability, it was easier for Adam to obey than to disobey. Thus he stood justified in his own perfect righteousness. But Adam transgressed he disobeyed and by that one act of disobedience he lost his righteousness, and lost it forever. For you know that that which is past can not be recalled. The deed once done, can not be undone. Hence it was an impossibility for him to recover his lost righteousness. It is not necessary in this place to notice any connection that the loss of this righteousness has with the moral law, but I will only say that, having lost this righteousness, he lost with it the favor of God. If, then, he should ever recover the Divine favor, it must be through some other medium; he must have righteousness in some other way, for it is impossible for him to recover his former innocence. And the particular point that we should notice is, that a righteousness under any law, when once lost, is lost forever. This principle applies to all law. The preceding examples illustrate the following fundamental principles:

1. A perfect obedience constitutes a perfect righteousness under any law, and will therefore justify.
2. A partial or imperfect obedience, however nearly it may approach perfection, can not amount to righteousness and therefore will not justify.

3. A perfect obedience to one law is not righteousness under any other law that may hold authority over us; or a righteousness before one law, will not justify under another law.

4. A righteousness under any law, when once lost, can never be regained by obedience to that law.

Although I have detained you so long on these examples, I must beg your indulgence and claim your attention to one more, because it brings into view an important principle which obtains in the matter and manner of our justification.

Ahasuerus, king of Persia, ordained a law that whosoever, man or woman, should come into his presence in the inner court unbidden, should be put to death. Esther, the queen, on a very urgent occasion, resolved to enter the chamber without being called. Accordingly she made the perilous adventure, and the moment she passed the door she was under condemnation. She had disobeyed the king's law, and might, according to law, have been sent to immediate execution. She had no righteousness that could satisfy the king's law; she was guilty and not righteous. She might, indeed, have pled the urgency and great importance of her object, but that could not justify under that law, for the law had made no provision for such cases. If, when she had entered, she had immediately returned before she had advanced three paces, it would have been of no avail; the righteousness which she had before the deed was done, and would have justified her under that particular law of the king, was gone and lost forever. But the king had also ordained a constitution by which the execution of that law might be dispensed with. If he held out his golden scepter to one who had transgressed, the penalty was instantly removed. This scepter was extended to Esther, and she approached and touched the gracious symbol. That moment her life was safe; she was beyond danger. She had a righteousness now, under a different constitution, that delivered her from the law that stood against her. She had not that righteousness which consisted in obedience to the king's prohibition; but we find here the superinduction of a righteousness by the king's grace, which answered all the demands of the king's law, and by it Queen Esther was justified before the king's throne. Now let us suppose that Haman, the queen's bitter enemy, had brought an accusation against her, alleging that she had transgressed the king's commandment, and had incurred the penalty of death; what defense could she have made? The charge would have been true, and she could not deny it. But she might say, I did disobey the king's law, and forfeit my life; but I touched the golden scepter this is my plea. I do not look to my obedience for justification, but I look to the king's most gracious scepter; and I bid defiance to Haman, and to all the realms of the king. Thus we see, that though a man may not have a righteousness that will justify him before a particular law, and that it may be impossible for him to obtain such a justifying righteousness, yet there may be, by the intervention of a different constitution, a way whereby he may obtain a righteousness that will remove the penalty he has incurred, and avail for his justification.

Keeping in view the principles of law exemplified in the foregoing remarks, we will endeavor to bring them to bear on our relation to God as subjects of His law. And it is hardly necessary to remind you that the law by which we must be judged, and by which we will either be condemned or justified, is that which we usually denominate the moral law. The substance of this law we find set forth in the ten commandments. Great pains have been taken by many to teach children at an early age to repeat these precepts by memory, while at the same time little or no care has been

taken to make them understand their extensive import, or the sacredness of the obligation thus imposed upon them, or the fearful consequence which disobedience will entail upon the transgressor. Hence there are multitudes who give themselves very little concern about these things, and scarcely feel their accountability. They seldom reflect that this holy law holds its authority over every action, every word, and every thought of their whole life. This is truly a solemn reflection; but the solemnity of the subject should not repress our inquiries, but impel us to so much the greater earnestness and diligence, in proportion to the magnitude of the interests involved in it. Let us beware that we do not shun the light, and, from dread of the consequences, hide the truth from our eyes. It is much better that we should know the worst that can and must come, lest a vain and unwarranted hope of security should induce us to neglect the only remedy that will answer our desperate necessity. The ten commands before referred to may be reduced to two: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." This epitome of the Divine law is warranted by our Savior himself, and it shows the spiritual nature and the great extent of the obligation; all which we must bring into the account, if we would know our true character and condition, as we stand related to its requirements and its sanctions. But, as I have said in a preceding part of this work, the whole requirement of the law is comprehended in one short sentence: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy." What, now, does your conscience say to this comprehensive obligation? Are you ready for the judgment? You must be prepared to meet this demand. Nothing less than positive, perfect holiness will be accepted. Measure your obedience by this rule, and say whether you have a righteousness every way equal to this perfect and comprehensive requisition; if you have not, there is no alternative. There is nothing before you but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. The law is absolute, and will not nay, can not show mercy. The law can and will curse, but it can not bless; it must give death to the transgressor, but it can not give life. The law being just, it is its proper office to dispense justice to all; but it can not be a medium of mercy to the sinner it will "by no means acquit the guilty."

Let us cast a broad look upon this law for a few moments. It is well worth the while, and you may never repent the time thus employed. This law is perfect in holiness, and is the fundamental principle from which all holiness in created beings is derived. As I have said before, it is the manifestation or expression of the glory of the Divine nature. By this law the Creator shows to us the holiness of His character, that we may know how to conform our character to His. Just so far as we have the likeness of God in the holiness of His character, we also resemble Him in all His moral perfections. The law is also a declaration of His holy will in relation to us; and, indeed, to all His creatures that are capable of understanding His will. Hence the obligation to be holy rests upon every intelligent being in creation. Satan, with all his apostate crew, though they are so depraved that they never will be holy, and will never desire to be so, are, notwithstanding, bound in duty under this law to be perfectly holy. And this obligation arises from the fact that they are intelligent creatures, and possess a moral nature. And the angels in heaven, which were created holy, and have preserved their holy character till now, and probably will maintain their holiness forever, are, for the same reason, under obligation to be perfectly conformed to the requirements of this holy law. And they are no more bound nor any less bound by it than the devils are. No change of condition or of moral character can in the least degree affect this obligation. Adam, who was created an intelligent being, and endowed with a moral nature, and who was perfectly holy in his created nature, was under obligation, by this law, to maintain intact his holy character in the

sight of God. When he sinned he lost his holiness, and a change took place, both in his moral nature and in his relation to God; but there was no change in his obligation to be holy and to perfectly fulfill the holy requirement of this law. Furthermore, we ourselves are unholy in our nature, as all men must know, yet God says to us, "Be ye holy;" and if we fail, we shall learn in due time whether He speaks in vain. And if by the almighty grace of the Divine Spirit a holy nature should be given to us, and we should eventually be perfectly sanctified, both in soul and body, and so stand in absolute unblemished holiness in His presence, we shall not then be released from the authority of this law, nor will the obligation be in the smallest degree relaxed or abated. Any change diminishing the obligation of this law would require a corresponding change in the character of the law itself; any change in the character of the law would necessarily involve a corresponding change in the character of the lawgiver. A doctrine has been advanced, that the moral law, being too severe, and requiring more of man than he is able to perform, has been repealed, and a milder law has been substituted in its place, prescribing duties which are not beyond the moral abilities of man to comply with. It is not alleged that the penalty of this new law is less severe, but some affirm that it is even more severe than the penalty of the moral law. Now, whatever may be the duties prescribed by- any law, the obligation to obedience must be imperative, otherwise it is no law. The extent of the obligation must be equal to the extent of the duties required; therefore, there can not be any mitigation of the obligation whether the law requires little or much. It is not claimed that the obligation to obedience is less sacred and imperative, but it is held that the duties imposed by this new law are not so severe, so rigid, so extreme as our duty to the moral law; so that the duties enjoined are brought within the compass of man's moral ability, in his present state of moral imperfection.

Now the moral law requires perfect holiness; and if this new and milder law does not require perfect holiness, it follows inevitably that it, in its own nature, is not perfectly holy. And if we assume that God has given a law that is not perfectly holy, how is it possible to vindicate the perfect holiness of the Divine character? His law must be an expression of His will in respect to us as His subjects. And must we believe that because we are unholy, a holy God has given us a law to accommodate our unholiness, and thus tolerate, or rather sanction, our alienation from His holy character? If this does not necessarily imply unholiness in the will of God, I would like that some one would show the reason. And it is indisputable that if the will of God is not holy, He is not holy Himself. A sincere and habitual desire after holiness, is the distinguishing characteristic of the renewed heart. The sincere and enlightened Christian desires to be perfectly holy, and cherishes the pleasing hope that a time will come when this desire shall be consummated; but if this desire shall be realized, he will be more holy than any law of God requires him to be, and the desire goes beyond the will of God.

It would seem unnecessary to say any thing more to expose the inconsistency and absurdity of this scheme of law; but as such an arrangement would be quite congenial to that spirit of self-righteousness which is in every natural heart, and which, indeed, it is so difficult to eradicate even from the renewed heart, I will offer a few additional thoughts on the subject. If the moral law is perfectly just and good, why should it be abrogated? If it is not perfectly just and good, why was it ever ordained? It is not out of place to inquire also, When was this new law given? We can not find it on record. And what is the specific requirement of this new law? If because of the present moral imperfection of human nature it does not require perfect holiness, but will be satisfied with

something less, it would appear to follow that it requires just so much holiness as our innate love of sin will permit us to render or enable us to acquire, and it tolerates the love of sin. Furthermore, how are we to be justified under this law? If we are to be justified by our obedience to this new law, then, without controversy, we are, to all intents and purposes, justified by the works of the law. But in the meantime faith is made void, so far as justification is concerned. I might enlarge to a much greater extent on this subject, and expose its falsity by other arguments, but I deem it unnecessary, for in every point of light in which we can view the scheme it is full of inconsistency and absurdity. It has no foundation in Scripture, and it reflects most injuriously on the holiness and justice of the Divine character. When the Scripture says we are not under the law, but under grace, we are not to understand that the law has no authority over us, and that we are under no obligation to obey its precepts. There are two senses in which we are not under the law, and both of them are of very great importance: 1. The believer is not under the penalty of the law he is not exposed to its curse he is no longer under its condemnation: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." 2. He is not under the law as a covenant of life. His acceptance with God does not depend on his obedience to the law. It is his rule of duty, but not a condition of life. His justification does not depend on his obedience to the law. These two principles should never be lost sight of, if we would understand the doctrine of justification. We shall have frequent occasion to advert to these principles as we proceed. But at present I must remind you that the obligation to a perfect obedience is perpetual; it can never cease, nor can its authority be suspended for a moment. The Author of the law is ever the same unchangeable God; and if the law were to change, it would no longer be a true representation of the Divine character, and therefore could not answer the purpose for which it was ordained. This law requires that every thing we do should be done from a principle of love to God. This is manifest from the fact that the spirit of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." The good Lord has placed us here in this world, in circumstances in which we possess and enjoy many rational satisfactions and lawful gratifications; but these are all to be enjoyed from a principle of love to God with gratitude to Him as the Giver in subordination to his will, and with a view to His glory. The various relations in which we stand to the human family, and other things of His making, devolve upon us many relative duties, all of which we are to perform from a principle of love to God, and with a view to His glory. Many of these duties are congenial to our moral natures such as loving our parents, our children, our near kindred and friends sympathizing with the afflicted, and relieving the distressed; and it gives us a sincere pleasure to exercise these affections, and to perform these kind offices, and thus doing, what we well can to promote their welfare and happiness all which is right but it does not fulfill the law unless there is in it the element of love to God, and a desire to do His will, that His Name may be glorified. In all that we do for ourselves, in all our transactions with others, in all our social intercourse with friends and acquaintances, with strangers and enemies, we are to have an eye fixed steadfastly on the will of God; and a desire to do those things which are pleasing in His sight must have a supreme influence. Moreover, we are not to utter a word with our tongues that He will not approve; for we have to give account of every word that we speak, and all our words will be judged by this law; and if they have not in them the spirit of holiness, the law will condemn them. And not only this, but the law takes knowledge of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and extends its authority over all the exercises of the mind. Every desire and emotion of the heart, and every thought of the imagination must be perfectly holy, and exercised in the love of God. And yet further, all this holy and spiritual

obedience must be performed willingly, cheerfully, and we must delight in it. It must be our chief pleasure to do the will of God. To obey reluctantly and unwillingly would be highly offensive in His sight. We must not be pleased with anything that does not please Him, but we must hold in aversion every thing in which He does not delight. And all must be done continually and unceasingly, without a moment's intermission or relaxation, from the beginning of your life to the end of your days.

07b Justification

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER VII.

JUSTIFICATION.

I have thus briefly, though very imperfectly, set before you the extensive obligation and stringent claims of that law by which you will be judged, and which you must perfectly obey, or death is the penalty, and everlasting punishment must ensue. Do the terms appear to be severe? Is it a hard service? I know you feel like the condition is too rigorous, and that compliance is utterly impracticable; that it would make your life intolerable and almost insupportable to be thus bound down to such strict observances, and perpetually confined to a perfect conformity with a rule that is beyond all the moral powers of man to satisfy. And perhaps it is so; but it is God's law, and you are bound to a perfect obedience, or you can never have a righteousness of your own that will screen you from the vengeance of God. Many will openly object to a law that requires so much self-denial, and say that it binds men in the chains of a moral despotism. But I entreat you not to impeach the justice, or even the goodness of the Lawgiver. Perhaps you are not aware of all that your objection implies. There is something involved in your objection that it is probable you have never once thought of, and that you would be almost ashamed to avow, but which you can not avoid without renouncing your objection. This objection is just equivalent to saying that you love sin so much better than you love holiness, that you deem it a hardship to be debarred the privilege of being unholy. You can make nothing else of it. Will you avow the principle? To avow it, is to say that you do not believe that God is as holy as He declares Himself to be; or, if He is, He ought not to be. You must not dissemble or prevaricate. If you regard the law as a hard master, you must say explicitly that you would rather serve Satan than serve God. But there is yet much more involved in it which it is probable you have never properly considered. If you were as holy as the law requires, you would be the holiest and happiest being upon this earth. And is it a hard law that insures you happiness through all time and forever? All the means of happiness which this world contains combined, could not make you the hundredth part as happy as a perfect conformity to this law. Thus, when the Lord gives you the means of being inconceivably happy, you loathe it, and call it a severe and intolerable condition. Neither is this all; if you would faithfully and punctually fulfill this law, you would be the most honorable character in all this world; the glory of kings and conquerors of statesmen and philosophers, would be as nothing compared with the high distinction to which you would be exalted. And your heart is ready to complain of the extreme demands of a law which is a manifestation of the goodness of God to His creatures! But whether you are satisfied with it or dissatisfied, whether its demands are moderate or excessive, it is the law by which you must be judged; and if you have not rendered a perfect obedience to its whole requirement, if you are not as holy as this law is, you are totally destitute of a righteousness that will save you from its burning curses. You can not be justified; you must endure the ministration of its eternal condemnation; for

without a righteousness that is as holy as this law, God will never say, "Let the prisoner go free." I think I may safely challenge you to call to remembrance any one action of your whole life, or any one thought of your mind, in which love to God was the reigning principle, and a sincere desire to please and honor Him was the ruling motive in your view; and if not, your whole life has been one continual course of sinfulness. How, then, can you be justified when you have no righteousness not even a partial righteousness to save you from condemnation? And without one that is perfect and immaculate in the sight of God, your condemnation is certainly inevitable. But in respect of our justification, it is altogether sufficient for my present purpose if you have been guilty of one sin-only one: that one will as effectually cut you off from all possibility of being justified by obedience to the law as ten thousand. One sin insures your inevitable condemnation. If you have committed one sin, even the least you are a guilty sinner before God, and, therefore, utterly destitute of any righteousness that can avail you in the judgment, and by which you can escape the damnation of hell.

It is well in this place to bear what God himself has testified on this subject. He has decided the case beyond debate: "There is none righteous, no, not one. That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. So that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Judgment came upon all men to condemnation. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If these plain and unequivocal declarations from God's own mouth are not sufficient to show you the attitude in which you stand before His law, it would be useless to appeal to reason. It is too plain to be overlooked, that no man has a righteousness that will justify him in the sight of that law by which we must all be judged.

As, therefore, our case is thus desperate, and it is impossible for us to attain to righteousness by any thing that we can do, it becomes a matter of the first importance to inquire whether there is any other way by which we can obtain such a righteousness as will fully answer our extreme necessity; and the Scriptures give us an answer of peace. Such a righteousness has been provided. Let us consider what the case requires. Two things are indispensably requisite to constitute a justifying righteousness for sinners: the first is a perfect fulfillment of all that the precept requires; the second is a satisfaction for the sins committed for nothing will satisfy the law except the penalty for transgression is inflicted. Without this, all else that could be done would avail nothing; for the Lord Jesus has said the heavens and the earth should pass away before one jot or tittle of the law should fail, but all must be fulfilled. It follows, then, that the penalty must be inflicted on the transgressor, or on an adequate substitute. This all sufficient and acceptable substitute we have in the person of the Son of God. If He has rendered a perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and has suffered the whole penalty for our transgressions, what more is needed to constitute a perfect righteousness? If the holy life of Jesus Christ and His obedience unto death will not satisfy the law, the sinner has no remedy. It is a pleasing employment to review those passages in the word of God which bear so distinctly on the subject of a sinner's justification: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was made under the law that He might redeem them that were under the law." It was not necessary that He should be made (or born) of a woman, in order to His being under obligation to obey the precept; for if he had been made of the original dust of the earth, He would have been under that obligation as far as it was possible for Him to be under obligation at all; but it was necessary that He should be made of a woman, that He might be one with us, and, as such, a

proper substitute for us; and it was also necessary that He should be made under the penalty of the law, that the law might not be turned out of its own proper and legitimate course in finding a competent and legitimate substitute and surety, and in that character redeem us from the curse. "In Him was no sin," but He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Was not this all that was required as a perfect obedience to the precept? And as death was the penalty, and He died for our sins, was not this all that the penalty of the law required? A perfect obedience to the commandment was all that the holiness of the law required; and the death of Christ was all that the justice of the law claimed. Hence, then, here is a perfect obedience to the law in its whole demand upon the sinner; and as righteousness consists in giving the law all that it demands, what better righteousness can a sinner need? If the commandment says, "Do all this," and Christ has done all; and if the penalty says to the transgressor, "Thou shalt die," and Christ has died, the just for the unjust, I would ask What more would you have? The law asks no more, and you should want no more. In Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and He offered Himself without spot unto God as a sacrifice for our sins, and if He is not an adequate substitute for sinners it is vain to hope for one. If I entertained a doubt of it I would instantly drop my pen. For all the perfections and excellencies that pertain to created and uncreated existencies are found in Him in all their infinite fullness; and if His holy life and obedience unto death do not constitute a righteousness that will satisfy the law and justify sinners, it is not possible to satisfy the law, and we are yet in our sins, and must remain forever in a state of condemnation. But let us remember that He against whom we have sinned has said, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake." And again, "This is my beloved Son, in Him I am well pleased." If the offended God is well pleased, surely we ought to be satisfied. Thank God I am well pleased, too! When I have such a substitute I can not fear insufficiency. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." In considering this wonderful exhibition of gospel truth it will be necessary to anticipate, in some measure, certain points which are yet before us, and belong to a different branch of doctrine; but they are truths, the importance of which can not be overestimated And I ask your particular attention to the first clause in the foregoing quotation. You will recollect that I have shown you the impossibility of acquiring a righteousness by obedience to a law when that law has been once violated; and now being cut off from all possibility of justification by the sentence of the law, we are now inquiring for a righteousness in some other way. The text now under consideration brings this to light in the clearest manner that you can desire or conceive

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." The law condemns us, and it can show us no favor; but we need not ask any favor of it. Here is a righteousness manifested which places us independent of the law. There is no need that you should perform one act of obedience to the law in order to obtain a justifying righteousness. And I must remind you, if you make one act of your obedience to the law necessary to your acceptance with God, you assume to fulfill all that the law requires; even though it should be a religious duty of any kind, if you perform it with a view to your acceptance with God, you thereby devolve upon yourself the obligation to fulfill till that the law require even to be perfectly holy; for it is a work of law, and brings you under the curse: "For as many as are of the works of the law- are under the curse." If righteousness come by

the law, Christ is dead in vain." By doing one work that you may obtain righteousness in the sight of God, you virtually subscribe to the covenant of works; and by works you must gain eternal life, or you can never have life. But as God has openly showed you a righteousness which is altogether without your works, you should seek to obtain that righteousness, and renounce all other. Let me state to you a fundamental truth - a truth which I would have you keep in perpetual remembrance: If you want a justifying righteousness, you must renounce all your own righteousness, and depend wholly upon the righteousness of Christ; or you must utterly renounce and reject the righteousness of Christ, and depend alone upon your own. "The righteousness of God." The text speaks of "the righteousness of God"--then it is not of man. Our obedience has nothing to do in the matter. It is the righteousness of God, because He provided it and He bestows it; and as He provided it for sinners, we know that He will accept it and be satisfied with it; for He would not provide a righteousness for us that would not be pleasing in His own eyes. And it was provided expressly for sinners, who have no righteousness of their own, and it would be of no use to any but sinners; and if you have disobeyed the law of your God, and are therefore a sinner, it is as free for you, and as much within your reach, as it is for any other sinner. Whether you are, in your own view, a great sinner comparatively, or whether, comparatively, a small one, can make no difference, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. And this righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" "being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Here we have brought to our view, in the plainest form, the ground upon which our justification is based. This shows what that righteousness of God is in which we are graciously accepted, and on account of which we are justified it is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He having redeemed us from the curse of the law. the condemnation is removed; and the condemnation being removed, the sinner stands justified through that redemption which removed the curse.

There is scarcely more common error among men than the notion that, because one man is practically a much greater and more wicked sinner than another, he is therefore farther removed from that righteousness which justifies sinners; that because he is comparatively a much greater sinner, his case is proportionally more desperate. But this idea is far from being true. It might and would be true if justification depended, in whole or in part, upon our obedience or our personal goodness; but as we are justified freely by His grace, there can be no difference. It may be admitted that if both remain under the law, the punishment of the one will be greater than that of the other, because they are dealt with on principles of law, which rewards every man according to his work. But justification is wholly of grace, irrespective of the demerits of the sinner. The same perfect righteousness which justifies one, justifies also the other. It is given to both on the same principle that is, freely by grace; and is received by both in the same way by faith. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. This righteousness which is of God through faith in Jesus Christ, will cover any number of sins, and nothing else will cover one sin. Say not, "If I had not sinned so much, or, if I had not lived in sin so long, I might have hope;" for there is no difference between a sinner of a hundred years old and a sinner of ten years old. As with the greatest, so with the least.

I had intended to notice other texts of the same import with those I have quoted, and to make such remarks on them as the subject would suggest; but why should I add any more? I could easily refer to a great many, but as I have yet to show how this perfect righteousness may be obtained,

so as for the sinner to have the benefit of it, I shall necessarily bring some of them into view as I proceed.

If you have attentively considered what has been said on this subject, you must be convinced that Christ, by dying for sinners, has made "reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness;" and now the deeply interesting question presents itself: In what way can I, as a sinner, obtain this righteousness for my own personal justification?

Before I proceed to answer this question, I have an apology which I wish to offer to the reader. In perusing what I have written on this subject, you could not fail to notice the frequent recurrence of the word righteousness. My reason for this constant repetition is this: Righteousness alone is that which will justify any one who is a subject of law. Many, as seems to me, speak on the subject of justification in such a way that the inquirer fails to get a precise and definite idea of that which is the essential thing in justification; and for want of knowing what that is which will satisfy the law, and the only thing that will do it, the mind is kept in confusion and darkness. Having constantly in my view that class of readers for whose benefit I am laboring, I have been resolved from the first to confine myself to such language as they will most readily understand. I could often employ a greater variety of style, but elegance of diction is no part of my object. I am earnestly solicitous to write nothing but what will please God; consequently I am indifferent about literary criticism I shall, therefore, persist in the course which I have adopted.

Christ, by dying for sinners, has brought in an everlasting righteousness, sufficient of itself to justify any sinner; and now the question is, How is the sinner to become invested with this righteousness? This is no hard question to answer. In this I have plain work before me. It is one of the easiest lessons for the teacher to teach, and perhaps one of the hardest for the learner to learn, of any that belong to the gospel ministry. We have plain and positive declarations in the word of God, and these infallible testimonies we shall use in solving the question. We obtain this righteousness simply by believing it. This is all; nothing more is required. In proof of the correctness of this answer, let us refer to the inspired documents:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:21) "Shall not come into condemnation." Is not this justification? What more is required for justification? "Hath everlasting life." If a man has everlasting life, surely he is justified—he is delivered from death. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans 10:4) I am not able to command language that will express the doctrine more definitely and explicitly than this text. The law requires righteousness, and Christ by dying in the sinner's place becomes the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. What else is required here to obtain righteousness but to believe in it? You believe that the righteousness of Christ is sufficient for your justification, and is the only thing that will justify you before God: this gives you a personal interest in it. If this is false doctrine, we must charge the falsehood to the Holy Spirit. I am not the author of the text, and I have no more right to alter any part of it than I have to blot it out of the Bible. If you choose, you may assume the responsibility of impeaching the veracity of the witness, but I will not. But perhaps you will say there are many who will acknowledge the truth of it who are not in a justified state, and that to teach the doctrine of justification in this way confirms them in a ruinous mistake. To this objection I reply that there is no danger. We have

ample security against this delusion in other doctrines, and there is too much in the word of God that will effectually guard us against any such consequences. The danger of error lies in a different place. Though many may acknowledge the doctrine that Christ is end of the law for righteousness, they do not in reality believe it, because they do not understand it. If one was well sounded on the subject, it would be found that he thinks there is something besides the death of Christ, or something additional something that he must do, or some qualification that he must possess in himself to give efficacy to the righteousness of Christ; or, that there is something else besides mere faith - some prerequisite or spiritual preparation necessary besides simply believing, or, in connection with it to give him a personal interest in this justifying righteousness. Whatever may be said or thought one thing is certain: he that believes in Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners, is justified, and shall be saved. If you interrogate the true believer, especially if he is a little advanced in Christian knowledge and experience, he will answer at once that he has nothing to depend upon for his acceptance but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that he has no plea to entitle him to an interest in Christ, but that he believes in Him. But even if it were otherwise, it is not my privilege, and hope it may never be my employment, to put forced constructions upon the word of God, through fear that the belief of the truth might produce evil fruits. The Divine Spirit inspired the apostle's thoughts and directed his words; and the people to whom he addressed the epistle, the circumstances under which he wrote, the object he had in view in writing, and the special doctrines he designed to inculcate all imperatively required that he should express himself with the most cautious precision. Immediately before he delivered this unambiguous proposition, he had shown that the idolatrous Gentiles had attained to righteousness by faith; but the Jews, who would have something of their own works, had failed to attain to righteousness, because they sought it not by faith. They could not understand the way of being justified by a righteousness which God had provided, independently of any obedience of their own, and of obtaining an interest in such a righteousness simply by believing in it: hence they were zealous to acquire a righteousness by rendering to the law the best obedience they could; and whatever of insufficiency there might be in that obedience, they expected to supply by doing things over and above what they supposed the law required or by the mere mercy of God exercised in defiance of law. But the righteousness which is of God is "through the redemption of Jesus Christ;" and He promises to justify every sinner that believes in it. He asks nothing of the sinner but to receive it by faith. Please notice the scriptures which immediately follow the text we are considering: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed." Why should the apostle take so much pains to support the doctrine of the text by other expressions of similar import, if he did not mean just what he said, and no more? Unless we have the hardihood to take liberties with God's word, which we would be ashamed to take with men's language, we can make nothing else of it but that a sinner is justified by believing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But the scriptures I have quoted are not all, by many, which affirm the same doctrine: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." To every one that believeth here the apostle stops and adds no more. Will you make additions to it? But what is this gospel which we are to believe? Let the apostle answer: "Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) Will you cavil at these statements? Oh, no! you are too modest to object to God's word. It is well; and with all my heart I wish you would be too modest to object to God's method of justifying sinners. "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of

Jesus Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith." If you are honest and sincere in your inquiries into this subject, this passage ought to be decisive. If you resist its force, you will have hard work to make any sense of the apostle's statement. Paul had as good a righteousness without faith as any man who ever lived as far as we have any knowledge of his history. Whoever lived a more upright and unimpeachable life, according to law, than Paul? He himself testifies under the influence of the Spirit, that he was blameless; and, after his conversion, when he lived by the faith of the Son of God, his zeal, his labors, his self denial and sufferings for Christ's sake are without a parallel; and yet be counted all as worthless, that he might win in Christ. "Not having my own righteousness" this excludes all good works, all merit, all personal holiness, as the ground of his justification. "But that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ:" this excludes everything in the way of receiving it, but believing and, to present the idea as specifically as possible, so as to avoid all possibility of misconstruction the apostle adds, "The righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ." This is as definite and perspicuous as language can make it. The apostle says to the Galatians, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law." This shows that righteousness is not to be obtained by obedience to any law; that righteousness which is unto life is not of us, but of God, and we receive it as a gift by faith, without any condition performed by us.

Perhaps I ought in this place to direct your attention to certain different forms of expression which are used in the Scriptures to signify the same thing. We know that a part is less than the whole, and that the whole must include every part; but it is a common thing in the use of language to put a part for the whole, and this form of speaking is quite frequent in the Scriptures. The reason for this mode of speech is often too obvious to admit of misconception as to the meaning of the writer. Thus it is said that we are saved by faith, and also that we are justified by faith. The word saved, in its general acceptance, comprehends more than the word justified, but it always includes justification, because there is no salvation without it; and though the word justification, in its restricted meaning, does not include the whole of salvation, yet as every one that is justified is also saved, the terms are used indiscriminately to mean the same thing. Whenever salvation is ascribed to faith, it proves justification by faith, for there is no salvation without it. I might cite to you many passages where it is declared that salvation is by faith, but I will notice but one at the present. The jailer at Philippi inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The jailer inquires in earnest, and the apostle answers by inspiration, and according to truth. If there was something else instead of faith, no matter what it was, that was essential, the answer of Paul was false, and he was a deceiver; and if Paul answered rightly, all those are deceivers who teach differently. And further, if there was any thing in addition to faith that was necessary, then the apostle was unfaithful, and left the jailer ignorant of the way of salvation; he did not truly answer the jailer's question. Hence it follows that by faith, and by faith alone, we obtain an interest in the salvation of Christ. Besides, our Savior himself repeatedly affirmed the same doctrine in terms as positive and unequivocal as the categorical answer of Paul in this case.

Now let us examine this great question of our personal justification in regard to works. To teach that all works of every kind, and all merit in us, are entirely excluded in the matter and manner of our justification is thought by some equivalent to giving us a license to live in sin. But if any man thinks he believes in Christ, and yet desires to indulge in sin, he knows nothing about believing in

Christ; he is ignorant of Christ, and of himself, and of sin, and of every thing in this matter that he has need to know; he knows nothing of the truth in Jesus. Without any fear of an opposer, I hesitate not to say that it is impossible for a man that has a living faith in Christ to love sin; for if he believes in Christ, he has the Spirit of Christ, and can not desire to live in sin. On the subject now before us, as well as in everything else that is revealed in the gospel, we can know nothing except what is found in the inspired writings. Whatever a man may learn of the fundamental principles of the Divine law by reasoning from the Divine attributes as manifested in the works of creation and providence, we can know nothing at all respecting God's method of justifying sinners, only as He has revealed it by special communication. Whatever, therefore, is testified in the word of God must be taken as true; and on the subject now under consideration the documents are full and explicit, so that we must treat with decided disregard the plainest testimony, or we can not evade the truth. But the natural man is so invincibly attached to the principle of living on terms of law with his offended Creator, that when he finds himself utterly precluded from the possibility of a reconciliation with God by any law which He has given, sooner than submit to a change of relationship he will make laws of his own, and endeavor to obtain a justifying righteousness by a compliance with his own prescriptions. Therefore, without resorting to a course of reasoning from the principles of moral right, which, in respect to the way of salvation, is always inadmissible, let us take the sure word of God, and form our judgment simply upon the evidence of the record: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God." This teaches that Abraham was not justified by works, in as plain language as it can be expressed; for if he had been justified by works he would have had whereof to glory before God. The apostle's expression is stronger than any didactic statement could be. If a man can be justified by any work whatever, he is justly entitled to that privilege on the clearest principles of moral justice, and may, without arrogance, rejoice in his acquisition; but, then, faith in Christ would be wholly excluded for if it is of works it is not of faith. We read of many good works that Abraham performed after he believed, and was therefore justified, but of none before he had faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." But why might not Abraham glory before God? Plainly because it is testified that Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness that is, he believed God, and was justified. If he had a justifying righteousness by faith, there was no need of works to justify him. To say that Abraham might have gloried before men but not before God, is going out of the scope of the apostle's argument, is quite foreign to the subject. I feel quite confident that the idea of glory before men never came into Paul's mind; nor can I recollect a single instance, when the apostle is speaking on the subject of justification, where he makes the remotest allusion to being justified before men. He never condescends to notice such trifles when showing the way of a sinner's justification through the atonement of Christ. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Are not works of the law entirely excluded from the way of justification by this text, and is not justification limited to faith alone? The humble, teachable mind will be more willing to receive this truth, than to put a false construction upon the words. A man may labor to obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ by his good works but he must forever labor in vain; for he must encounter the opposition of the Scriptures in everything he does for that purpose. But it may be objected: "Was not the apostle speaking of the ceremonial law?" I think he was speaking of all law. But suppose he was speaking exclusively of the ceremonial law, by the

observance of which it is allowed that none pretend to be justified; then it follows that the apostle was not intending to exclude works under the moral law, which are a much higher order of works than mere ritual observances. I admit that works performed according to the spiritual claims of the moral law are of a higher order of moral excellence than mere ritual performances; and that if we have to secure an interest in the righteousness of Christ by obedience to law, these are the works necessary to be done, and the only works that can profit us, because that is the law by which we are to be judged. Take it upon this ground, and it follows that we must do "all things which are written in the book of the law." And this would render the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ superfluous, and also faith in Christ is totally excluded having no object. Now which plan of justification is the best and safest for a frail sinner to be justified by faith alone, or by faith and works both? And further, by- which method is the grace of God more gloriously displayed to be justified by grace through faith, or to be justified by our own works? I might also ask, if justification is by works, either in whole or in part, does it not lay a foundation for boasting? For if Abraham had been justified by works, it is certain he would have had whereof to glory. And why not you and I? "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." It is not said as many as break the law are under the curse. The doctrine the apostle teaches here is that if we will pursue the works of the law with a view to our justification, we are under the curse, because we have not rendered a perfect obedience to the law, which we must do, or we have no hope of being justified by works. Read the latter part of the ninth chapter of the Epistle the Romans, and if you are willing to be guided by Scripture, you can not fail to see that our works have nothing to do in our justification. Let us look at a few more scriptures: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned to him for righteousness." (Romans 4:4-5) "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace." (Romans 4:16) "Being justified freely by His grace." (Romans 3:24) There is no need that a sinner should be holy, or religious, or humble, as a condition of his being justified by believing; for let his character be what it may, he is justified as an ungodly sinner. If he is holy, it gives him no title to justification by the grace of Christ; and if he is ungodly, it is no bar to that privilege. You should not do good nor be good with a view of being thereby justified; but believe on Him that justifies the ungodly and then do good, and be good that you may glorify Him by whose grace you are justified freely without your works.

There are some who earnestly contend that we are justified by- the righteousness of Christ, who, notwithstanding, object to the term imputed. I am no stickler for terms, and if any will supply me with a more appropriate word, I will consent to use it on all occasions, rather than give needless offense. Perhaps such persons attach an idea to the word impute a little different from the sense in which I would use it. If so, there ought to be no disagreement between us, for we may both believe the same thing. If they say that it is nowhere expressly said in Scripture that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, I would remind them that it is a very weak argument, and amounts to very little, or nothing at all. The doctrine may be clearly taught in the Bible without such verbal exactness. We read of righteousness as a gift, and this is a very acceptable term with me, and accords well with other doctrines. It accords with the whole of our salvation from first to last. It is also said that we are made the righteousness of God, and that Christ is made unto us righteousness. But I will state the doctrine thus: We are all sinners under condemnation of the law, and Christ, by His death, has satisfied the law, and thus brought in a perfect righteousness, in which, or on account of which, we are justified when we believe in Him. If you take this from me,

you take all; I have nothing left. If you will receive this doctrine, we will not wrangle about words. But being unskillful in the use of words, I will freely confess that I know of no word more appropriate by which to express the manner in which the benefit of Christ's righteousness is applied to us than this old-fashioned word impute. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Taking this text with the connection, and it is too evident to be denied that the righteousness by which we are justified is imputed to us. If it is a righteousness of our own, it is self-righteousness; there is no way to evade this; and I know of no other righteousness by which we can be justified but the righteousness of Christ. This comes as near saying that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, as I have any- need of to establish the doctrine. The Scriptures most clearly teach that we are justified by faith without any good works done by us, or any good that is in us. This doctrine has been opposed by an objection which it is proper to notice. If the objection is founded in truth it ought to be known. It should not be slighted or shunned, but we ought to meet it fairly. I have, in a previous section, adverted to it, and now I design to consider it more fully. It is alleged by some that if we are justified alone by faith in Jesus Christ, without any thing good in us, or done by us, it opens a door to licentiousness, and that a man believing in Christ may live in sin, and yet be justified and saved. As this objection is not brought against the doctrine of justification itself, but only against the way in which we are justified. it is necessary to inquire into the nature of that faith by which we are justified, that we may see whether the doctrine of a free justification is justly liable to the force of the objection. I would remark however, that I am not bound to disprove the objection, but the burden of proving lies, in the first instance, on the objector, and unless he exhibits the proofs he is not entitled to an answer. But I have never seen any attempt to support the objection by evidence. I will even go further, and say that if the objector could establish the truth of his objection, it would not overthrow the doctrine against which it is brought it would only amount to a difficulty, nothing more. Of one thing I feel perfectly confident the objection can not be sustained by the Holy Scriptures. And as to arguments deduced by reasoning from general principles, they are of no value when opposed to the plain teaching of the inspired word. If the genuine effects of evangelical faith, as taught in the Bible, will show us that it has no such tendency as that which the objection implies, the objector is left without any ground to stand upon. And I have no fear of failing to show that faith has a tendency directly contrary to that which the objection ascribes to it. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "Sanctified by faith that is in me." Thus we see that holiness is the direct fruit of faith: how, then, is it possible that it should have a tendency to induce the believer to live in sin? If there is a disposition to live in sin, it must be for the want of faith, for it can not bear both sinful and holy fruit. It is by faith that we overcome the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" By faith we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. We live by faith, we walk by faith, by faith we stand. He that believes shall be saved, shall never perish, shall not come into condemnation, shall never be ashamed. Christ dwells in them, and they are the children of God. All these things are ascribed to faith in the word of God; and should we be baffled for a moment by an objection that has not been proved true, and can not be proved?

08 The Final Perseverance of the Saints

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER VIII. THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

MAN, in his natural state, is destitute of the spirit of holiness. He has not in his heart the love of God He is dead in trespasses and sins; and except he is quickened by the Divine Spirit and made spiritually alive, he is- morally incapable of rendering to God any spiritual and acceptable service. He must be born again, and made a new creature. This change in his internal character is effected by the Holy Spirit, and there is no other power that can perform the work. When this change is wrought in him, he has spiritual life, and is capable of spiritual exercises. These doctrines, I believe, are acknowledged by all who can make any fair pretensions to the name of evangelical When we are born of the Spirit we possess spiritual life, and commence our spiritual pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan. But here a question arises which we shall attempt to discuss, and, like every other question which is immediately connected with our salvation, we ought to decide it by the word of God. The question may be stated thus: Will every true child of God certainly continue in a state of grace until finally saved? The question might be varied in form, but this statement seems to be sufficient for the purpose, as the precise doctrine must necessarily come into view as we proceed with the investigation. I have stated it as fairly as I know how. The affirmative of this question is usually called "The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints;" and the negative is termed "The doctrine of final apostasy." Both doctrines have many advocates, and specious arguments are brought forward in support of these different views. I believe it is conceded on both sides that a true Christian may be betrayed into sin, and sometimes into very grievous sins, while yet he has not actually lost his spiritual life; and I believe it is also admitted that a true Christian may become cold and worldly minded, and spiritual affections may suffer a decay, and need the reviving influences of the Spirit of grace, but his spiritual life is still whole within him; or, in other words, a Christian may backslide to a certain degree without entirely losing his spiritual life. It is also held on both sides that a man may be the subject of very strong religious impressions and believe that he is truly converted, and others may think so too, but in fact he was never truly born again. All this may be true without proving or disproving either side of the question at issue.

I shall attempt to establish the affirmative of this question, and to show from the Holy Scriptures that the children of God will persevere through grace to final salvation. If the Scriptures do not support my views, I will not contend; and if any will maintain the contrary, they must confine their arguments to the word of God; for if the true doctrine is not found there, the question is not worth debate.

Before I present the evidence of this doctrine, I will remark that there is a kindred doctrine taught in the Bible which, strictly speaking, does not belong to this subject. It is the doctrine of the certain and everlasting security of the Church. This is not identical with the doctrine of the final

perseverance of the saints. The two should not be treated of as the same, though it is often done. Two planks in a floor may have the same use, and touch each other from end to end, but they are not the same piece of timber. We will, therefore, examine the doctrine of final perseverance, and attend to the other in its own place. The final perseverance of a Christian has a more intimate connection with sanctification. The believer perseveres or continues in a course of obedience by the same grace which sanctifies his heart; and if sanctifying grace should cease to be given, his continuance in well-doing would also fail. If it should be asked, "If a Christian were left entirely to himself to stand in his own strength, would he utterly fall and be lost?" I suppose it might be answered in the affirmative; for I suppose that the whole universal creation would fall into total annihilation if the preserving power of God were entirely withdrawn from it. Nothing is independent of Him. God is the only independent being in existence, and every thing is as dependent on Him for its continuance in being, as it was for its coming into existence at first. So that if we were to concede that if a Christian were to be entirely deserted by his God, he would fall finally, and be lost, the concession would not affect the doctrine of the final perseverance of every true believer in Christ. Our Savior said of all those whom His Father had given Him, that they should never perish; and it is also said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And we have no more right to add in the one case, "provided they prove faithful," than we have in the other case to take out the words, "be thou faithful." In the most positive terms I deny the right of any man to make any such additions or mutilations in the Divine record; or to introduce any conditions, where such are not found in the text. If such conditions are taught in the Scriptures, and really attach to any particular doctrine, we should rely on those passages where such conditions are specified, and not take the liberty of annexing them to other passages where none such are found, in order to evade the force of texts that seem to militate against a doctrine elsewhere taught. So far as I understand the views of those who maintain the doctrine of final apostasy, they would contend as firmly as I would that all who do continue to be faithful will certainly obtain ultimate salvation; but on the other hand, they believe that a true believer may prove unfaithful, and be finally lost. I have no wish to misrepresent the opinions of those who differ from me, and if I have not stated their doctrine fairly, it is because I have misunderstood it. There is not a truth taught in the Bible that I desire to shun, and I am forcibly impressed with the belief that many of those who oppose the doctrine of final perseverance, do not clearly understand the true ground upon which the doctrine is founded.

Spiritual life is given to the believer by the Holy Spirit, and when this life is received, we may with propriety ask whether it is in the power of God to maintain this life, and enable the child of God to continue in a state of grace and hold on his way to the end of his race. I suppose no one would deny this. Surely the most strenuous advocate of final apostasy would not contend that, however liable to fall the Christian may be, God is not able to make him stand. But although this would not be controverted, it may be of use to devote a little attention to this part of the subject. We ought to understand the nature of the power and the way in which it is exercised, in order to accomplish the end proposed. It is not that physical power which He put forth in producing the material creation, but a spiritual power, exercised in a way of influence, operating upon moral character, or moral natures. The physical power of God may be sufficient, for aught we know, to save men in their sins; but the justice of God and the holiness of His nature are such that He can not exercise it in any such way. We, being sinners and rebels against His authority, are justly exposed to His righteous displeasure, and are under the curse of His law. Our relation to Him as condemned

criminals, forbids all spiritual intercourse, and thus we are cut off from all spiritual life and strength, until a way of reconciliation is opened up, as a medium through which may be communicated to us spiritual blessings. The barrier which our sins had interposed between Him and us, is removed by the sacrifice of His Son, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The atonement thus made for our sins, opened an ample and all-sufficient medium through which the gifts and graces of the Divine Spirit could be shed abroad in our hearts, to give us life and strength in a way consistent with the moral perfections of the Divine Nature, and the honor of His law. Christ having died and risen again, is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and officiates in behalf of His people as intercessor; and through His intercession the Holy Ghost is given to us in measures equal to all our necessities for life and godliness. There is an infinite and undimishable fullness in the Holy Spirit, so that all necessary supplies may be granted to the believer in due time and measure, according to the will of God. Thus the power of God, exercised in giving and maintaining spiritual life, is not merely that physical power exerted in creating the world, but a spiritual power, acting upon spiritual objects, for accomplishing a particular end, according to the design of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and all having an immediate reference to the ultimate salvation of the people of God, and the glory of His grace.

Having submitted this view of the fullness of spiritual power for the preservation of the children of God, I repeat that the sufficiency of this power of God for the preservation of His saints will not be denied. And then the point in controversy is reduced to this: "Is it the will of God to give His children the necessary supplies of grace to insure their final salvation?" Upon this question hangs the whole controversy. This is the precise issue between the contending parties. If this point can be determined by the word of God, it would be useless and even frivolous to debate the subject any longer, or in any other point of view. To this point, therefore, I shall direct my inquiries in the further discussion of the subject.

I quote from Romans 8:32 : "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The apostle is addressing himself particularly to believers, as the whole chapter fully shows. He sets forth the firm ground of hope which the children of God have in the plan of salvation through Christ. And the method of reasoning which he employs is one of the strongest modes of logical argument known to the art of reasoning. The argument implies that the contrary is an absurdity. If the love of God to His children is so boundless and invincible that He would make the infinite sacrifice of giving His well-beloved Son to die for them, will He then suffer them to finally perish for the want of a little spiritual strength, which it is His delight to give? Men may use this mode of reasoning, and because of some unseen fallacy in the process of deduction, lead to a false conclusion, but not so the Spirit of God. In this reasoning of the Holy Spirit there is an implied defiance of the whole world to controvert or evade the conclusion, and yet there are some that will not submit. "Freely give us all things." If the phrase "all things" is to be understood in a general sense, and not strictly universal, yet why should the only exception be the very thing which the Christian most needs, and without which he can not be saved? But any exception is inconsistent with the argument; for the argument is, that if God should do so great a thing for our salvation, how should He refuse to do that which is so much less? The principle upon which He reasons excludes all possible exceptions.

It will not be denied that there is an all-sufficiency of gracious power in the Holy Spirit to sustain the children of God under every possible necessity. This power is exercised towards us through the

intercession of our great High Priest Christ Jesus. And are we to suppose that He is unwilling to intercede for us? Or shall we say that His intercession is ineffectual? There must be an unwillingness on the part of the Father to answer the intercession of His Son or an unwillingness on the part of the Son to make intercession for us, or an insufficiency in the power of the Holy Spirit to impart the needful grace, otherwise the true believer will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The doctrine of final apostasy greatly dishonors the efficacy and glory of Christ's intercession; and it is not easy to see how it can be said in truth that He is able to save them to the uttermost (or forever, as in the margin) that come to God by Him. The text here referred to (Hebrews 7:25) has immediate reference to the intercession of our great High Priest. An indefensible cause will sometimes induce its adherents to resort to evasions wholly unworthy of a candid inquirer after truth; hence some may say that God will give the needful grace to His children if they ask Him. But this is little or nothing less than begging the question; it is, in effect, saying, If they persevere they will persevere "they will be saved if they hold out faithful." I am aware that this is a stronghold to which the advocates of final apostasy constantly repair when pressed by the promises of the gospel, but it will afford them no shelter; for if they could find a clear warrant in Scripture for annexing this condition (which they have not done) the argument would still be futile the argument would never touch the true principle upon which the perseverance of the saints rests. Suppose we give them their own position, and say, "The Lord will give us sustaining grace if we pray for it." To see the emptiness of their argument, it is only necessary to reflect that the spirit of prayer is an important part of persevering grace. And this is what the Lord has promised: "I will give them the spirit of grace and of supplication." The spirit of prayer is as much a fruit of the Spirit as love or humility. But in respect to the intercession of Christ, there is no propriety, in detaching a particular grace or qualification from all or any of the rest of the spiritual exercises of the heart. It does manifest injustice to the work of the Divine Spirit. That which the intercession procures for the believer is the Spirit of Christ, which embraces or produces all His gifts and graces. When He gives us His Holy Spirit, the gift includes, necessarily, all the fruits of the Spirit; for though the Spirit is given us in measure, yet it is not given to us in piecemeal. It can not be proved to be even possible that the Spirit can be given to us with out including the spirit of prayer. Besides, God's rule in giving us His Spirit is according to our need, and not according to our petitions; and He knows our needs often when we do not. In giving persevering grace and strength, He is not governed by our supplications, but by the intercession of Christ our advocate at His right hand. And full well does our great Intercessor know all our necessities; for we have not a High Priest who can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

If there is any professed believer who does not habitually pray for grace to sanctify his heart and preserve him from sin, I should suspect that he is not a true child of God; and the children of God who do pray for it, are indebted to the Holy Spirit for their desires, which are the essence of prayer. So far as any Christian has any real desire for spiritual blessings, that desire is originated by the Holy Spirit. Every child of God should keep in remembrance that it is not of ourselves that we are upheld in spiritual life, but we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; that is, by His spiritual power, exercised in giving us continual supplies of grace and spiritual strength, whereby we are spiritually enabled to persist in a course of well doing according as His Divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. His spiritual power, as exercised in relation to His children, is inseparable from His will; and if we should say that according to His will He hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, we should but express the same idea.

None doubt the sufficiency of His physical power to do any thing; and if He gives His children all things that pertain to life and godliness, the expression can not comprehend any thing less than a full sufficiency of spiritual influences to maintain in us spiritual life and holiness, which will certainly insure our final salvation. That which the natural man has need of is spiritual life; so that they who are dead in sins are quickened - made alive by the Holy Spirit. This being done, we have spiritual life; and if this life is maintained in us, our salvation is sure; for death and life can not subsist in the same subject, and in the same respect. If, therefore, it is the will of God to uphold us in spiritual life, the final perseverance of the saints must necessarily be a certainty. I will therefore quote a few texts in relation to this point: "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40) "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44) "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." (John 6:51) " Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the, last day.)' (John 6:54) "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:57) "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever." (John 6:58) To evade the force and obvious meaning of these scriptures, we must ignore every acknowledged rule of interpretation, and do violence to the well-known laws of language. That receiving Christ by faith, is what is meant by eating and drinking, in the above quotations, is plain from the general tenor of the connection in which they stand. That all (everyone, distributive) that believe in Christ shall have everlasting life, is here declared to be the will of the Father, and Jesus says He will raise him up at the last day. This life can be supported only by- the power of God; and if He is not willing to maintain this spiritual life until the last day, how can we depend upon His word? Such phrases as "everlasting life," "eternal life," and "life forever," must receive a meaning not only different from their ordinary acceptation, but directly contrary to it, if any thing short of salvation is admitted. Any rule of interpretation which would even admit final apostasy in the above- scriptures, if adhered to, would demolish the whole body of Divine revelation. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me." The epithet living, as applied to the Father, denotes that He lives by the necessity of His own nature, and that it is impossible that He should not live; on any other supposition the epithet would be needless. The doctrine taught is, that as surely as the Father lives, so surely the Son will live; and as surely as He lives, so surely will they live who believe in Him. If I were engaged in a public debate, and my opponent should produce scriptures that would contradict my thesis as expressly as the above texts and some others contradict the doctrine of final apostasy, I should quail, and not know how to answer. Again, Jesus says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." The only way to resist this testimony- is to contradict it. It is an unqualified affirmation, and we must meet it with an unqualified contradiction, or give it an unqualified reception. The affirmation is either true or false. Evasion has no place here.

Those who oppose the doctrine of final perseverance take false ground. Their argument proceeds upon the supposition that when a man is converted, he must persevere in his own strength, independently of the continual supports of Divine grace. But on this principle I would not attempt to defend the doctrine. It is not the true ground upon which the doctrine is founded. We are every moment dependent upon the sustaining grace of God. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." He has given us assurance in His word that He will give us grace in time of need, "nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in

me." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is God that works in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and, having begun this work in us, He will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. The prayers of the saints are in perfect accord with this principle: "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." "Uphold me according to thy word; and let me not be ashamed of my hope." Thus it is in the Lord that we have righteousness and strength. "Uphold me with thy free Spirit." "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." The true Christian prays habitually for grace to uphold him in the paths of righteousness and the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The mother may forget her sucking child, but the Lord will not forget His children, and he that touches them, touches the apple of His eye.

Let us view this subject in respect to the love of God: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." "But God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." As God loved His people with so great a love when they were enemies when dead in sins will He love them less, now that they are regenerated and adopted, and are His children, and have the love of God in their hearts? After they have become His children by faith in Jesus Christ, does He love them less than He did when they were enemies and rebels against His authority? Did He love them more while they were the children and willing servants of the devil, than He does when they are His own children? Are we to suppose that His love is so fickle and inconstant that, having loved His own unto death, that He will not love them to the end? Is it rational to suppose that He will stand by and see His children actually perish and die for want of sustenance? The apostle's argument is in direct opposition to the notion that God will let go His children out of the hand of His love. I can see no possible way to reconcile the doctrine of final apostasy with the argument of the apostle. The children of God are under the new and everlasting covenant, and have a personal interest and a vested right in all its provisions. In that covenant God stipulates that He will be their God, and they shall be His people; for "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." I feel a reluctance in referring to some passages in Scripture, because I have reason to believe that some of those who reject the doctrine of final perseverance are prejudiced against them. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29). In reading such solemn declarations of the Son of God, the truly pious and reverential mind will be loath to seek evasions. They ought to be accepted as decisive, and impose silence on gainsayers. But if any one will cherish hostility to the oracles of God, it will not make the word of God of none effect: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Now, why all this accumulation? How can we read it without coming to the conclusion that the apostle intended to comprehend every conceivable possibility that a child of God might fail of final

salvation? Can any one show a reason why the apostle should, in this enumeration, embrace the heavens above and the earth beneath; life and death; the heights and the depths; all things present and to come; and close with an expression that includes everything else, if any exception were allowable? It is my holiest opinion that there is not an opposer of the doctrine, however competent he might be; if he should attempt to express the certain and infallible salvation of the Lord's people, in the strongest language that he is capable of using, who could equal the terms employed by the apostle in the preceding quotation. For what purpose is the light of inspiration given to us if we will shut our eyes? I am almost tempted to think that the man whose incredulity can resist such evidence, is proof against Divine testimony. I would remark, however, there is some difference of opinion among men, as to whether the phrase, "the love of God," is to be understood of God's love to us or of our love to Him. But so far as the doctrine now under consideration is concerned in the question, it is a matter of no consequence which construction is put on the phrase. If it is impossible to separate us from God's love to us in Christ, our final salvation is certain; and if it is impossible to separate us from our love to Him, our salvation is equally certain; so that the doctrine is in no way affected by any seeming ambiguity in the phraseology. That the former construction is the true one, I have no doubt, for I think the context clearly shows it. But on either interpretation the passage is fatal to final apostasy. God is unchangeable; and as to our mutability we have security in the promises. "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This text shows that the Lord's children shall not depart from Him, and also shows the reason why they will not; that is, the Lord will put his fear into their hearts. This one text expresses the fundamental principle upon which the whole controversy rests, and should be decisive with every honest inquirer. God's children will not utterly depart from Him, because He will give them grace to cleave to Him. It is disagreeable to turn aside to notice quibbles; but sometimes men who are conscious of their inability to find scripture or reason to meet an argument, will resort to this contemptible mode of evasion. It has been said on the passage quoted from Romans, that sin may separate us from the love of God, and that sin is not a creature. I am confident that if a man of ordinary intelligence ever employs this insignificant evasion, he is ashamed of it when he does it; for he must be sensible at the time that self respect forbids it. The objection really is not worthy of respectful notice; yet, for the reader's sake, I will notice it respectfully. It is said, "Neither death nor life." Now what could death do in this matter without sin? It would be powerless. And what would sin do if it did not produce death? It would effect nothing as to depriving us of spiritual life. "Nor principalities, nor powers." There is not the least danger that the principalities and powers in heaven would separate us from the love of God, for they are engaged on our side; being sent forth to minister to them who are to be heirs of salvation. It is their office and their holy delight to give us every assistance. And can the principalities of hell and darkness do anything against us in any other way than through sin? If God be for us, who can be against us? "Nor things present, nor things to come." Is not sin among present things? No Christian will answer in the negative. "Nor principalities, nor powers, Is not sin a power? If it has power to separate the Lord's children from His love to them in Christ, it must surely be a power; it must have a power to do more than all the mighty things that belong to immensity and duration of time, for the apostle selects the mightiest things that belong to both, and affirms that they can not do it. Those who desire to stand in their own strength, and can thankfully enjoy the danger to which it subjects them, must have more confidence in themselves, and less in the grace of God than I desire to have. I can easily conceive how a strong man armed may keep

his palace in peace; and I can also conceive how a stronger than he may overcome him, take from him his armor, and oust him; but I can not well understand how the conquered and weaker man, when deprived of his armor, can return and overcome the stronger, and reject him, and repossess his lost habitation, especially if the victorious conqueror is the Almighty Spirit of God.

It can not be out of place here to make a few remarks on the term "eternal life," and others of similar meaning. The term may be employed in reference exclusively to the state of the saints after death; or it may relate to that spiritual life which is imparted to believers in this world, and which is to endure forever. That it is used in this latter sense in some places, is too evident to be doubted, and it is in respect to such passages that I now ask the attention of the reader: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John 3:16) Here it is hath, not shall have. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47) As my object in quoting these scriptures is to show that such terms are applied to that spiritual life which the believer receives in this world, it is needless to add others, and especially as I do not suppose it will be denied. The point to which I would direct your attention is this: that this spiritual life is declared to be eternal, or everlasting. And if it were even possible, according to the plan of salvation, that this life might cease, it could not, with propriety of language, be called "eternal life." If it is not the determinate will of God that this life shall endure forever, such language would convey a false idea. To say that a man who has eternal life may die, is a contradiction in itself. It is intuitively evident that a life that may die is not eternal life. The life that believers have is dependent upon the life of Christ: "As I live ye shall live also." Never till Christ dies will this life cease; and He having once died unto sin, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him. And when Christ, who is our life shall appear, we may assure ourselves that we also shall appear with Him in glory. I believe some have said that when they arrive in heaven, they expect to strive and labor as hard to keep a place there, as they now do to obtain an entrance there. In this they are consistent with themselves; the same principle by which our spiritual life will be preserved there, is that which maintains it here. If the preservation of our spiritual life here depends upon ourselves, it will depend upon ourselves there. But as the continuance of our spiritual life depends upon our union with Christ, so it will there. It is the grace of God which gives us salvation here; and by the same grace we expect to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, world without end.

Before closing this article I will notice one or two objections which have been opposed to the doctrine we have been defending.

1. It is said that if the doctrine of final perseverance is true, that exhortations to faithfulness and admonitions of danger must be useless. On this objection I will remark:

(1.) That the truth of this objection has never been proved, and I suppose it can not be proved. And, in strictness, all that is necessary is to deny the truth of the proposition; at least the objector is certainly bound to prove the objection true if he will make any effectual use of it.

(2.) The perseverance of the saints is to be ascribed to the grace of God; and it is His will to use means for accomplishing His purposes of grace. Those exhortations and admonitions may be a part of that system of means which He has appointed for bringing His children home to Himself. Are not those exhortations well adapted to excite Christians to diligence in pressing towards the

mark for the prize?

(3.) We are never exhorted to any thing that is not duty, and duty is the same whether the doctrine be true or false.

(4.) We are not always competent to decide whether exhortations and warnings are useless under given circumstances. If the infant Jesus had been destroyed, what would have become of God's purpose to save sinners through Him? And can any Bible reader doubt that it was the determinate purpose of God that the Redeemer should not be destroyed in His infancy? Why, then, did He direct Joseph to carry the child into Egypt, and assign as a reason that Herod would seek to destroy Him? The objection would lie with as much force and propriety against this proceeding, as in the case against which it is alleged. We should learn that God's ways are not our ways.

(5.) Though the final salvation of all believers may be known to God as a certainty, yet it is as much our duty to labor for it as if it depended alone upon our diligence. Why should the apostle say to the saints at Rome, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," and then say to the Corinthians, "So run that ye may obtain?" It seems to be a settled rule with some, that if they can not see the consistency of two doctrines revealed in the Bible, it is their privilege to reject the one which is most adverse to their wishes. They are not willing to suppose that the Almighty has revealed any thing that is above their comprehension

2. The second objection is an appeal to facts, and the object is to prove final apostasy. If they can prove final apostasy, of course the contrary doctrine may be given up. But why resort to facts if they can find other evidence? The appeal is almost equivalent to a confession that they have no better means of supporting their theory. An alleged fact is worth nothing, except the truth of the fact is clearly substantiated. The lamentable defection of King Solomon is relied upon as a case in point, and I do not know where they will find a better. Now, in order to make any legitimate argument of this example, it is required that two points should be proved not merely made probable, but proved beyond question: (1.) That Solomon was once a true spiritual child of God, and (2.) that he was finally lost. The first of these may be shown from the Scriptures to be a very strong probability, but it is impossible to prove the second; and except that is proved to a certainty, the whole position is lost. It would be as easy to prove that Solomon was finally saved, as to prove that he was finally lost. In the first place, no man can prove, positively, that Solomon ever had spiritual life; in the second place, if he had, no one can prove that he lost it; in the third place, no one can prove that he did not repent of his sins before he died; and, lastly, no one can prove that he was not saved. It is rather strange that any man of sound judgment should ever advance so weak and empty an argument. Those who oppose the doctrine of final perseverance seem to think it sufficient to produce plausible objections. But this is not sufficient those objections are worth but little when the most is made of them that can be. Before they plead their equivocal objection they are bound, first, to invalidate the evidence of those scriptures which so plainly teach the doctrine.

09 The Inevitable & Eternal Security of the Church

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE INEVITABLE AND ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE CHURCH. THE doctrine of the certain and everlasting security of all the children of God has often been blended with that of the final perseverance of the saints: but these doctrines are certainly distinct from each other; they are not identical; and it is well that we should keep the distinction in view while we are inquiring into the great plan of salvation through Christ. Both doctrines lead to the same final result, and both establish the same great truth, but each has its own peculiar place in the great scheme of our eternal redemption. In our perseverance we ourselves are agents we persevere; but the certain and infallible security of God's people belongs to the unalterable purpose of God. We have no agency in it. It is wholly independent of us, and is an essential part of the foundation upon which our salvation is based. Eternal salvation is an end to be accomplished, and our perseverance is a part of the means by which this end is to be attained.

It is not always safe to rely on arguments drawn from general principles, because there may be a latent fallacy in the process of deduction which may lead to an erroneous conclusion; and this will be the case sometimes when the principle from which we reason is known to be sound, and also when we are unable to detect any flaw in the process of reasoning. If, therefore, on the subject before us, I should reason from general truths, I shall endeavor to compare the conclusion with what is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures; and I ask no greater weight to be given to my arguments than a candid and unprejudiced consideration will justify.

I lay it down as an axiom that God never does any thing but what He designs to do. This is too evident to admit of debate. And I think it should not be denied that He actually does everything that He purposes. The design or intention must necessarily precede the accomplishment of it; and with Him, who sees the end from the beginning, the performance must inevitably follow the design. I suppose I shall meet no opposition here, for I presume there are few, if any, who have any proper respect for the Divine character, or for the truth of His word, that would controvert these positions. If, therefore, He has purposed the salvation of those whom He saves, He must change His purpose, or their salvation is infallibly certain. As to the particular period of time in God's eternal existence, when He first purposed their salvation, that is not the present question. The particular point now before us is the certainty that He will effectually execute the purpose; and this can depend upon nothing but His sovereign will. To argue against this certainty is the very next thing to controverting self-evident truth; therefore, taking no notice of any objection that might be deduced by reasoning from principles of abstract truth because one scientific truth can not overthrow another, and is not to be admitted in opposition to the testimony of the Bible we will refer to other objections. Those who can not accept our doctrine rely upon arguments drawn from other doctrines, which are revealed in Scripture. However plausible this mode of reasoning may appear at first sight, it will be found utterly impotent in its application to this subject; for it is useless to

resort for objections to any thing intermediate between the first original purpose and its final consummation, and every other doctrine must of necessity have its place in the arrangement between these two. Everything pertaining to the plan of salvation must have its place between the beginning and the end; and He who sees the end from the beginning must have foreseen all that should, or possibly could, intervene between the purpose and its ultimate execution. It is expressly affirmed that God's purposes shall stand, and it is nowhere expressly contradicted; but that which is alleged as objection is their inferences from what is taught in the Bible. But there is nothing in the arrangements of God's plan of saving His people but what He has placed there. And when He purposed salvation as an end, did He introduce other matters into the plan of execution which would, or possibly might, defeat the object in view? There is no way to avoid the certain salvation of the glorified church but to deny that God purposed her salvation, and then we are compelled to admit that God saves sinners without having any specific design to do it. I do not advance this argument as being peculiar to the plan of salvation, for it is equally true in respect to everything that God does and designs to do.

God saves His people by covenant, and not a covenant by which provision is made for them to save themselves, but a covenant by which He has bound Himself by promise and by oath to save them Himself. The certain salvation of His people, therefore, is secured by covenant. This covenant is confirmed in Christ. He, as the surety of His people, has already performed the whole condition on their part, and is accepted and confirmed by His resurrection from the dead, and made eternally sure and unchangeable by His glorification. The condition of the covenant being thus fulfilled, the only possible contingency must be whether He will faithfully perform His covenant engagements whether He will perform a promise which He has ratified by an oath. The security of the Church stands upon this very foundation, and the certainty of the eternal salvation of His covenant people rests upon the inviolable truth of God's oath. The stipulations of the covenant, as it respects His people, are most explicitly laid down by the apostle, as they had been previously by the prophet. This is the covenant: 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

Moreover the Church of Christ is His inheritance. If the salvation of the Church is not secure and certain, then Christ has no assurance of His inheritance though he has purchased it with His own blood. The Church is not only spoken of as the inheritance of Christ, but the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and as His fullness: "The Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." Thus we see that His mystical body is not complete without the Church. I must object to any theory which defeats the Son of God of His inheritance which deprives Him of that inheritance which He has purchased with His own blood. His people are joint heirs with Him, and if the inheritance is sure to Him, it is equally sure to them; and not merely because the inheritance is reserved in heaven for them, but because as Christ is a Son, so they also are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They both have the same inheritance, and both inherit on the same principle, and the inheritance is equally sure to both. The inevitable certainty of the final salvation of the Church appears to be inseparable from that union which subsists between Him and His people. This doctrine of the union of Christ and His believing people is so abundantly

taught in the Holy Scriptures, that to deny it would be to ignore the authority of the Bible. It is expressed not only by multiplied reiteration, but in such a variety of forms and illustrations that we must admit the doctrine or reject the written word; for the manner in which it is exhibited precludes all evasion. Leaving out of notice, for the present, the original purpose which God purposed in Himself; let us, as it were trace this union in a kind of historical line, confining ourselves to explicit Scripture statements. We are said to suffer with Him; to be crucified with Him; to be dead with Him; to be raised together with Him; to be quickened together with Him; and to sit together in heavenly places. The scriptures here alluded to are easily found; and except this bond of union should be broken, it must insure the infallible security and certain salvation of the Church. But we see that it has passed intact through the ordeal of sufferings death and the resurrection into the life and exaltation, to the heavenly place; so that, having survived these conflicts, there can be no danger of dissolution. But we are also said to be one with Christ. This is identity; but we are not to consider Christ and His Church as identical in every respect. Yet, unless we will impute to the language of inspiration a vagueness which would render it almost useless as a source of Divine instruction, we are forced to concede that, in the economy of redemption, there is a point of view in which Christ and the Church are one. I will refer to some scriptures: "As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." "I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

10 Predestination and Election

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER X.

PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION.

IT has happened that in religion, as well as in philosophy, a great diversity of opinions has prevailed in the world of mankind. In philosophy we might not expect it to be otherwise, because it is the science of nature, and we have no other source of knowledge to which we may apply for the truth of nature. So much of self-evident truth as nature will furnish is a sure guide; and so far as we adhere to that, we are in no danger of error. But the comparative amount of self evident truth, which nature furnishes in proportion to the vast amount of information which the great realm of nature contains, compels us to explore extensive regions in the pursuit of knowledge, oftentimes by the aid of mere speculative induction, and much labor of thought has to be expended before we can bring our results to the test of demonstration. Hence, for want of an infallible directory, available at all times and on every subject of inquiry, we have a reasonable apology for a variety of opinions in that department of knowledge. But we can make no such excuse for error in matters of religion. We have an infallible directory to guide us into all truth. There is not a doctrine which is essential to the service of God, or to the salvation of the soul, but what is laid down with sufficient clearness in the Holy Scriptures to guard us from every important error. I do not allude exclusively to those doctrines the belief of which is essential to salvation but to every doctrine which is an essential part of the great plan which God has ordained for accomplishing the salvation of sinners, and every duty which is essential to Christian obedience. If any man, therefore errs through ignorance, he is himself responsible for all the evil that may result from that error. We have a definite and perfect standard by which we may test every article of our faith, and thus avoid error before we embrace it; or, having embraced it, we may correct it. If God had left us, in matters of religion, as He has done (in a great degree) in matters of mere science, merely to the exercise of our reasoning powers error might have a plausible excuse; but He has not so left us; hence, therefore, he that, in matters of religion, believes or practices differently from God's word, has no plea for his error, because he rejects the counsel of God against Himself. And in the great day of decision, when the secrets of every heart shall be brought to light, if any man shall be found who held erroneous doctrines, the only answer he can make will be, that he did not believe God; and if he has erred in any important duty, he can only say that he disobeyed God. No vindication will be allowed. He may not plead ignorance he may not plead good intentions; every plea of every kind will be overruled. We have the all-sufficient rule of God's word, and among all the thousands of false opinions that have been taught and believed in this world there is not one that will admit of apology before the tribunal of the Righteous Judge. If a man who has access to the Bible is ignorant, he is ignorant of choice; if he is in error, he chose error in preference to truth. To say that there is any defect or insufficiency in the code of Divine truth, or that the mind of God is not

delivered with sufficient clearness to enable the sincere inquirer to learn His truth, is a manifest impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God. And he that charges the Bible with obscurity calumniates its Author; and no man can slander God's word and be guiltless. Whatever may be alleged with regard to some particular passages in the Bible, all that is material to the primary doctrines of the gospel, or to Christian duty, is presented to us plainly enough for the instruction of every obedient mind; and if it is not understood, we must not ascribe obscurity to the language of Divine Revelation, but we must seek for it in the darkness of our degenerate hearts. It is true, as we have said, that a great variety of opinions has prevailed in the world, and even amongst Christians, on almost every fundamental doctrine of the Bible, and endless controversies have grown out of this diversity of sentiments, yet there are some doctrines which have been acknowledged by almost all who profess to take the Bible for their guide. This is some alleviation of the evils attending erroneous principles. It is well, indeed, when there are opposing views in religious concerns, that so many can agree on some of the essential truths of the gospel of salvation. All agree that there is one God, and only one. They agree, also, in more than this one thing. There is a general agreement with regard to the attributes which constitute the perfection of the Divine nature. It is admitted that God is eternalself-existent, and that all else besides Him is created, and was created by Him, and that all things are dependent upon Him. It is admitted that He possesses every possible perfection that can pertain to a self-existent and infinitely perfect God; and, consequently, that in Him there is no imperfection.

Since, then, God is the only eternal, self-existent Being, and all else had a beginning and was created, it follows that there was a period in the depths of a past eternity when Jehovah dwelt alone, and there was no other being in existence; but He then possessed every attribute of His nature in all the fullness of perfection the same as He does now, and as He ever will; and though His hands had effected nothing out of Himself, yet His infinite mind had ample employment, and was in never-ceasing exercise. Whatever His power has since then brought to pass, is only the fulfillment of designs which He then entertained while He then dwelt in His own eternity, and while the original immensity contained no other being than Himself. Whatever purpose then existed in the Divine mind, must of necessity have originated in Himself, for there was nothing in existence but Himself; and, therefore, nothing that could give rise to a thought or purpose in His mind. And whatever He might do or bring to pass pursuant to such a purpose, must necessarily be done in view of some specific end or particular object contemplated by that purpose; and this ultimate end must have a determinate final reference to Himself, seeing there was nothing in existence at that period out of Himself to which it could refer. And this ultimate end, which it was His will to accomplish, must be an end worthy of Himself, and not beneath the dignity of His infinitely glorious character. The ultimate end, therefore, which God has in view, in all that He ever has done or ever will do, is His own glory; that is, in other words, the manifestation of His own infinite perfections. In this He proposes to Himself an object worthy of Himself. This is the highest end that it is possible for Him to have in view, in any thing that He does or permits to be done. Not only is it the highest end of which we can form any conception, but, from the nature of the case, we are fully warranted in saying that He could not have any higher aim in view; for as He is infinitely supreme in Himself, and as He is His own end in all that He purposes and performs, it follows that this is the highest end that He can possibly have in view in all His works. Having, therefore, a most glorious end in view, which it was His purpose to effect by the use of means, it was indispensably, - necessary that He should have a perfect knowledge of all the means which He would employ in fulfilling the great

design. Whether a wisdom and knowledge short of that which is infinite would be adequate to the purpose, I do not at present propose to inquire; but shall content myself with exhibiting some of the proofs which the inspired record brings to bear on the subject: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." "His understanding is infinite." "He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee." As all things were created by Him, it is impossible that He should not know all things, and know them to be just what they are. As He made all things for Himself, He certainly knew what use He would make of every thing that He made. It can hardly be thought hazardous to say that whatever God may do must necessarily be, in some way, a manifestation of what He is. He certainly does nothing accidentally (as we term it), nor does He do any thing without knowing beforehand what He will do. Hence all that He does is done in the prosecution and fulfillment of a specific purpose.

We propose, in this chapter, to consider the doctrines of predestination and election. Although election is included within the category of predestination, the two doctrines are distinct from each other; and this distinction should be observed in treating of them, especially as in one point of view there is an essential distinction. Predestination has respect to the whole system of nature to the whole creation as well as to the scheme of salvation. Election, as the term is generally used by theological writers, respects God's plan of saving sinners. Election always respects persons. Predestination respects things as well as persons, and often respects things and events irrespective of persons. To predestinate is to determine beforehand; to elect is to choose. These two acts of the Divine will may be co-extensive, but they are not identical.

We shall submit to your consideration a few remarks on the subject of predestination. We have already said that to predestinate is to determine beforehand. According to this general idea of the term, as indicated by its etymology, if God designs or determines to do any particular thing at any period of time before He actually performs it, this is predestination; and in this sense of the term I suppose that all will admit that every thing God does is predestinated by Him, for who can think that God does any thing without intending to do it? But that characteristic of Divine predestination which has given rise to so much controversy in the theological world relates to the time when the act of predestination took place in the Divine mind. Many object against eternal predestination, but even this objection is not urged very strongly against many of God's predeterminations. I think I have seen it laid down somewhere, as a fundamental principle, that God predestinated, or fore-ordained from all eternity, "all things whatsoever cometh to pass." I have an objection to this form of expression; but notwithstanding this objection, I believe that all the wisdom of this world can never overturn the doctrine even as it is stated above. The truth of the doctrine can never be disproved either by the Scriptures or by logical reasoning. But I will state the doctrine of eternal predestination in a form to which I will subscribe without hesitation. I believe there was a determinate purpose in the mind of God, before the beginning of His creation, to do all that He ever has done, or ever will do, in His creation. There are some, I believe, who maintain the doctrine of the Divine omniscience in the strictest and most comprehensive sense, who yet deny the doctrine of predestination. They argue that omniscience does not necessarily involve predestination. Others who, I suppose, can not well separate the two, and, being unwilling to receive the doctrine of predestination, deny the doctrine of omniscience. I may notice these things before I close my remarks on this subject; but I will say here, that I do not rely alone on this kind of

evidence, and if the doctrine of predestination is sustained by the Holy Scriptures, it will be sufficient for my purpose, and ought to be sufficient for every sincere seeker of Divine knowledge; for he should receive it on the authority of God's word, independently of other arguments. In Ephesians (Ephesians 1:11) it is said, " Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Here we learn that God works all things after the counsel of His own will. This shows that whatever He does is done in pursuance of a previous design. The will of God never changes, and His "counsels are of old." He predestinates according to a purpose, and according to the same purpose He works all things. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself." If He made all things for Himself, He must have known for what purpose He made them, and must have determined so to use them that they should answer that specific end. Again, it is said that " all things were made by Him and for Him, and by Him all things consist." How all this should be, and yet He have no previously fixed design, is beyond my conception, especially taking into view that all that He ever does is with a determinate design to manifest the glory of His own perfections. " Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." If all His works were not determined by Him from the beginning of the world, it is not possible to understand how He could know them.

I deem it unnecessary to say much on the subject of universal predestination, because that predestination which is so much opposed has particular reference to moral and accountable creatures, and of this I shall have occasion to speak more at large when treating on another part of the subject; but I have expressed an intention to say something more on the subject of God's omniscience, and its connection with predestination. At that time I thought to reserve my remarks on these points till the close of this chapter; but I suppose they would come in place with more propriety at present. That God knows all things perfectly, absolutely, and in the most comprehensive and universal meaning of the terms, is a doctrine that very few, I believe, have ever called in question; but this infinite knowledge of God has been disputed by some. We might expect that if any would limit the Divine wisdom and knowledge, it would be those of the more ignorant and weak-minded class of men; but we find such among the learned. Men of learning (and, as I believe, truly pious), and in high repute as theological writers, have denied the strict omniscience of the infinitely wise God. I think I have already sufficiently proved the doctrine by the explicit testimony of God's word; and it is an unpleasant task to controvert opinions that are revolting to the moral sense of a reverential mind. Those who contend for limitations of the Divine knowledge admit (I believe) that His capacity for knowledge is strictly infinite, and that God is capable of knowing all things; but they suppose there is no necessity that He should actually extend His knowledge to every event and circumstance to which He may extend it. If this idea is true in natural theology, it must be true also in Divine revelation, for these two witnesses can not contradict each other; and the Scriptures teach positively that God does actually know all things; that His knowledge is infinite; that all things were known to Him from the beginning of the world. If He does not, in fact, know all things that is, if His knowledge is not absolutely infinite with what propriety can we ascribe omniscience to Him as an attribute of the Divine nature? To ascribe omniscience to Him, is giving Him rather more glory than is due unto His name; besides, if there is imperfection in His knowledge, it would seem to follow that there must be corresponding imperfection in all His attributes, otherwise there would be a want of harmonious perfection in the Divine nature totally inconsistent with the glory of the Divine character; and if we allow corresponding imperfections His other attributes, we effectually destroy the whole idea of a perfect

Being. The advocates of this most unwarrantable assumption adopt it confessedly for the purpose of making room for the perfect freedom of the human will. That we find mystery, when we view the freedom of the human will, in reference to absolute omniscience, needs no proof; it is a matter of consciousness: but in avoiding this mystery by denying the latter, we are forced into mystery equally as great, and, indeed, it involves us in still more mystery, for those who embrace this strange theory suppose that God purposely hides some events from Himself. This is mystery in the abstract. He hides an event from Himself in order to leave man to his own choice, and thus He knows not what man will do till the event transpires. But how can He hide an event from His view of which He knows nothing? If He does not know of it, how can He know how to conceal it from His view? "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and good." But He removes some of the evil out of His sight till it is committed. It is hard to say whether there is more mystery or more absurdity in this. I wish to treat great men with respect, or I should apply to this doctrine the term which I think properly belongs to it. Moreover, if it is necessary, in order to man's freedom of will and accountability, that God should exclude from His immediate knowledge any one act of man, in any one instance, it is equally necessary that He should do the same in every case with regard to every act, for we are, equally accountable for every action of life, and for one as much as for another; and thus we shall make the omniscient God ignorant of all the actions of His accountable creatures till He discovers it by the event. But there is one thing that it is certain He knows He knows how far His knowledge extends, and He declares that He knows all things, and no man can doubt it and be innocent. But that the absolute foreknowledge of God is inconsistent with the freedom of man's will, is what can not be proved by the Scriptures. Their doctrine is founded upon what they suppose possibly may be in the Godhead; ours is founded upon what God declares is in Himself. Their doctrine is the offspring of human speculation; ours is the substance of God's own testimony. I have not the least doubt that the absolute foreknowledge of God extends to all things; neither have I the shadow of a doubt that the human will is free. And to me it appears to be more consistent with sound reason to believe what is clearly provable as both these doctrines are, though I might not be able to show their agreement than to reject a doctrine that is expressly affirmed in the word of God, in order to adopt a hypothesis that is so exceedingly derogatory to the honor of God, as that of imputing to Him an imperfection which must vitiate all His attributes; for how can He exercise His justice, or His power, or His goodness, according to the perfection of their own nature, if His knowledge is limited? Are not all these attributes exercised under the direction of His knowledge? Who can tell what will become of the world and all its inhabitants in time and eternity, if the God who governs it is ignorant of what is going on among His accountable subjects. But if God does foreknow with certainty some events which yet are contingent upon the will of man, and for which men accountable it is clear that He may also foreknow all events in which the will and accountability of men are involved; and that He does foreknow such events is matter of the clearest revelation. The Lord foreknew, and foretold to Moses, that Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go out of Egypt; and that he sinned in refusing, is beyond dispute, for he acknowledged his sin, saying, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people have sinned." Again: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23) It would be easy to refer to a great number of examples equally pertinent, but these are fully sufficient to establish the point. The God that made man and endowed him with a moral nature, must of necessity know what that nature is; and He knows also to what influences it will be exposed; consequently He knows what

every man will do in every instance, if left to the free exercise of his own will, whether the action itself be good or bad. But this foreknowledge has nothing to do with the moral character of the action. It is certain that God never foretells what He does not foreknow; but neither His foreknowledge nor the prediction of the event gives moral character to the action. If God knows with certainty that any particular event will transpire, every one, I suppose, will admit that the event will certainly come to pass; but it is not His foreknowledge that makes it certain, for it would be just as certain if He did not foreknow it. And this is true with regard to the accountable actions of men, whether of good actions or of bad actions. God never compels men by His power to the performance of any action, good or bad, whether willingly or unwillingly, but He often interposes with His power to prevent men from performing bad actions, even when they would willingly do them. You may see this exemplified in the builders of Babel, and the Scriptures will furnish you with any number of examples. But I submit to my reader's consideration, that if there is any thing that God does not know, then, in that thing, He is ignorant. Is the reader prepared to say that God is ignorant? Does not your moral sense revolt at the thought? And yet, if the hypothesis is true, it is unavoidable. Do angels worship a God who is ignorant of the affairs of His government? So, indeed, some learned men would have us believe. It would be rather uncharitable to suspect that such divines are more willing to make others believe it than they are to believe it themselves. If any man expects to stand before God in judgment, I would advise him not to make himself responsible for having charged God with ignorance, lest he should see anger in the face of the Judge. I will adopt no tenet that requires to be supported by imputing ignorance to the God of heaven. The abettors of this doctrine admit that God could know all things, but that He chooses to conceal some things from His knowledge; that is, He chooses not to know some events till they transpire. But this evasive refinement upon the perfections of the Divine nature rather aggravates than alleviates the reproachful imputation; for it makes God ignorant as a matter of choice, and thus He is made to choose ignorance rather than knowledge. It certainly betrays a most deplorable want of reverence for the Divine Majesty to ascribe to Him the least imperfection of knowledge, whether willful or involuntary, besides the fact that it is a direct contradiction of His own testimony. Let us banish the thought with abhorrence, and not give it a moment's entertainment. I hope that no such degrading conceptions of the Divine perfections will find a momentary lodgment in the minds of my readers. Our God knows all things, past, present, and to come; all things actual and possible; all contingencies, dependencies, and possibilities, both fundamental and incidental. Such is the perfection of His infinite knowledge that He can not willingly or by necessity hide any thing from His all comprehensive view. From everlasting to everlasting His knowledge embraces all things within His own infinite immensity, without exception limitation, or modification. But it is alleged that foreknowledge does not necessarily involve predestination. And perhaps it might not be easy to prove that simple foreknowledge does involve predestination; but to make any argument of this against the doctrine of Divine predestination, it will be necessary for the objector to show that the foreknowledge of God is ever exercised independently of His other attributes, which, I think, can not be made to appear. It is very doubtful whether any one perfection of the Divine nature can be exercised alone without necessarily, involving the exercise of other attributes in connection with it. It has been thought that the attribute of self-existence necessarily comprehends all the infinite perfections of Divinity, and it would not be easy to defend the contrary. However this may be, it is quite safe to say that there is no possibility of separating those perfections of Divinity which constitute the one infinite perfection of the Godhead; and, considering

omniscience in connection with other attributes of the Divine nature, I think it does necessarily involve predestination. God knows in all cases what will be best; His infinite goodness must incline Him to do what is best; His holy will must determine Him to choose what is best. This is predestination. Unless we will say that He does not always do what is best, I can not see how predestination can be evaded. To predestinate is to determine beforehand; and if God always knows beforehand what will be best, and determines beforehand to do what is best, He must necessarily predestinate all things that He ever does. And if He is immutable if "He is in one mind" - then His predestination must be as eternal as Himself. On the point now under consideration, absolute foreknowledge is a conceded principle, and the question is, Does this foreknowledge involve predestination? Absolute prescience necessarily includes the knowledge of what is best in all things; and if, with this knowledge He chooses to do what is best, wherein does this act of choice differ from an act of predestination? To choose is to determine, and to determine a future event is predestination. His omniscience precludes the possibility of His making a wrong choice, and His immutability precludes the possibility of His changing that choice. I am aware that some have held forth the doctrine that God does change His mind; but if this is so, we can not learn His character from His word, for He expressly affirms the contrary. I could extend these arguments much further, but I deem it unnecessary. The doctrine of the freedom of the human will is true, but the inference that it is inconsistent with Divine omniscience and immutability is false.

Election.

Having treated of predestination in a general point of view, we will proceed to consider the subject of election. There has been more controversy on this doctrine than almost any other in the whole body of theology. Many have misunderstood the doctrine; some have either ignorantly or intentionally misrepresented it; others have perverted it by misapplying it. The word elect signifies to choose; and when we find the word in the Bible, this is the sense in which we should understand it. And if we find it apparently teaching a doctrine which we can not understand, or which we can not reconcile with other doctrines, or which is repulsive to our feelings, we are not at liberty to put a different meaning on the word, for this would be no better than making Scripture. The advocates and opposers of the doctrine of election argue, for the most part, on different principles, and unless there is some standard of ultimate appeal which both parties would acknowledge, and by which both parties would consent that their arguments should be tested, there can be little hope of a termination of the controversy. But waving this for the present, we will notice some doctrines which are erroneously supposed to be necessarily involved in the doctrine of election, but which, in fact, have no immediate connection with it.

1. And first, we will discourse a little on reprobation. Of those who reject the doctrine of election, there are some who make a great parade about reprobation, as though it must necessarily follow if election be true. But this is palpable sophistry. And while dealing their vindictive anathemas against the doctrine of reprobation, they suppose they are demolishing the foundations of election. Except what they do by way of creating and confirming prejudices against the truth, their labor is lost. Perhaps very few of those who declaim so bitterly against reprobation have any definite idea of what they mean by the term they use. If, by reprobation, it is understood that the Almighty, by an eternal decree, doomed men to everlasting punishment, irrespective of their character and works, we may very justly denounce the doctrine. But why make so much ado about it? I know not a man upon earth who avows his belief in it; and if there are any that do, I should not feel obliged to

debate the question with them. But supposing I have stated the doctrine correctly (and I know that some do understand it in that light), I deny that any such idea is involved in the doctrine of election; and to argue against the doctrine of election on that ground, is misrepresentation. But further: If it were true that such a decree has been ordained, and the truth of it could be proved, it would not in the least affect the doctrine of election, because it would have no necessary connection with it. Such an act of reprobation would be, and necessarily must be, wholly distinct from an act of election. To confound the two, evinces a great want of discrimination. Neither of these acts would necessarily include the other. If one is true, it does not follow that the other is true. Each of these acts would be independent of the other. The decree of reprobation would affect those only who are the objects of such decree, and none else, and the decree of election would affect none else but the objects of election. Reprobation would respect none but those who are lost, and election respects those only who are saved. The two acts contemplate different and opposite results, and respect different objects—that is, different persons—and no force of construction can make them identical. In the great day of consummation, when the Judge of all will say to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," this sentence will have no relation to the others; but a distinct sentence of "Depart, ye cursed," must go forth from the tribunal against them, and the latter sentence will have no respect to the heirs of the kingdom. And so, likewise, if there were an irrevocable decree of predestination, before the foundations of the earth were laid, fixing the eternal state of the wicked, such decree would not elect the righteous, nor in any way affect them for good or for evil; but there must be a distinct and independent act choosing them to eternal life. It would be just as necessary, in the one case, that there should be two distinct acts of predestination, as, in the other, that there should be two distinct sentences of final decision. Those who make such an outcry against the doctrine of reprobation, with a view to overthrow the doctrine of election, may possibly succeed to some extent in misleading the credulous and inattentive reader; but they succeed in an evil work, for it is highly sinful to employ false reasoning on sacred subjects. The truth of God stands in no need of such satanical assistance; for whether a doctrine be true or false, it is wicked to employ false reasoning in the discussion; and if they gain any advantage by it, the acquisition is the reward of dishonesty. The opposers of the doctrine of election are apt to make reprobation a first and last resort; but the believer in election, if he rightly appreciates his means of defense, may always have an effectual reply ready for the attack. He has nothing to do but to tell his opponent that reprobation has no connection with election—that he has left the question in debate, and is not legitimately entitled to an answer till he proves the truth and applicability of his objection; and this his adversary will never be able to do.

2. Equally unfounded, and very similar to the preceding objection, is the notion that some have entertained, that if election is true, the Almighty created one part of the human family to be saved and the other to be lost. But the doctrine of election involves no such consequence. That some will be saved and others lost is true, and clearly taught in the Scriptures, but the Bible does not teach that they were created for that purpose. If any choose to say that the fact that some will be saved and others lost, involves the doctrine of election, they may prove their inference if they can, but that would not prove that election causes the salvation of some and the loss of others as the end for which they were created. Election of itself saves none, and it is neither the cause nor the occasion of the loss of any. I repeat, that election has respect to those only who are saved; and there is no difficulty in showing the reason why sinners are lost.

3. There has been some controversy on the question whether Christ died for the elect only. Let this question be decided which way it may, it does not affect the doctrine of election. If Christ died for the whole human family, the doctrine of election would stand just where it does. The elect were not chosen as persons for whom Christ should die, but as persons who were the objects of God's saving love. It is true they must be saved through the atonement of Christ, can not be saved without it any more than the non-elect; and there is an all-sufficiency in the atonement for the salvation of the whole world. But Christ did not die for the elect as elect; He died for sinners as sinners. There was an inexorable necessity that Christ should die for sinners because they are sinners; but there was no necessity that He should die for the elect because they are elect. The elect can not be saved without the atonement; but it is not because they are elect, but because they are sinners. Election does not bring us to Christ, neither does non-election keep us from Christ. Election does not invest us with any privilege to come to Christ, neither does non-election deprive any man of his privilege to come to Christ. All have the privilege of coming to Him and all have the same privilege. Election does not give any one any power or ability to come to Christ, nor does it deprive any one of such power or ability. The reason that any man does not come to Him, is because he will not come. Neither does election give any man a will to come to Christ, neither does election or non election make or keep any man in a state of unwillingness. God chooses His people, but this does not make them choose Him, or keep others from choosing Him. Election effects no change in the heart of a sinner, nor does it prevent any sinner from changing his own heart or his course of life; neither does it prevent the Lord from working in sinners that change of heart which is necessary to their salvation. Without repentance no sinner has any ground to hope for pardon; and election prevents no man from repenting, neither does it give any man any power or disposition to repent.

Election does not implant the love of God in the soul of the elect, nor does it prevent the non-elect from loving God, nor deprive them of any ability to love Him, or debar them of the privilege. It is the privilege of Satan, who is irrevocably doomed to eternal damnation, to love God, to repent of his sins, and to forsake his wicked ways, and also it is his duty to do all this. Without faith we can not be saved, but the elect have no more power to believe than the non-elect; and the non-elect have as much ability and privilege to believe in Christ and be saved as the elect have, and they are welcome to come to Him for salvation; and all that do come will be saved. They have the same means of grace, the same opportunities, the same invitations and encouragements, and the same assurance of acceptance. Election does not remove the curse of the law from the one any more than it does from the other; neither are the non-elect held under condemnation because they are not of the elect; for the elect are "the children of wrath even as others." It is as much the privilege of the non-elect to pray and seek the Lord with assurance of salvation, as it is of the elect. The Lord's election of His people has done no injury to any others. It debars them from no facilities or advantages for salvation. It does not doom the non-elect to hell, nor keep them out of heaven.

4. It is objected to the doctrine of election that the elect will be saved let them do what they will that they may live in sin, and still be saved. Now, if election were the whole of salvation, there might be some seeming plausibility in this objection; but the Scripture doctrine of election does not necessitate any such result. Election does not supersede the necessity of faith and repentance, love to God and holiness of life, or any of the means or spiritual qualifications necessary to salvation. God's people are chosen to salvation through Christ; but not chosen to salvation

independently of the necessary conditions and means of salvation, but as including all that is necessary to the final consummation of the great end to which they were elected. As a counterpart to this objection, it is urged that if election be true, one who is not of the elect may pray, and strive, and seek with his whole heart, and do the best he can, and yet he can not be saved. But this is false reasoning; no such inference is deducible from the doctrine of election. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that precludes the possibility of salvation to any sinner. If there is nothing else in the way of your salvation, election will not prevent it. There is nothing in election that conflicts with any other doctrine taught in the Bible. 'Do what he will the elect will be saved," and, "Do what he will the non-elect will be lost." This is substantially the argument of those who do not understand the doctrine: and, in fact, they do not understand their own argument; for, in point of fact, every man does what he will, whether elect or non-elect-whether he is saved or lost and election has no influence on his will. So it is said also that if a man is not elected, he has no possible chance of being saved. But why not? If he repents of his sins and forsakes them, and believes in Christ, will he not be saved? He has the same chance to repent and believe that all others have; and the gospel assures us that all who do these things shall be saved. And can any be saved without it? In respect to all the means of obtaining salvation, and all that is required of sinners in order to their being saved, the non-elect stand upon the very same ground as the elect.

Suppose that, before the foundation of the world, God, having prospectively in His view all the human family as if then present before Him, and, without regard to any good or evil that might attach to their character, He had then decreed, unconditionally, a certain number of elect persons to inevitable and eternal damnation, (and this is, perhaps, the worst form of reprobation that misrepresentation can devise,) I would ask if this inflexible decree would be of any advantage to those who were not of this devoted number? I think no man will pretend that they would be in any respect benefitted by it; for it would be impossible to point out in what respect their eternal interests could be favorably affected by such decree. And now, reversing the case, suppose that, instead of this horrible decree, God had ordained, by an immutable decree, that a certain number of selected persons should, irrespective of all considerations, be made eternally happy and glorious in heaven; I would inquire in what way could this decree injuriously affect the eternal interests of those who were not included in this selected number? No man can show it. It would not change their condition; it would not change their moral relations to God; it would not change their moral character; it would not affect them either for good or evil in any respect whatever. Such decrees would affect those who were the objects of them, and none else. Hence none but those who would be affected by them would have any ground of complaint. Even, therefore, upon this hypothesis, there would be no ground to charge the sovereign election of God with injurious discrimination. But the doctrine of election as taught in the Bible, and as held by those who are now called Calvinists, is far less liable to objection than the hypotheses above presented. What, then, are we to think of those enemies of sovereign grace who impiously charge the Almighty with being unjust, and apply to Him the odious appellation of tyrant, because He is infinitely gracious to His own chosen people, without doing any injury, or even unkindness, to those who obstinately persist in a course of rebellion against Him, and perish in their sins, while a free salvation is presented to their acceptance?

Let us make an example of an individual case; and for this purpose I will select the reader: Suppose God, before the foundation of the world, in foresight of your guilt and ruin, set His love

upon you and resolved that He would redeem you from condemnation, and sanctify you by His Spirit, and save you eternally, to the praise of the glory of His grace, would you object to it? Are you unwilling that He should then make you an object of His saving mercy? Can you say conscientiously that you are not willing that God should, even before the world was made, entertain a gracious purpose of saving your wretched and guilty soul, and keep that purpose in his heart till He should consummate it in your eternal salvation? If you know the worth of God's love, I can not believe you would object to such a design of mercy. Well, this is election. This is the very election taught in the Scriptures; and the principle is the same, whether it respects you as an individual sinner, or whether applied to the innumerable multitude that will inherit salvation. Now, on the other hand, does all this grace bestowed upon you do me any injustice? Does it injure me at all? Do I fall because you stand? If you stand, it is by the grace of God; if I fall, it is by my own sin. God, in His infinite mercy, has provided an all-sufficient atonement, and proclaims salvation through this atonement to a guilty world, assuring sinners that whosoever will accept this salvation shall receive the blessing. But I refuse this salvation I choose to live in sin; I will not accept the provisions of His grace, but freely choose to pursue my own voluntary course of unrighteousness till I die in my guilt; and God did not choose, either before I was born or after, to resist or change my will, but to leave me to my own choice. This is non-election. And, moreover, this is all the reprobation that any man can impute to Divine predestination, without a violation of truth.

5. The doctrine of election is supposed by some to interfere with the freedom of the human will; but this is a mere unfounded assumption. It has never been proved, and never can be. But suppose it could be proved, yet if the doctrine of election is proved also, they would still be bound to prove that it is impossible for both doctrines to be true, before they could derive any advantage from the objection. If God, before the foundation of the world, chose Paul as an heir of eternal glory, it is impossible to show, or even to conceive, how that act could in any way affect the freedom of will in any other man, or even in Paul himself. It is remarkable with what extreme jealousy some men seem disposed to guard the doctrine of free-will, even where there is no danger of invasion. The freedom of the human will is never in danger, and can not be. The will has in itself all the freedom of which it is capable in its own nature; and, in most instances, if the subject was critically examined, the foundation of this sensitive jealousy would be found to consist in this: that the objectors are not willing that God should have any will that is not in accordance with their will. If you think the doctrine of election limits or abridges the free exercise of the human will, and that this may consistently be offered as an objection to the doctrine, I would reason with you a little on the subject. How much freedom of will do you claim as your right? I will give all that you can claim. As to freedom of will in the ordinary concerns of life, and when our spiritual relations to God are not specially involved, there will be no dispute between us. In reference to our important relations to God, I will say that He has given you a holy, just, and good law, and it is your right and your privilege, as a rational and accountable being, to love this law or to dislike it; being responsible for your choice, God has given you this liberty as a rightan indefeasible right. This liberty you exercise, and have always exercised, unrestricted and unconstrained. You have always chosen of yourself and for yourself, whether you would love and obey this law, or whether you would not. Now, we have all freely disobeyed this law, and, as responsible subjects of it, we have incurred its condemnation. In addition to this, the great Sovereign has provided an ample atonement for our sins, and in the gospel He has set forth Christ as an able and willing Savior of sinners, and as the only way of salvation and has further assured us, that if we choose this way of salvation we shall

obtain it. Now, the way of life and the way of death is set before you, and the Author has given you the liberty, as a right, to choose which you will. Here you have presented to your free choice salvation, with all its manifold blessings, on the one hand; condemnation, with all its fearful consequences, on the other; and it is your right, your privilege, to choose for yourself; and there is nothing that does or can debar you of this privilege, or force or compel your decision. You may, and you do, choose for yourself, and the consequences of your choice you may and you must receive. If you freely choose the Lord, He is your Lord and your Savior, and it is your right and privilege to choose Him. It is also your right and your privilege to refuse. Moreover, you have an unrestricted right to choose your own time for making your choice. You are at liberty to choose the Lord to-day, or to procrastinate as long as you will. There is no compulsion or prohibition. A friend or an enemy may persuade you to determine now what you will do, or to postpone your time of choosing indefinitely; but there neither is, nor can be, any force put upon the freedom of your will, Now, what more freedom of will do you claim. This is all the freedom that can belong to the will of a rational being, but if you can conceive of any freedom of will beyond this, I will concede it to you. Now, with all this plenitude of liberty which you claim and possess and I believe it is your sacred right must appeal to your candor to say whether you are willing to concede to your Maker equal rights and privileges? If you are, I call upon you to renounce your objection to God's election to His eternal election. Or do you assert a claim to control the high prerogatives of a Sovereign God? If it is your right and privilege, in the free exercise of your will, to choose God or not to choose Him, has He not an equal right and privilege to choose you or not to choose you? If, in the free exercise of your liberty, you have a right to choose your own time to make your choice, has He not an equal right to determine the time of making His choice? If He chose you to salvation before the foundation of the world yet He leaves you at liberty to choose Him whenever you will; and this liberty you do, in fact, exercise at your own option. But perhaps you will say, that if God does not choose you there is no possibility of your being saved. I reply, that if you do not choose Him, there is no possibility of your being saved. Turn which way you may, if you object to election on the ground of freedom of will, you claim a prerogative which you are not willing to accord to your Maker. Supposing it to be possible the free exercise of God's will should conflict with the free exercise of your will, so that the one must yield to the other, whose rights are paramount? Which has the prior claim? But these never do so clash as that the choice of one that is, the election of one party will deprive the other party of a free election.

If you are curious to know whether you are one of the elect, you should first decide the question whether you have chosen Christ as your Savior. If you, as a lost, guilty, helpless, and justly condemned sinner, put your whole trust and all your hope in a crucified Redeemer, rejecting all other confidences, you have all the assurance that God's promises can give you that you shall be saved; and if you have thus chosen Christ, you have all the evidence that you can need that God has chosen you to salvation, for He chooses to save all that come to Him by Christ as the only way. And those whom He has not chosen will not come, and therefore die in their sins; and the very fact that you have chosen Christ is the best evidence that you can have that you are one of the elect number: "All whom the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." It is not essential to your salvation that you should know or believe that you are one of the elect; but it is essential that you receive Christ by faith. Why, then, perplex yourself with a question that God has not directly revealed, and neglect those things which He has made known and which are material to your eternal happiness?

We will now attend to the direct proofs of the doctrine of election as that doctrine is taught in the Bible. And reverting to what has been said on a preceding page, we repeat, that to elect is to choose; hence the elect are the chosen. To exemplify this, we will notice a few examples, and a few will be sufficient: God chose Abraham as the head, or father, and in him one branch of his posterity, out of all the world, to be a peculiar people to Himself, for the purpose of making them a great nation upon which He would bestow great blessings, and confer upon them special privileges above all the nations. Hence they are called His chosen or elect people.

God also chose Cyrus. long before he was born, to be His instrument in overthrowing the city of Babylon, and calls him His elect. God chose Aaron to be His high priest, and David to be king over Israel, and Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And it is needless to multiply examples; it is only necessary to remark that in all these cases God might have chosen others, if it had been His will to do so; and the word is used in its usual acceptation But the election of which we are now to speak particularly, is the election of those who are chosen to salvation through Christ; and we shall understand the scriptures adduced according to the obvious meaning of the words and phrases employed by the inspired writers. To understand them otherwise, would imply that the Holy Spirit used language that was calculated to deceive the reader. The election of the Lord's people to grace and glory, as we have it taught in the Bible, bears the following characteristics: It is (1) sovereign, (2) eternal, (3) unconditional, (4) personal. This I undertake to establish by testimony that no obedient mind will presume to impeach. In 2 Timothy 1:9, we read: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This saving and calling is according to His own purpose and grace. Is not this a sovereign act? If this is not sovereignty, I know not what meaning you will attach to the word. It is also according to His grace given us in Christ Jesus, not according to our works no conditions of repentance, faith, good works, or good moral character, as a ground upon which this grace is given us. If there had been it would not be grace, but the reward of merit. It is expressly said that it is not according to our works. No conditions to be performed by us are so much as hinted; but according to the tenor of the passage they are necessarily excluded. This purpose and the grace given us is before the world began. Surely we may allow this to be eternal! Before ever there was a sin committed on earth, or any man to commit sin. This is going far enough back for any purpose the believer in election has in view. Good scholars translate, "before eternal ages." I may notice this form of expression before I close this chapter; but to proceed: "Hath saved us and called us." The grace is "given us." The language is personal throughout. It can not be meant of nations, for it would not be true in that application; for no nation, as such, is saved: for the same reason it can not refer to religious privileges and the means of grace, neither to designation to office nor special service. It is personal salvation.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6) Whatever of mystery and sublimity there may be in this passage, and in the general connection in which it stands, there is no force of construction that can be put

upon the terms, if we allow words to have any fixed signification at all, by which election can be excluded from it. Each of those characteristics of the doctrine as-stated above are distinctly expressed. "Before the foundation of the world." We understand this phrase according to the obvious meaning of the words. His choosing us in Christ, His predestinating us to the adoption of children, are acts of high and imminent sovereignty' and it is expressly said to be according to the good pleasure of His will. Not only do we find the terms used to be personal, but the matter of the text will admit of no other application. The election here taught provides for our being made holy and without blame it is election to both grace and glory. In Ephesians 1:11 we read: " In whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Again the sovereign will of God is expressly referred to, and it is more particularly against this point that opposition is chiefly directed.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30) Prodigious labor and ingenuity have been employed to invalidate the testimony of this scripture, but it has all been in vain; and such labor must forever be in vain. It stands to this day, and ever will remain an unshaken proof of the doctrine of eternal election. Nothing can be plainer shall than that the foreknown, and the predestinated, and the called and the justified, and the glorified, are the self-same persons; and those persons are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. No force of construction that can be employed can make this apply to any nation that ever was upon the earth The language used by the inspired writer is strictly personal, and remarkably definite. These persons, as foreknown, are predestinated to a designation distinctly specified; that is, to be conformed to the image of Christ. This, without doubt, is the highest state of glorification to which any created being can be exalted. We have here, in one short sentence, the predestination and the ultimate end; then follow the steps of the Divine procedure, by which the precious design is carried out into final accomplishment. They are called, justified, and glorified. The whole passage, when understood according to the plain and obvious meaning of the language used by the apostle, is so plain, so explicit, that nothing but the perverse ingenuity of unsanctified human learning will attempt to devise any way to avoid the doctrine which is so plainly taught. The passage, when interpreted according to the plain import of the words, is in perfect agreement with the general scope of the apostle's argument in the connection; it also accords with the whole of the doctrinal part of the epistle. Those who have attempted to evade the true doctrine of this text have been compelled to adopt a scheme of interpretation which requires them to put strange and unwarrantable meanings upon words and phrases which they will not bear, entirely different from their well known and acknowledged signification, in ordinary composition, and which they themselves would not pretend to attach to similar language when used on any other subject. It may be doubted whether they themselves ever employ the same forms of expression in that sense in which they pretend to interpret the inspired record. The object is manifestly to screen their preconceived opinions from the destructive force of Divine truth. Their method of explication is full of discord, confusion, and inconsistency, and never can be made to harmonize with the context and general scope of the apostle's discussion, or with the tenor of the epistle throughout.

If the doctrine of election, as taught in this passage, was injurious to the interests of any rational being; if it was disparaging to the honor of God; if it was inconsistent with the perfection of any of the Divine attributes; if it was at variance with any other doctrine of the gospel; or if this was the only place in the Bible where the doctrine is taught, there might then be some seeming apology for those who put such forced and unnatural constructions upon the plain revelations of Divine inspiration; but there is nothing of all this involved in it. The radical principle from which his opposition to God's electing grace emanates might be detected in every human heart, if honest inquisition was to be made; but how much better it would be if we would all bow with reverence to the ordinances of a Supreme God! When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, and He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations, He will say to His own separate people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This kingdom is prepared for them the very persons to whom He speaks, and in distinction from those on His other hand. Prepared for them from the foundation of the world! Will any sane man say this kingdom was prepared for those on the left hand?

I might add to the foregoing quotations a number of others, which go to establish the doctrine under consideration; but the mind that would resist the evidence of these would not yield to any amount of proof. The doctrine would not be rejected for the want of evidence, but for want of a disposition to submit to it. To what has been advanced on this subject I will now subjoin a few remarks, which I submit to the reader's reflection.

1. It is not possible that God can be under obligation to any of His creatures. Such obligation would be utterly inconsistent with His independence, and would also divest Him of His sovereignty. Obligation necessarily involves accountability; but what creature dare demand of Him, "What doest Thou?" "Yet, if He is under obligation to any creature (man or angel), that creature has a right to call Him to account. If it be alleged that if God makes a promise, He is under obligation to fulfill that promise, we admit it; but the obligation is to Himself, and not to him to whom the promise is made. What are we to understand by any promise that God makes to man? When God made a promise to Abraham, He merely revealed to him what He intended to do. He never promises to do any thing but what He previously intends to do; and He is no more under obligation to do it after the promise than He was before. God is under obligation to Himself to maintain inviolate all His perfections, and therefore He is under obligation to perform all His purposes. If He reveals any particular purpose to any man, this gracious disclosure of His design to that man can not bring Him under obligation to the man. I speak thus because I am aware that there is a latent impression on the mind of almost every one, that God ought to do something for him, and that even if he does deserve punishment, others also deserve it; and that it would be unfair (softening the term) for God to do that for another which He does not do for him. But if He has a right to do what He will with His own, and to bestow unmerited favor on whomsoever He pleases, the exercise of this right does no injustice to others. If none deserve His mercy--if all deserve His wrath and if He is good to all as certainly He is, surely no one is entitled to complain because He is infinitely gracious to a part. God's election is an act of sovereign grace, and not compliance with an obligation. If any man object to discriminating grace, let him read the parable in the beginning of the twentieth chapter of Matthew and see if he is not rebuked by the application our Savior makes of it.

2. If we consider the condition into which we have brought ourselves by our sins under a just condemnation and also take into view the fact that we are all enemies to God by nature, and have in ourselves no real disposition to love and serve God, or seek His sanctifying Spirit, we must see that there arises from these considerations a necessity if God saves any that He must choose the objects of His saving mercy. If, all alike, we will not come to Him, is it not manifest that He must of Himself choose those whom He will bring to Himself?

3. The objections made to the doctrine of sovereign election will apply with equal justice and propriety to the dispensations of Divine Providence. There is a notable analogy between the dispensations of God's providence and the dispensations of His grace considered in reference to His sovereign will. One man is born into the world with the elements of bodily disease in his natural constitution; a sufferer from his cradle to his grave perhaps never passes a day without suffering from an inborn defect of physical constitution while his neighbor, or perhaps his brother, comes into the world with a more perfect physical organization; enjoys good health, with all the activity and strength of a sound athletic frame. The one is not to blame for his misfortune, and the other does not owe his advantages to himself. It is the work of a sovereign God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. No man can overlook these discriminating providences, or show the reason why it is so.

4. The doctrine of election is in perfect accordance with the dispensations of grace in the conversion of sinners. How often does it happen that the minister preaches for years to the same congregation! They all hear the same gospel all have the same means of grace the same advantages and here and there one is converted; and of those who are converted, it frequently occurs that some who appear soft and easily affected are left still in their unbelief, while others of the most stubborn heart, and who did not fear God nor regard man, have been subdued by sovereign grace. If the conversion of sinners is the prerogative of the Divine Spirit, we are compelled to resolve these discriminating dispensations into the "good pleasure of His will."

5. Some think that even if the doctrine of election is true, and clearly taught in the Bible, it ought not to be preached. Now I think that no one doctrine ought to be preached to the exclusion or neglect of other fundamental doctrines; but if the doctrine of election is revealed in the Scriptures, we ought to believe it, for it is profitable for instruction and growth in grace. But it can not be of use for our sanctification unless it is believed. Every truth revealed in the word of God ought to be believed, and therefore it is right to teach the whole truth. The false representations that some make of the doctrine, and the erroneous inferences that some profess to deduce from it, ought not to be preached. There is probably not a fundamental doctrine contained in the Bible that some do not wrest to their injury; and the objection would lie with equal force against the whole body of gospel doctrine.

11a Atonement

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER XI.

ATONEMENT. No system of theology that should leave the doctrine of atonement without special notice, would be considered as complete; and, indeed, such a system would be radically defective. A great deal has been said and written professedly upon this important subject; but I hope I may be excused for saying that, according to my judgment, much of what has been written has been to little or no purpose. Not pretending to be able to instruct the theological world, it is my constant desire to be useful to the "poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." I believe the essential doctrines of the gospel--such as we have been discussing in the preceding pages--have been pretty correctly understood by the true church in all ages, from the days of the apostles to the present time, and we have no reason to expect any new discoveries in the plan of salvation. There is room for the wisest to increase in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; but, in the fundamental principles of the gospel, nothing new will be brought to light that is essential to the great system of gospel truth. All that is indispensably necessary is to have access to the word of God, and a heart prepared to receive the instruction. I shall not aspire to the honor of new discovery; but if I can offer a thought that will throw any additional light on any part of the subject into the mind of my reader, verily I shall have my desired reward.

If the word atonement was a scriptural term, and of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, like justification and redemption, we might ascertain its scriptural meaning by consulting the connection in which it is used by inspired writers: but it is not so; the word is used, I believe, but once in that book, and in that place all good scholars concur in saying the original word should not have been translated atonement, but reconciliation. The word is often used in the Old Testament, respecting the sacrifices offered under that dispensation, and in this light I suppose it may be said to be a scriptural term. From the use there made of the word in a typical sense, we may learn something of what should be its proper meaning in an evangelical sense. But, at least, the word is properly a theological term, and, considered in this point of view, it has, or ought to have, a definite and universally accepted meaning. If the word is generally used by writers in a particular acceptance--and I believe it is--any writer who discusses the doctrine of atonement in a different sense, without at once apprising his readers, most probably has an insidious design in view; but if he really differs from others as to what we are to understand by the atonement of Christ, we have no right to require any thing more of him than a plain and unambiguous statement of the sense in which he intends to use the term, or of what he understands the atonement to be, and an honest avowal of the difference between his views and the opinions of others. The range of my reading is comparatively very limited, so that I have consulted very few works written expressly on atonement. What little knowledge I have acquired of the various theories which have been put forth by our learned writers, has been derived incidentally from a few authors who have had

occasion to refer to them. Not occupying that position in the literary world which would entitle me to claim equality with our theological authors, I have felt timid in referring to them by name; but the high respect which I entertain for those great names must not deter me from exhibiting what I believe to be the truth of God as we have it in His word, although my views might not perfectly accord with theirs in every particular idea. I am not aware, however, that my views of atonement differ materially from those which have been generally maintained by our standard orthodox divines. With regard to the meaning of the word atonement, some are disposed to lay a good deal of stress on the etymology of the term--to wit, at-one-ment; but it requires but little knowledge of the history of our language to see that etymology is a very uncertain method of ascertaining the proper meaning of words. The English scholar stands in no need of examples to illustrate this. Besides, it is not so much the literal meaning of the word with which we are concerned; it is that particular evangelical doctrine of theology which has been generally designated by the term atonement. This doctrine I propose to discuss, and I design to employ as definite and precise language as I am able. A late writer on atonement gives us the following definition: "It is the expiation of sin through the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus." I shall not object to this definition. The author intended no disguise or evasion. As he is still living, and is also "a brother beloved," and one who, I doubt not, loves the truth, I presume he will not be offended if I offer a critical suggestion. If, by the word obedience, we are to understand both the perfect holy obedience of His life and also His "obedience unto death"--that is, His obedience in dying--the definition is, perhaps, as unexceptionable as can well be given; but although the perfect holiness of the Redeemer's life was essential to the validity of His sacrifice--it was essential to the merit and acceptableness of the "offering" which He made for our sins, and in this sense was essential to the atonement--yet I am not quite sure that it is an essential part of the atonement itself. The holiness of Christ was necessary to honor the law in the holiness of its nature and authority, but it was the justice of the law in relation to sin that required atonement. I believe it is held by our standard writers generally, that the obligation to be perfectly conformed to the holiness of the law is intransferable, and so I understand it; if so, substitution is inadmissible. The holiness of the law requires absolute holiness of every subject of the law, and nothing else can satisfy the demand. The obligation can not be discharged by a representative. If these thoughts are correct, I can not so well see how the holiness of our Savior's life, though immaculate, can constitute an essential part of an atonement for sin. It is easy to see the perfect character was essential to His being a competent and acceptable sin-offering, and also that it was essential to His official relations to us as sinners. And further: As the law held a rightful authority over us as human subjects, it was necessary that our accepted Surety should, in human nature, honor the holiness of the law by demonstrating that the obligation to perfect holiness was not a requirement beyond the constitutional ability of human subjects. It was necessary that the holy character of the law should be fully vindicated or satisfied by inflicting the penalty for transgression upon one in human nature.

I would not be too positive on this point, and I will thankfully accept the kindness of any one who will give me more light. I have not made these remarks as intending to instruct my superiors, nor as a verbal criticism; but believing there is here a real distinction in these two aspects of the Divine law, I thought it might be well not to lose sight of it in a discourse on the atonement of Christ.

Another modern writer on atonement says: "The essential idea in the doctrine of atonement is that of substitution, or vicariousness." This postulate is objectionable; for, although in the atonement of

Christ substitution is an essential condition, yet it does not belong to the essence of the atonement itself. Substitution was an indispensable prerequisite; but in the order of nature, as well as in the order of operation (if I may so express it), the substitution preceded the atonement. Christ must first become our substitute--our accepted substitute--before He could make atonement for us. Using the word atonement in its general meaning--not restricting it to the atonement of Christ--it is allowable to say there may be atonement where there is no substitution, and there may be substitution where there is no atonement. There is so wide a distinction between the ordinary signification of the two words that neither can convey the essential idea of the other. The same writer says: "The atonement is something substituted in the place of the penalty of the law, which will answer the same ends as the punishment of the offender himself would." Passing, for the present, the very objectionable doctrines couched in this quotation, it is sufficient to say that if the atonement did not answer the end of satisfying the Divine law for our sins, it would be false to speak of it as atonement. But why adopt such a distant and pointless mode of statement?

Again: "It is through Christ that reconciliation is effected between God and man;" and,

"That in accomplishing this He suffered and died as a substitute in the place of sinners." Here our author ventures to come to the essential doctrine of the atonement--rather an unusual thing for him to do. He speaks abundantly of substitution, of law, of sufferings, and of punishment; but seems to be fearfully cautious of speaking much about the death of Christ--the very thing that constitutes a real atonement. That in which I glory above all things, he seems to be studious to keep out of view. I suppose he kept this grand transaction constantly in his own eye while treating on atonement; but he appears to be reluctant to set it before the eyes of his readers. As I understand atonement to mean equitable satisfaction for injury, or adequate reparation, I understand the atonement, which is the subject of the present discussion, to be that satisfaction for sins which was made to the Divine law by the death of the Son of God. I suppose this statement will give the reader a sufficient idea of what I mean by atonement, but I do not pretend that all the elements and essential characteristics of the atonement are included in this one sentence. To set the idea in a clear light, let us look at a few passages of Scripture which have direct reference to atonement: "Christ died for our sins." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He hath redeemed us to God by His blood." "But God commandeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." In these quotations we see what the atonement is. We might add many others to the same effect. Whatever men may think the atonement ought to be, these Scriptures show us plainly what it is. That God saves sinners through the death of His Son, is the grandest and most glorious manifestation of the all-fullness of the Divine perfection of any that He has ever made to us. Nor is it in the power of the human mind to conceive of any possible way in which all the perfections of the infinite Godhead could be revealed to created minds to a greater or to an equal extent; and how wonderful, how overwhelming the thought that such sinful wretches as we are should be graciously embraced in it! This transaction is the foundation of the whole plan of man's salvation; and when we reflect what stupendous weight of glory is dependent upon it, we can not ascribe too much importance to it. It is the good pleasure of God to lay the burden of more of the glory of His Name upon this one thing, than upon all else put together that He has ever done, of which we have any knowledge or can conceive. The sinner that builds on this foundation has nothing to fear;

but a hope that rests upon any other ground must eventuate in disappointment and confusion. If there is any defect or insufficiency in the atonement, the whole scheme of man's salvation is a failure. Hence an essential error or mistake in this doctrine must vitiate all other doctrines of the gospel, for all others rest upon it. In what I write, I "consider what I say," and request the reader to do the same. As atonement has particular respect to Divine justice, in canvassing the doctrine we should make the exact extent of its claims, and the plenary liquidation of those claims, a ruling principle throughout, for no partial reparation is atonement. The satisfaction made must be full, complete, and perfect in every respect, in which the interests and honor of Divine justice are concerned. The justice of God in its relation to us is set forth in what we usually term the moral law, and this law has two fundamental elements: First, obligation to obedience; secondly, penalty for disobedience. The obligation is just--founded in pure justice. The penalty is also just, and emanates from eternal moral justice. We have all transgressed, and have thus subjected ourselves to the administration of the penalty; and the same immutable law that prescribed the penalty must inflict it. The only way in which we, personal sinners, can satisfy the demands of penal justice, is to suffer the penalty in our own persons. If there was any way in which we could satisfy the claims of justice without suffering the penalty we might escape; but there is none. It follows therefore that we can not make atonement for our sins. We never can make a finished satisfaction, so as to found a righteous claim to a discharge from the penalty. I might enlarge upon this whole topic and show it out more fully, and, perhaps, I ought to do it; but I will pass on to what I have now more immediately before me. In making atonement there are certain conditions which must be complied with; as, 1. The satisfaction must be made to the injured party.

2. It must be made by, or in behalf of, the offending party.

If it is not, it can not avail to his benefit.

3. If made by a substitute, such substitute must be every way competent to the work.

Otherwise the undertaking must fail.

4. The atonement must be perfect and complete. Or it can not answer the ends for which an atonement was necessary. In relation to the above conditions, we will examine the atonement of Christ.

These propositions are so plain and so evident, that it would seem superfluous to spend time or labor in proving or illustrating them; and yet I believe that every one of them has been expressly or virtually denied. But I can not take special notice of every artful evasion and critical perversion of gospel truth. I do not wish to become intensely controversial; but if a man will maintain the truth of Holy Scripture, it is not possible to avoid polemics.

1. Atonement must be made to the injured party. Is it not intuitively evident that when a reparation is made for injury, that it must be made to the party injured? None other had a right to require it, and none other had a right to accept it. If the sin for which atonement is made is sin against God, is it not manifest that the satisfaction, or atonement, must be made to Him? Candor can not be blind to this. The honor of the Divine government must be maintained untarnished. This is a point insisted on largely by most writers on atonement, and it can not be defended too earnestly, nor be too thoroughly examined. But the honor of the Divine government can not be conserved without equity of the government is maintained. The honor of God's government rests fundamentally upon

this principle. The honor of the Divine government requires imperatively that the righteousness of law--which is the medium or instrument of administration--should stand impeachable. We may say that the honor of the Divine government belongs rather to the order of policy, and in this respect might be optional; but the equity of God's government is a necessity--a natural and Divine necessity--and can not be optional. For Him to create rational and intelligent creatures was an act of His sovereign will; He was perfectly at liberty to create us or not create us, according to the good pleasure of His own will; but to govern us and deal with us as His subjects, in a way of strict righteousness, is not an act merely of discretionary will, though of course His will is in it, but by the necessity of His essential nature. He must govern us according to the principles of immutable and eternal justice; for it is evident beyond controversy, that if He is just in Himself, He must be just in His government.

Inflexibility is essential to justice. To suppose that it could fall short of, or extend beyond its legitimate bounds, destroys the very idea of justice; and that justice which relates to us and to our sins, is God's justice, and is as unchangeable as He is Himself, for it is an attribute of His essential nature. Hence an atonement made for our sins must be made to Him; He must be the object of atonement.

Every man who acknowledges the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, feels that He does not stand in that friendly relation to God that he would desire to do; he is sensible that all is not right between him and his Maker; he is conscious that he has sinned against his rightful Sovereign, and that his God has good reason and just cause to be displeased with him. Now, if anything is done by way of making atonement, or satisfaction, for his sins, so as to adjust the difference and remove the difficulty, whatever it may be--say the death of Christ--if he does not believe that God Himself is satisfied with it, that He approves and accepts this atonement as full satisfaction on His part, it will bring no relief; he will still be exercised with those uneasy apprehensions that God still holds his sins in remembrance. But if, on the other hand, he feels a perfect assurance that this atonement makes full satisfaction to God--that He is not only content, but well pleased with it--then the sinner finds a resting-place; he feels that he has secured ground to stand upon. But these things could not be so if the atonement was not made to God. This is the ground upon which every true believer in Christ rests upon. He is conscious that God has a just demand against him, and that Christ has died for the express purpose of satisfying that demand. If that voice, that glorious announcement, twice delivered from heaven, has no reference to atonement, it is among the least of all the revelations that God has ever made to us; but if it may be supposed to have any reference to the atonement, it is demonstrative proof that the atonement was made to Him.

It is right, however, that we should notice the present topic more immediately in the light of the moral law; and this law naturally presents itself to us in two points of view: the holiness of the law, and the justice of the law. Our obligation to a perfect obedience is founded in the holiness of the law; but the penalty for transgressions is the expression of the justice of the law; and we must not forget that the authority of the Lawgiver is in both. It is the authority of the Sovereign God that requires the obedience, and the same Divine authority declares and enforces the penalty. The subject of the atonement, in that point of view in which we are now considering it, does not require us to say much with regard to the holiness of the law, because it makes but the one demand upon us--that is, absolute perfect holiness; and this it makes on every individual personal subject of the law. It does not ask, and can not accept, of any commutation, satisfaction, or mitigation. The

requirement--the only requirement--is personal holiness; and the obligation to render this is perpetual and unchangeable, and can not be relaxed. And, as no atonement can satisfy this demand, it can admit no substitution that will release us from obligation to be holy. But the case is different with respect to the claims of justice. The justice of the law requires satisfaction for the injury--that is, atonement. Crime deserves punishment; and if crime is committed and passes unpunished, this is injustice. The justice of the law demands that transgression--that is, sin--shall be punished. If sin is committed against the Divine law, and the just penalty of the law is not inflicted, it is clear that there is injustice somewhere. If the requirement of obedience to the law is a just requirement, and if the penalty annexed by the law for transgression is a just penalty, then the administration of the law is not just except the penalty is inflicted. It is God himself that is the Lawgiver; He, and He only, enjoins the obedience; He only declares the penalty for disobedience; He only is the administrator of the law, and the equity of the administration is the manifestation of the justice of the Lawgiver. It therefore follows as a plain consequence, that if any atonement is made for our disobedience, it must be made to Him, that it may satisfy the demands of His justice and vindicate the equity of his administration. Our sins are sins against God, and the satisfaction must be made to Him. Hence it is said that Christ, in making atonement, "offered Himself without spot to God." Indeed, the point is made so plain by the general teachings of the Scriptures and the very nature of the case, that, without any great impropriety, I might have dispensed with any remarks on this topic, and proceeded with the general subject just as though the doctrine had never been denied or doubted; but, on account of its connection with other topics belonging to the subject, I thought I might not be quite justifiable in passing loosely over it without more special notice; and, in the further discussion of the subject, a frequent recurrence to this point will be unavoidable.

2. The atonement must be made by, or in behalf of, the offending party.

If atonement is made by the offender himself, then there is no need that another person should interpose in his behalf; and if the sinner could make the requisite satisfaction for his sins, it would supersede the necessity of any intervention on the part of Christ. But as those whom I desire to edify are looking for edification in that atonement which is made by the death of the Lord Jesus, I will not detain the reader by treating on atonement as made by the offending party. All that I should think necessary to be said would only be preparatory to atonement by substitution.

If the law is transgressed, the penalty, as a matter of course, must ensue, and the condemnation must fall on the transgressor. If one man injures another, he is under obligation to make reparation. This is a plain principle in equity. And upon this principle, if a man does violence to the law of God, he is under obligation to make satisfaction for the violation committed. This obligation he is bound to fulfill according to the tenor and spirit of the law. As the reward of a perfect obedience to the Divine law is life, so the penalty for disobedience is death. That death which is the penalty of the law is something more than the mere death of the body, as the Scriptures clearly prove. But how much is included in the penal death, or necessarily results from it, is not easily comprehended, and I shall not in this place attempt to specify its nature or define its extent. It is sufficient for our present inquiry to say that every sinner is under obligation, which he can not avoid, to suffer its infliction, as that is due from him to the authority of a violated law. Suppose, then, that this death is inflicted upon a personal transgressor: he has no power to restore himself again to life, and consequently he must remain forever in a state of death; for he is a sinner still,

and his sin still remains upon himself. The law has no power to deliver him from death; and he has no power to deliver himself, and so must continue forever the subject of a violated law. Moreover, he still possesses all the powers of his moral and intellectual constitution, with all their functions, activities, and capabilities, and is therefore still under obligation to render a perfect obedience that the law requires. But his moral nature is depraved. He is alienated from his God, and averse to the holiness of the law, so that he continues to be the enemy of God, and remains an actual sinner. In this condition it is morally impossible that he can ever render that perfect obedience to the holy requirement of the law which is due to it. And the penalty of the law still lying upon him, it is impossible that he can ever remove that penalty. He may endure the penalty by abiding still in a state of death. But what the sinner needs, is that the penalty should be removed from him, that he may not suffer it. Bound under the iron fetters of inflexible justice, he can not do any thing, less or more, towards making satisfaction to the injured authority of the law. But nothing short of a full and complete satisfaction--a finished satisfaction for his sin--can ever constitute an atonement.

Hence we must look to a substitute for atonement--to one who will make the required satisfaction for us, in our room, in our behalf--to one who will assume our liabilities, and take our place under the law, and endure the penalty in our stead. This is what is called vicarious suffering. The substitute must suffer that death which we would have to suffer, if the substitute were not to suffer it for us. The doctrine of substitution has been carried by some beyond its legitimate bounds. At least, so far as it is an essential element in the atonement of Christ, they have assigned to it a place where it can have no real application. Perhaps we may notice this hereafter. Others have denied the whole doctrine of atonement; but these require no notice, further than what the general discussion will supply. There are others, again, who profess to hold the doctrine of substitution, but explain it in such a way as virtually excludes it from the work of atonement. The fact that the atonement made by the death of Christ was made for and in behalf of sinners, is so explicitly testified in the Scriptures as to foreclose all reasoning to the contrary. We will select a few texts in proof: "Christ died for us." For--that is, in the place of. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." This is too plain to need comment. "I lay down my life for the sheep." "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." We might add to these a great many others, but I shall take it for granted that these are sufficient. Of the Justice of Vicarious Sufferings. The question, How can it be just for the innocent to suffer for the guilty? is an inquiry which will naturally arise in the mind of many who are seeking to attain to clear views of the doctrine of atonement; and this is the place, in the order of discussion, for its consideration. As I do not pretend to be able to give my reader a satisfactory solution of this problem, I would prefer to pass it, for the present, without comment, and treat it in a separate article at the close; but as I can not make a reasonable excuse for such a detachment, I will proceed now to give my reader the result of some of my reflections on this profound ethical question. I must invoke the reader's patience, as I may dwell on this topic a little longer than he would expect. I shall endeavor to be as brief and concise as the nature of the inquiry will permit; but if I were preparing a separate work on atonement, I should probably treat this question considerably more at length than I design to do here. And I suppose it may be possible that some of my thoughts may not have occurred to the mind of every reader; and it would give me pleasure to cast one ray of light on this subject into the mind of the reader, as I rejoice in every accession that any Christian can make to his knowledge of Christ. I do not claim the ability to solve the question, or to explain the mystery, but I will simply present some of my own thoughts on the subject, leaving their confirmation, or their refutation, to

such as are farther advanced in the knowledge of this branch of gospel doctrine than I am. But before I enter directly upon the main question, I wish to impress a few things on the mind of the reader, because they are impressed on my own mind.

1. If there is mystery which we can not understand in a doctrine, or if we can not see its consistency with another doctrine known to be true, we are not, therefore, at liberty to reject it, because all the difficulty may be referred to our own limited powers of comprehension.

2. In reasoning upon any one perfection of the Divine nature, we are not to make ourselves absolutely certain that our deductions are necessarily correct. In order to do this, it would be necessary to understand all that is contained in that perfection, which, with us, is impossible. And more than this: All the perfections of the Godhead are mutually and intimately related to each other, and hence it might possibly be necessary that we should understand all these relations before we would be justifiable in pronouncing our conclusion indubitably correct, except where we have sufficient evidence from other sources to sustain them.

3. If we find a doctrine plainly taught in the Scriptures which appears to us to be inconsistent with any one of the Divine attributes, we must yield to the Scriptures, and not be guided by our deductions from abstract truth, which may be, and frequently are, fallacious. The testimony of God's word must, in all cases, be accepted as paramount and decisive

4. The union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ is such an inconceivable mystery to us that we are not competent to affirm or deny respecting the moral nature and the moral relations of a constitution which so far exceed all our powers of comprehension, and especially one to which in its most vital point there is no analogy.

5. The essential characteristics of eternal justice, so far as justice governs the relations of men, both to God and to each other, are sufficiently made known to us as the subjects of administrative justice; but there may be a great deal included in Divine justice which it is not possible or needful for us, in our present condition, to understand; and in the great transaction now under consideration, the Son of God is not constitutionally a subject of administrative justice. He assumed this state of subjection, and He is the only being in existence who could be injuriously affected by the substitution, whether just or unjust.

6. We, as the subjects of law and administrative justice, are accountable beings to superior authority; but the Son of God is supreme, and accountable to no other authority, for there is none above Him to whom He can be responsible. All the obligation that He can possibly be under, is that obligation which He is under to His own Godhead; and therefore He has a sovereign right to do and submit to all that is according to His own sovereign will. And we may rationally suppose that the principles of justice, in their application to subordinate and accountable creatures, may not be applicable, in every respect to a supreme and independent being.

7. It may be said, that if that is just in the Divine administration which is inconsistent with and even contrary to all our ideas of human justice, how can we arrive at any true knowledge of the Divine character? To this we may reply, that other attributes of the Divine nature are equally inconsistent with our notions of those attributes, and consequently are equally liable to the same objection. For example. Our world is full of misery, distress, and almost every variety and decree of suffering. How can this be consistent with the infinitemercy of God, when it is, and ever has been within the

power of God to prevent it? We are therefore, authorized to say, that we may know the true character of God, but we can not know His whole character. True, there is mystery: but if there was no mystery, we could not know the true character of God; for mystery to finite creatures is necessarily inseparable from an infinite nature. We know from the word of God that He is just, and that Christ suffered, without any sin of His own, the just for the unjust. This should be received in implicit faith. And it is not wisdom, but presumption, to inquire into the mysteries of the Godhead further than He has seen good to reveal them. And perhaps it may not be impertinent to remark, that if this mystery in the justice of God had been clearly revealed to our understanding, for aught that we know it might have disclosed another mystery beyond that equally as much above our comprehension, and perhaps still more repugnant to our pride. "Be still, and know that I am God." Can it be just that the innocent should suffer that the guilty may escape? This is in substance the form in which the question meets us; and the answer is supposed to be intuitive--that it is not just; hence it is presented as a formidable objection to the atonement made by the vicarious death of Christ. But this form of stating the question is not fair; it embraces two distinct questions. I must therefore protest against this complication. In discussing a subject--such a one as the subject now in hand--the prime point of inquiry ought to be disencumbered of every thing that does not essentially belong to it. That the question in the above form contains two distinct questions, is evident: 1. Can it be just that the innocent should suffer? 2. Can it be just that the guilty should go unpunished? If we would attempt a logical investigation of our subject, these questions should be treated separately, and should by no means be blended into one. If it should be admitted that it may be just that the innocent should suffer under the administration of law, the whole question is disposed of at once. For what purpose the sufferings are inflicted, or on whose account they are endured, or what particular benefit may thereby accrue to others, have nothing to do with the justice or the injustice of the principle; and though it may be a moment's digression, I must remark that I never hear any complaint of injustice because the guilty is allowed to escape the just punishment due to his sin. And yet the integrity and the honor of Divine justice is as much involved in the one transaction as in the other. There is as much difficulty and as much mystery in the one question as in the other, and we are as much bound to answer the one as the other. The objector, by imputing injustice to substitutional suffering, necessarily incurs the burden of defending the remission of penalty from the imputation of injustice; and in this he never can succeed while he adheres to his objection. By answering the latter question, the objector will furnish the materials of an answer to the former; and if they were required to withhold their objection till they had complied with their own obligation, it is probable we should never hear of such schemes of atonement as some that have been ushered into the world. They may appeal to the mercy of God; but let it be remembered that there is no mercy in the treasures of Divine grace that can be exercised at the expense of Divine justice. Such an appeal would have no relevancy, and would leave the question of justice untouched.

I will now repeat, that in considering the question of the injustice of substitutional suffering, the fact that the guilty are exempted does not affect the merits of the question. If our object is to arrive at the truth as nearly as we can, we must bring the subject of inquiry as nearly as possible to a single point; and the question will be, Can it be just that the innocent should suffer under the administration of law? The question reduced to this simple form might seem to divest the object of inquiry of any complications that would embarrass our investigation, but in reality it does not. That specific object which we now have in view subjects the question to still further limitations, unless

we will consent to hamper ourselves forever with entanglements that have no necessary connection with the precise object of inquiry. The question, so far as we have any concern with it, is properly a theological question, and the solution does not strictly belong to the principles of mere ethical science. It is therefore our privilege to leave the realm of metaphysics, and discuss the doctrine exclusively in the light of theology. We should have nothing to do with it in any other point of view than as it relates to the vicarious death of the Son of God. This death is an isolated event in the Divine administration. The whole history of the Divine government, so far as men can have any knowledge of it, furnishes no similar event. The case is absolutely unique; and if we will contemplate with any reasonable attention the elements of this transaction we shall not fail to see that it is not possible that there should be any analogy. We therefore do injustice to the subject if we consent to canvass it in any other way than as it respects that one event. We must take this one isolated fact as it is, and confine our discussion of the question to the bearing it has on that one specific case. There is no need to deal in abstractions.

If the question is propounded, whether a law in a human government requiring the infliction of a prescribed penalty for crime on an innocent subject instead of the one that was guilty, I should have no objection to an answer in the negative; for even if the suffering substitute endured the penalty voluntarily, I should think a just law would not admit of such substitution, nor allow the penalty to be inflicted. But there would be no analogy between such a case and the vicarious sufferings of Christ; for, in the first place, the substitute, though voluntary, has no right to dispose of himself in that way. He would do an act which would be wrong in its own nature. He would virtually take the administration of the law in his own hands, which he has no right to do. God has invested no man with a right to sacrifice his own life in order to save the life of a criminal; the act would be suicide. Again: If the substitute dies, he can do no more for himself, or for his government, or for any one else. He can not rise from the dead. All that he accomplishes by his death is the release of a guilty criminal from merited condemnation. And again: Men are equals, and all stand in the same relation to the law; neither the substitute nor the criminal stand in any other or higher relation to the law than that of subjects. But in the matter of the substitutional death of Christ, the conditions are very different. The want of parallelism is so great that we can not reason logically from one to the other. And yet some persons seem to take no notice of this want of analogy and use the figure as if the cases were in all respects similar. I can not think they do justice to the subject. All the advantage we can derive from analogy is merely partial and incidental. If we seek for light on the substitutional atonement of Christ, we must examine it on its own merits, and confine ourselves to such principles and conditions as the case itself will supply, adhering to the guidance of Divine revelation. The plausibility of the objection, in a mere ethical point of view, should not intimidate us in the least; because we are not dealing with an abstract principle, but canvassing a specific case brought out in a given fact--a fact involving great and important considerations, which may verify that the abstract principle has no just application to the case.

We should keep in view, also, that individual personal rights are limited by the rights of others, and this is the only limitation. It is the privilege of every man to exercise his rights--those rights with which the Creator has endowed him--to whatever extent he pleases, provided he does not invade the rights of others. If a man performs an act by which the rights of no other being are infringed--if there is injustice in the deed, the injustice must be confined to himself; that is, he only is affected or

injured by it. But the Creator has given no man the right to injure himself. Man is God's property, and if a man murders himself, or is designedly accessory to his own death, or willfully does himself a personal injury, he infringes the paramount rights of the Creator.

It must also be admitted that it is a moral impossibility that God should do any thing that is not in strict accordance with His nature; for as is His nature, so of necessity is His will; and He can not put forth His power only as He wills to do it.

We say that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was innocent, suffered the penalty of the law as a substitute in the place of sinners. The objector ascribes injustice to this transaction. Now, I must maintain that he is bound to show wherein this injustice consists. It is not pretended that any injustice is done to God as Lawgiver and Judge; neither is there injustice done to those for whom He suffered as a substitute, for they are immensely benefited by it. It is evident that if injustice is done to any person, it must be done to the suffering party; and if there is any force in the objection, or if it has any just application to the case, it must apply to Christ, and to Him only. Then the question before us is simply this: Was Christ, in dying as a substitute for sinners, the victim of injustice ?

I propose now to submit to the candid reader the result of some of my reflections on this subject, not pretending to give a complete and satisfactory answer to the question, and thus remove it out of the field of controversy. In presenting my thoughts on this subject to your consideration, I must be permitted to direct your attention to the original purpose and to the ultimate end of that economy of which this great transaction was an important and an essential part. I can not do justice to the view which I take of the subject without this; and I think also they shed their light on the whole field of inquiry. If we leave out these considerations, I can not see how we can ever attain to a clear view of the general subject, and especially of the particular topic of the present discussion. For the sake of brevity, I must consent to forego my wishes in two respects: On some of the particular topics I would gladly extend my remarks further than I design to do; and also I would like to refer to certain scriptures, which I think would sustain the views offered to your reflection.

God is what He is by the necessity of His own nature; and being infinitely perfect in His essential nature, whatever He designs or purposes must be perfect, for nothing that is imperfect can originate in or emanate from His infinite perfection. And, as all His purposes originate in Himself, so they all terminate in Him. As He is the first cause, so He is the last end of all that He purposes and of all that He does. If, then, we inquire what is the ultimate end of all that He purposes and performs, the answer is, the manifestation of His own glory; or, (to express the idea in different forms,) it is to make known what He is--to reveal His own nature. This manifestation of Himself, considered in its relation to us, is made that we may know Him, that we may know what He is, that we may know His true character.

God, in His word, has revealed Himself to us as One God, subsisting in three Persons--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three are the same, co-essential, co-eternal, co-equal Godhead. In this triune God there is one will, one purpose, one way, and one end in all things, to the glory of the One God. This trinity of persons in the Godhead is an incomprehensible mystery to us, but God has revealed to us the fact that it is so; and He has further revealed to us that, in accomplishing this great end--to wit, the manifestation of His glorious character--He would do all

things by and through the Son of God, who is Christ the Lord. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." "For by Him were all things created that are in the heavens and in the earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." The ground that we should take here is, that God has a sovereign and Divine right to make known to His intelligent creatures the excellency and infinite fullness of His nature; also, that He has the same Divine and supreme right to make this manifestation of Himself by and through His co-equal Son, who is one with the Father ; and further, that the Son of God, as one with the Father, possesses in Himself, by virtue of His own supreme Divinity, the same right to make this manifestation according to the sovereign will of the eternal Godhead. Moreover, God had a Divine and eternal right to make this manifestation of Himself in whatever way it might be consistent with His sovereign will. We say further, that there is but one nature, but one will, and but the one purpose in the Godhead. And if the Son of God, as the great Actor in accomplishing the Divine purpose, either on the ground of necessity or propriety, chose to unite His Divine nature with the nature and form of any of His creatures, He had a sovereign and Divine right to do so; for He has a right to enter into whatever relations to His creatures He pleases; and He creates all things, and upholds all things, and works all things according to the counsel of His own will. All things, therefore, must be subordinated to Him and under His sovereign control, or He would not be in a condition to fulfill the great office of a perfect Revealer of the Divine perfection. And all that is comprehended and intervenes between the original purpose and the final consummation of the great design, must be subjected to Him, in order to enable Him to make that manifestation of the Divine character which is the ultimate end in view. Hence all that He has made in creation, and all that He does in His providence, or in the operations of nature, are only a system of means by which He is to make known to intelligent creatures the infinite perfection of the Godhead; and He has a sovereign right to employ them for that end, according to His own good pleasure. And as He, the Supreme, had in Himself an inherent and sovereign right to dispose of and use all those means which He had created and ordained for that designated purpose, according to His will, in the prosecution of the appointed end, so He had a right to dispose of Himself in any way that might be necessary in subserviency to this determinate end. And being Himself the Supreme, He could be under obligation to no being but Himself; and this obligation to Himself--or to the Godhead, which is the same--in relation to this ultimate end, bound Him (so to speak) to manifest the all-fullness of the incomprehensible and invisible God to His intelligent creatures; and in order that the all-fullness of the Divine nature might be seen in Him, it was necessary that all the fullness of the Godhead should dwell in Him personally. I suppose the representations here made will not be contested; and if, in the exercise of those rights and perfections, the rights of no other being are infringed, and He does no injustice to Himself, it seems to me that the impeachment of injustice must fall to the ground. We will therefore proceed to inquire further. The Son of God, in whom resided all the fullness of the Godhead, manifested the glory of His power when He created or brought into existence the original matter of this earth and of the whole universal material creation. In this work there was a most conspicuous and demonstrative exhibition of Divine power. When He proceeded further to organize and diversify this material substance into its present forms, varieties, adaptations, and uses, and thus prepare it to be the habitation of His intelligent creatures of the human race, we see a wonderful manifestation, not only of His power, but also of His wisdom and His goodness. Again, when He

declared His holy law, which he had ordained for the observance and for the good of His intelligent creatures, He then manifested the holy nature of the Divine Lawgiver; and by annexing a righteous penalty for transgression, and promising life on condition of a perfect obedience, He made known to us that He is a God of perfect justice.

We are authorized by the Holy Scriptures to believe that a part of His intelligent creatures of the angelic order did actually violate His law, and thus subject themselves to its dreadful penalty, and in consequence are doomed to irrecoverable ruin, and must suffer under the administration of punitive justice without redemption, in order that the Divine justice may be manifested to the glory of God. Thus we see that the Son of God is making greater and greater manifestations of the glory of the Divine character. In the case of the apostate angels we see an exhibition of that inflexible justice that knows no mercy, and can not relax, or mitigate, or dispense with the least tittle of its demands; for if it could it would not be perfect justice. The honor of Divine justice must be maintained if its vindication should involve the whole creation in ruins. And when we consider the superior excellency of this high order of intelligent creatures, and that no merciful provision is made for their deliverance from the unrelenting hand of offended justice, nor any alleviation of their desperate and wretched condition, we may assure ourselves that if creatures of an inferior order should follow their example of disobedience, that Divine justice will require a satisfactory vindication equally ample, and every way commensurate with its injured honor.

We will now suppose (which is a solemn fact) that the human race should cast off their original character of holiness--should refuse obedience to God--transgress His holy law, and, of course, incur the penalty, which is death. We have just now had an example of the imperative requirements of Divine justice in the case of the rebellious angels; and justice is the same, whether it respects angels or men. Thus guilty man falls into the hands of violated justice, which can not be defied and trampled upon with impunity; for if it might, the Son of God, whose office it is to administer the Divine government, would fail to manifest the glory of His justice. And, unless the honor of justice is vindicated, man must forever abide under the wrath of God, that the rights of justice may be maintained. But let us now lay down another supposition--one which is equally true with the former. Suppose, then, that it is a part of the great purpose of God, in making known the glory of His Name, that He will make a new and additional display of all the perfections of His Divine nature beyond any thing that has ever preceded it; and in doing this, that He will show that His wisdom is sufficient to make a way whereby the rights of justice shall remain inviolate, while He will extend redeeming mercy to the transgressors of His law. This work belongs to the Son of God, not only by appointment, but of necessity; for it is by Him that all the purposes of God are executed. And I must be allowed to believe that there was no other being in existence, created or uncreated, that was competent to the work; none other who possessed those inherent constitutional qualifications which were essential to the great achievement. He, being a Divine person, is independent of all other beings. He has a sovereign right to do His own will. He is accountable to none. He is under no obligation to any other being than Himself. He possesses a Divine right to dispose of and use all things that He has created according to His own good pleasure--subject only to that obligation which He owes to Himself to maintain inviolate all His perfections. He, therefore, had an independent and Divine right to assume human nature, and thus unite the Divine and human natures in His one person. This right I suppose no one will question; and in the exercise of this right He did make Himself one with man, born of a woman,

and made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law. Let us spend a moment in considering the import of this text. He was not made one with man in such a sense as to be a partaker of the sinfulness of man's fallen nature; but in such a way as that, by uniting both natures in His one person, He was God and was man. But His Divinity was not made humanity, nor His humanity made Divinity; but both natures, in all their fullness, and in all their respective perfections, were united in His one person. The object in view was that He might redeem them that were under the law. To do this it was necessary that He should Himself be made under the law; and that He might be made under the law it was necessary that He should be made (born) of a woman; and thus deriving His human nature immediately from a descendant of Adam, He partook of the original constituted nature of man. And it should not be entirely overlooked that this uniting of the two natures is, in various places, ascribed to Christ himself, as being His own work. All this He had a supreme right to do; and in doing it He did not in the least impair any of His own rights, or trespass on the rights of any other being. It is, therefore, not possible that there could be any injustice in these transactions. But, to save the time, I forbear to show how both God and man are abundantly glorified in it. The language employed in this text by the Holy Spirit--He was "made under the law"--clearly implies that previously He was not under the law in the same sense that He was made under it. The object to be accomplished was a declarative manifestation that the glory of God's grace could be revealed in the redemption of the guilty, while the honor of His justice should sustain no disparagement. As we have said before, the Son of God was under obligation to Himself--to the Godhead--to manifest, or make known, the glorious perfections of the Divine nature. And, as part of this work was to demonstrate that God is "a just God and a Savior"--a Savior of sinners--He was under the same obligation to do and to suffer all that was required to fulfill this condition. The Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and the Scripture gives reasons for this; consequently He must be made in the likeness of sinful flesh. This condescension appears to have been an indispensable condition; and the point of inquiry is, Did the Divine nature suffer any injustice in this part of His work? I shall not make it a question now whether the Divinity of the Son of God endured any pain in making atonement; but for the present I will take it for granted that it did not; and leaving that question to be decided as it may, I will only remark here that if any can bring proof that the Divinity of Christ suffered, I think I can bring equally as good proof that there was no injustice in His suffering. And this is all that the present inquiry demands. The only respect in which injustice can be chargeable on the ground of His condescension, is that it seems to require that the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven and earth should be obliged to stoop from His high pre-eminence to the low degree of uniting Himself with human nature that He might suffer death. If there is any injustice in this arrangement, it respects His Divine dignity only. But we are very incompetent judges of what the Divine dignity requires; and that which is glory in God's esteem men would account shame; and, in fact, the humiliation of Christ was an illustrious manifestation of Divine grace: "That He might show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In His humiliation He made a more glorious demonstration of the excellency of His gracious character than could have been possible if He had never "made Himself of no reputation, and taken upon Him the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And all this He did Himself. He voluntarily took the burden on Himself. He willingly bore it Himself, and He receives the reward in that He has glorified Himself. And now, who can point out the injustice that is done to the Son of God?

We must now inquire whether there was any injustice done to the humanity of the Son of God by His enduring the sufferings necessary to make atonement for sin. Perhaps the whole question hinges upon this point; but it must be remembered that I have not promised to solve this mystery. All I profess to do is to submit some of my own thoughts on the subject to your reflection. If I could show that the claims of Divine justice against the sinner were fully canceled by the atonement, and that no injustice was suffered by Him who made it, this would vindicate the transaction from the imputation of injustice. The first of these positions, I suppose, will be admitted; for if the claims of justice in this respect are not satisfied, there is no atonement--whatever else was done, there is no atonement.

I submit that the penalty of the law is death; and that the death of Jesus Christ, as a surety and substitute for sinners, is a full and sufficient satisfaction to the penal demands of the law. But could the humannature of the Lord Jesus receive the inflicted penalty without being the victim of injustice? I shall freely confess, that if the suffering was inflicted against the will of the suffering party, I can not see the justice of such a transfer of the penalty. And perhaps it would not be safe to affirm that the mere consent of the substitute, irrespective of other considerations, would make it just. On the other hand, it might be going too far to affirm, that with the free consent of the substitute, there would be any injustice done to him. And I doubt whether any man can show that the willingness and voluntary assumption of the suffering party, wholly free from any external force or influence, does not effectually repel the imputation of injustice. But in my present attempt I have no need to avail myself of any advantage that I might derive from this argument. As there is a great difference between the guilty and the innocent, in respect to character and condition, so we think there must be a difference in the application of the principles of administrative justice in the two cases--a difference arising from, and corresponding with, the difference of character and condition. The execution of the penalty of the law on the guilty transgressor is punishment for crime; but on the innocent substitute, though it is suffering, it is not strictly punishment. So it is correct to say, that the innocent suffered for the guilty; but, in strictness, it is hardly correct to say that the innocent was punished for the guilty; and although the penalty of the law is the same in its application in both cases, yet the principle of administrative justice may, perhaps, be different according to the different relations in which the two cases stand to the demands of strict justice.

If the sinner suffers the penalty of the law in his own person, when the death penalty is inflicted, there is no hope beyond death. He must lie under the terrors and despair of death forever. There is no possibility of regaining life; and there can be no deliverance, because there is no way of deliverance. And, further, he has no reward; he receives no compensation for his sufferings. But this is far--very far from being the case with regard to the infliction of the penalty of the law on the human nature of Jesus Christ. He had the fullest assurance, that if He should pass through the ordeal of death without sin, that He would rise again--rise to an eternal life, over which death could have no power. He laid down His life that He might take it again. So the Psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." "He shall swallow up death in victory." If He chose, (not merely submitted, or consented, but freely chose,) by suffering death, to exchange a natural and mortal life for a life that is spiritual and immortal, and beyond the power of death, it is not easy to see any inconsistency with the principles of justice in the transaction, inasmuch as He was an immense gainer by it. The

sufferings of death, however great, were soon terminated; but the glory and joys of His new life endure forever and ever. Perhaps (and I think it probable) He could realize in his own case what the apostle says of Christians: "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." I presume that no man can show that his new life is not much more than a full compensation for undergoing death. But this is not all that I have to say on this principle.

11b Atonement

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER XI.

ATONEMENT. As it was the office and great prerogative of the Son of God, as such, to manifest the supreme excellency and infinite perfection of the Divine nature, so the fulfillment and consummation of this purpose was the great object that He had in view in every thing that He did; and with a view to the accomplishment of this great end, He created all things as a means to be employed by Him in the execution of this grand design. And He so constituted them that they should be adapted to this purpose; and especially man was created for this end, and constitutionally endowed with a capacity and fitness for the purpose, according to the peculiar place which he was to fill in the great plan of manifestation. For this purpose man was created in the image of God; he was endowed with all the moral perfections of his Creator, so far as it was possible for human nature to be. And now we will look at him in this character of moral perfection; and as we suppose the human nature of Jesus Christ was in all respects the very same as that of Adam in his original creation, and therefore might, with the utmost propriety, be called the "second Adam," we will consider the moral perfections of Christ as a man. He was holy in all His moral nature; we are the subjects of moral depravity and corruption. There is not an attribute of our moral nature that is not debased, contaminated, and averse from God. As we have attempted to show in a preceding part of this work, our moral nature is totally corrupted by sin; but this was not so in respect to the human nature of the Son of God. God's will was His will. The will of the Divine nature of the Son of God and the will of the human nature were the same. Whatever was pleasing to the Divine nature was pleasing to the human nature; whatever was the delight of the Son of God to do, or submit to, was also the delight of the Man Christ Jesus to do; also, whatever was the unvarying purpose of His Divine will was also the unvarying purpose and intent of His human will. And as it was the determinate purpose of the Son to manifest the glory of the Divine character in every way and by every means possible, so it was the constant aim and purpose and the paramount desire of His human nature to do the same thing. In respect to both His natures He could say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." The will and purposes and the actings of the human nature were in perfect unison with the will and purposes and the doings of the Divine nature; and as the ultimate end of all was that God should be glorified, if the Divine Son, in doing this, in the exercise of His sovereign right as such, without any injustice to Himself or to any other being, chose to become poor, and to humble Himself by assuming human nature, that in that nature He might suffer death, so we may conceive that the human nature, in the exercise of His right, and actuated by the same will and desire with the Divine nature, might voluntarily, and without any injustice to Himself or to any other being, choose to submit to suffering and death, that He might thereby glorify God, and thus answer the great end for which human nature was originally created; for man, as such, has rights peculiar to his nature and relations, which it is his privilege to exercise

according to his own good pleasure; and with those rights none have a right to interfere but his Creator, who invested him with those rights; and if they are exercised in obedience to the will of God, there can be no interference. No man has a right to deprive another of his life, provided he has not forfeited his life according to the law of God. And we admit that God has not given to man a right to divest himself of life; but God has a sovereign right to take from every man that life which He gave him. I do not say that He has a right to make His innocent and obedient creatures miserable, for He can not do injustice to any of His creatures; but as He gave life to every living thing, He has a right (if it were His will) to take it away from the living. Yet it is the prerogative of God to invest any of His innocent creatures--any innocent man--with a right to surrender his life in any way, in obedience to the known will of God. He may confer this additional right upon whom He pleases; and this right He did confer upon Jesus Christ, who was the Son of man and the Son of God. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power (authority) to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Independently of inductive reasoning, this passage appears to establish the position that the Father did confer upon Jesus this special and peculiar right to dispose of His life for a special purpose, and gave Him assurance that He should not remain under the power of death. Now, as He possessed in Himself, and by divine authority, a right to receive that infliction of the penalty which was due to sinners, and no one else could be injuriously afflicted by it, I am not able to see how a charge of injustice can be imputed to the transaction. But when we proceed to take into view the objects and results of the atonement thus made, in relation to Himself, all appearance of injustice, in a practical point of view, seems to disappear. For with Him, (I speak of Him as a man,) His great object, purpose, and desire, in His life and death, was the glory of God--that God might be glorified in extending mercy to sinners, while His justice should remain unimpeachable. This paramount desire he realized, and will forever rejoice, with a joy inconceivable by us, that, in suffering the penalty of the law for sinners, He was the means of advancing the declarative glory of God far beyond any other exhibition of His glorious character that had ever before been made. If He, with all the willingness and zeal of which His nature was capable, chose to endure temporary suffering and death, (however great the suffering might be for the time,) that He might be instrumental in achieving the most glorious object that even God Himself has in view, who will attach the character of injustice to that economy under which He suffered? And, as a part of His reward, He became capacitated for a measure of enjoyment incomparably greater than He otherwise would have been capable of; and He is now, and ever will be, filled with a joy which no mortal man could sustain. Our mortal constitution would be overborne by the burden. The consciousness that He has the full approbation of His God--that God is well pleased with the sacrifice He made and the service He rendered--will inspire His soul with a holy ecstasy exceeding in measure any thing experienced by the highest order of angelic creatures. Thus He, "for the joy set before Him, endured the cross." What a measureless compensation!

Again: When He shall have finished His work on earth, and the whole general assembly and church of the First-born, in a glorified state, shall be gathered into the heavenly sanctuary above, He may look around and survey the innumerable millions of glorified saints, all rapt in the fullness of heavenly ecstasy, and brought thither through the suffering He endured, and as the fruits of His death. "The grain can not bring forth fruit except it die:" and Jesus died and rose again, and now beholds the immeasurable fruits of His humiliation. Who shall attempt to estimate the boundless

joy which the contemplation of the scene around Him will inspire? A great "multitude which no man can number," of the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, all brought into this high relation and exalted to this glorious eminence through His obedience unto death. These are a part of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." They are a part of His reward, for they are the purchase of His blood.

There is yet one more consideration to which I must direct the reader's attentions--a consideration infinitely worthy of our highest thoughts, and which ought to inspire every soul with ineffable joy. It is that boundless glory which is conferred upon our suffering Substitute, as a part of the reward due to His humiliation and death. On this topic we can not enlarge. The subject is, in itself, so high above all the powers of human conception, that our best thoughts shrink into insignificance. He is clothed with "all power in heaven and earth." All his enemies are subdued under His feet. He is made the "Head over all things," and "crowned with glory and honor"--"angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to Him." How clear, how explicit, is the following testimony: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." This needs no comment. None but an inspired pen can express the infinite height of glory to which He who died on the cross is exalted; and thus exalted because He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." All the angels of God are required to worship Him; and their obedience is both their glory and their joy. In conventional transactions between men, when both parties fully understand all the interests involved on both sides, if the stipulated consideration is equal in value to the condition required, there is no fraud--there is no injustice. And taking into view all that the Scriptures fully warrant us in setting down as the reward of our Redeemer's sufferings, and who will take upon him to say that the consideration is not equal to the condition? "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." If there is any injustice in the whole transaction, we have a right to inquire to what point in the transaction does the injustice attach? It must of necessity relate to the suffering party; it can apply to no other. No other being in existence can receive damage or be injuriously affected by it. He had a sovereign right to do what He did, in its relation to Himself as the suffering party; and in doing what He did, He infringed the right of no other being whatever. He that will object to the vicarioussufferings of Christ on the ground of injustice, should look well to see where he will find materials to support his objections. The mere abstract question, Is it just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty? is one which we are not obliged to answer. The guilt of the person for whom the innocent suffers, has no concern with the justice or injustice of the suffering. Let us propose another question: Is it just that the innocent should suffer for the innocent? As to the injustice, it would be the same in one case as in the other. But neither can be made to comprehend the vicarious sufferings of Christ. The question in that case would more properly be: Can it be just that an innocent person should suffer under law, provided he receives a plenary compensation for his sufferings? I believe that no man can prove the negative; and if the affirmative be admitted, the question will then necessarily occur, Is it true that our Redeemer is amply rewarded for the sacrifice He made for our redemption? Now, as both the sufferings and the reward are great beyond all our powers of comprehension, we may not be able to give a positive and unqualified answer to this question by any comparison that we can make between the two, yet we think the

testimony of God's word is fully sufficient to authorize an affirmative answer; and unless the objector can prove the negative, he is not entitled to advance the objection.

It is too often represented as if Divine justice, in pursuing the sinner, is made to turn out of its proper course in order to find a substitute, and seizes upon our Surety. This is not so. This is misrepresentation--unintentional, no doubt. Justice pursues its own legitimate course. Infinite mercy can not turn it aside. The immaculate holiness of the Son of God can not turn it aside. Justice (so to speak) was bent upon an equitable vindication of its injured rights and honor--its legitimate course was direct toward the sinner. Christ our Surety took our sins upon Himself, and voluntarily interposed His own person in the way of avenging justice, and rendered in full the required satisfaction; then justice, being satisfied, pursues the sinner no further. There was no such thing as justice being turned out of its due course to fall on our Substitute. But Christ, our Substitute, voluntarily threw Himself under the ministration of wrath. If He suffered injustice, would it be too much to say that He was Himself the author of His own injury? It would appear to accord very well with what is written: "He gave Himself for us." "I lay down my life for the sheep." He offered up Himself.

It is a principle of natural law that we may voluntarily and innocently submit to labor, or endure suffering, with an assurance of securing an adequate reward; and though it may not be worthy of being called an argument, I might appeal to a natural sentiment in the mind of man, whether if he could live always here in this world, and be exempted from the pains and troubles incident to humanity, but by voluntarily suffering death, with a certainty of being immediately raised to an eternal life, in a state incomparably and inconceivably better than would be possible in this life--whether he would not judge the latter preferable? Neither would he suppose that he would inflict upon himself any injustice or violate any principle of moral right. In thus presenting my thoughts on this question, I have not assumed the task of solving the question or explaining the mystery. I hope I have more correct views of my incompetency than to claim the ability to solve a mystery which, I believe, has repelled the approach of all our learned divines. At least, if the subject has been investigated, I am not aware of it; but I have read so few books on atonement that I am not prepared to say what has been written. My own mind having been somewhat perplexed with the question--and supposing it might be the case with others--I resolved to give it the best investigation my time and opportunities would permit. The nature and design of this treatise compelled me to be brief. If I had been preparing a separate treatise on the atonement, I should have written much more in detail than I have done, and should also have referred to a number of scriptures which appear to me to bear directly on the subject. With one more remark I leave these thoughts to the consideration of the reader. If I did not believe that my Savior would Himself receive an ample reward for what He did and suffered for His people, my spirit could not rest. Must we live in the fear that when we shall be with Him, it will be our employment to condole with Him on account of His uncompensated sufferings? Of the Value and Sufficiency of Atonement.

We must admit that there is a real distinction between the value of the atonement and its sufficiency. Perhaps these two topics might be treated to greater advantage by considering them separately; but they are so essentially and so intimately connected, that a frequent reference from one to the other may be almost unavoidable. We shall, therefore, discuss them in connection, while we may not lose sight of the real distinction. It is the value of the atonement which makes it

acceptable in the sight of God; it is the sufficiency of the atonement which makes it available in behalf of sinners. The intrinsic value of the atonement is derived from the Divine dignity of Him whose death made atonement, and its sufficiency arises from its real value. The Scriptures represent the infinite worth and inherent efficacy of the atonement as being derived from the fact that it was made by the death of a Divine person--namely, the Son of God: "He gave Himself for us." "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." "Who (Christ) gave Himself for our sins." The fact that Christ gave Himself for us as an atonement for our sins, is sufficient of itself to determine the value of the sacrifice. Hence, also, we see the frequent allusions to the relation which Christ sustained to the Father in reference to His atoning death: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," etc. "God sent forth His Son to redeem," etc. I have no doubt that the real worth and inherent excellency of the Son of God is greater than the whole creation--may I not say, infinitely greater? As the atonement is made to God--as the price of our redemption is paid to Him in vindication of His injured law--I suppose the reader will be willing to leave it with Him to judge of its value, and will take it for granted that, as God has accepted it, there can be in it no deficiency of intrinsic merit. And although the sufficiency of the atonement may not be a more essential and vital principle than its value, there is more danger of an erroneous estimate being put upon it; for, aside from such as may be more fundamental, a soul oppressed with a load of guilt and conscious of his just desert of Divine wrath--groping in darkness, and, as yet, seeing no way of escape--his mind full of gloomy forebodings and confusion, (and such cases do occur,) Satan may tempt him to doubt whether even the death of Christ is sufficient to answer his desperate necessity. But, again, there is an error of far more frequent occurrence, for it is almost universal--that men want to lend a little help to the death of Christ. They want to do something themselves by way of making satisfaction for past sins; or they will expect to bear some suffering themselves, either in mind or in body, to gain the favor of God. I believe it is no very uncommon thing for persons to expect to suffer in this world in order to avoid suffering in the world to come. These false views arise from putting too low an estimate on the atonement of Christ; and, indeed, the religious errors arising from an inadequate appreciation of the sufficiency of the atonement are too numerous to admit of specification in this place. To determine the sufficiency of the atonement we must examine it in relation to the object which was to be accomplished by it, in a legal point of view. That object was to satisfy the claims of the Divine law--that is, to make complete satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins. Whatever was necessary to vindicate the integrity and honor of the Divine law, which we had transgressed, was indispensable to the sufficiency of the atonement. Nothing less would be sufficient, nothing more would be necessary, and nothing else would answer the purpose. In theological strictness, such a thing as an insufficient atonement is an impossibility; because, if it does not effectually and perfectly accomplish the object, it is not atonement. Whatever might be done, if it does not effectually and completely vindicate the justice, truth, authority, and honor of the moral law, it is a misnomer to call it atonement. The law imperatively required the infliction of the penalty--the whole penalty. That penalty is death; and death is a final fact, beyond which the law does not go. Death is also indivisible; it can not be so divided as to admit of a partial infliction.

Now, if the offering up of a dove as a sacrifice for sin would perfectly satisfy the demands of the law, such a sacrifice would be a sufficient atonement, and nothing more would be needed. On the other hand, if the sacrifice of the Son of God, and with Him the whole universal creation, visible

and invisible, would not make this requisite satisfaction, it would not be sufficient--it would not be atonement in any proper sense of the word. The sufficiency of the atonement does not depend upon the amount of the Redeemer's sufferings. It was formerly held by some that Christ suffered in exact proportion to the amount of sin or guilt which was expiated by His atonement. This is plausible, at first sight, but it is certainly an error. This theory would determine the sufficiency of the atonement by the amount of suffering that all those who are saved would have borne, provided no atonement had been made.

If the atonement consists essentially in suffering--in the pain and agony endured by our Surety--it would be impossible to obtain any definite idea of what it really is--it would be one of the most vague and indefinite conceptions imaginable.

There is, in some respects, a true and proper analogy between commercial law and moral law, and it is allowable and right to employ this analogy in illustrating the doctrine of the atonement. The rule of commercial law is, so much of one commodity for so much of another; and strict commercial justice requires that the two shall be of equal value. We will suppose that A has injured B to the amount of one hundred dollars, and immediately repairs the damage to the full amount of the injury. This would be atonement in a commercial or pecuniary point of view. This would be exact justice, and the wrong would be rectified; and this would be practicable, because the injury and the reparation, being both of the same nature and kind, the precise equivalent is ascertainable, and B would receive all that justice would require. But let us take another example: Suppose that A is a man universally respected, every way worthy of the high esteem of the whole community, justly deserves and actually enjoys the confidence and love of all his acquaintance; and B, by slander and falsehood, destroys his fair reputation, and brings him into universal contempt, and thus A becomes the object of public detestation and disgrace, and must live under a load of infamy, with all its attendant evils, too numerous to admit of detail: how is reparation to be made for this injury? If B, or any other for him, would give A the wealth of a kingdom, it would not repair the injury while A is still the object of scorn and contempt. No punishment that could be inflicted upon B, even if it should exceed the demerit of his crime, would redress the wrong. In fact, put both together, and all would do nothing at all towards making atonement. What, then, would answer the specific demand? It is easy to see the imperative requirement. A must be restored to the esteem, love, and confidence which he enjoyed before he was defamed. Let the vindication be in every respect and in full measure equal to the injury. This would meet the claims of justice; this would be atonement; this would be all that A would have a right to require. And though B might still deserve all the punishment due to his crime, yet A would have all his rights; and if he obtains all his rights, it matters not whether they are restored by B, or by another in his behalf. This illustration may assist us in understanding the true nature of the atonement, as well as in ascertaining its sufficiency.

We thus bring the inquiry to a point: That which is necessary and indispensable to atonement, and to the sufficiency of atonement, is, that the claims of the law, which stood against us, should be fully met at every point, and completely canceled. The justice of the law, the authority of the law, and the honor of the law must receive an ample vindication, and this can be done in no other way than by the infliction of the penalty. All this is accomplished by the death of Christ. A plenary and perfect satisfaction has been rendered to the claims of the law by Him. Thus the law has received all its rights, and claims no more. The satisfaction has been made to the law by Him for us. In

ourselves, we deserve the merited punishment, just as much as if nothing had been done. The obligation to obedience was fulfilled by our Surety, and the penalty for disobedience has been suffered by Him, and what more does the law require? It does not and can not require more. It has "recovered all."

I might enlarge my discussion of this topic to a much greater extent; I might adduce a number of arguments too strong to be successfully resisted; I might quote a number of scriptures bearing directly on the point; but as the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ is so generally admitted, I do not think it necessary to detain the reader's attention on this point. I had prepared the materials, some of which I would willingly present to your notice, but will decline it, because there are a few things having connection with the subject, to which I wish to direct your attention for a few minutes; and there will then remain one more aspect of the atonement which will demand consideration.

We have already said the value and sufficiency of the atonement does not depend upon, or consist in, the amount of the mere sufferings of Him whose death made it; but it can not be denied that both writers and speakers express themselves in language that would seem to imply that doctrine--to leave the impression on the mind that it was the greatness of the sufferings endured by our Savior that removed the curse of the law from us. If the intensity of the Redeemer's sufferings was that which constituted the value and efficacy of the atonement, then the penalty of the law is suffering--the endurance of pain; and in this view it would be difficult to defend the God of love from the imputation of delighting in the misery of His creatures. He delights in being just, and in doing justice in the administration of His government; and His justice requires that He should inflict the deserved punishment on the wicked; but this is a very different thing from taking pleasure in the miseries even of His sinful subjects, for such pleasure would inevitably imply malignity, which is no part of the Divine character.

Let us say the penalty of the law is death, and Christ suffered the penalty for us. What can be plainer and more simple than this? It is as definite and specific as any commercial transaction can be. But it is not my wish or design to depreciate the sufferings of the cross, or to reduce them within the limits of moderation, or even within the bounds of comprehension; but to guard against ascribing to the mere suffering that which is due to the power and efficacy of His triumphant death; for there is comparatively so much said about His overwhelming sufferings, and comparatively so little of His death, that there is danger of insinuating a false idea at the very point where simple truth is all-important. These sufferings are often made the theme of eloquence, and surely it is the grandest and most sublime subject, beyond comparison, upon which the powers of oratory can be employed. But transcendently great as were our Redeemer's sufferings--great beyond conception--yet there is one thing that is greater--that is, His death. The death of the Son of God is the greatest event that has ever transpired in God's universe, of which we have any knowledge. Without this, all the sufferings which the Lord Jesus underwent, or could have endured, never would have made His humiliation complete, or brought His saving hand within reach of lost sinners. This act of submission by the Lord of all, stands in pre-eminent glory above all else within the compass of time and space. If the Son of God had suffered all the pain and agony that it was possible for His Divine and human natures to sustain, without total extinction, from the hour that He was laid in the manger till this present hour, if there had been no death, there would have been no atonement. Any thing called (or miscalled) atonement that does not include the death of Christ, precludes the possibility of His resurrection and glorification, and, by consequence, the

resurrection and glorification of all His saints.

All the while that I have been discoursing on this subject, I have proceeded on the ground that Christ suffered the penalty of the law. I am aware, however, that this has been denied. I am in possession of the arguments by which the opposite theory is supported; and I think I could show the inconsistency and fallacy of their reasoning. But I do not design to say much upon this topic, because I think a very little will be sufficient to make it evident that the theory can not be sustained. A late writer on atonement says: "It is not meant by the atonement that Christ endured the literal penalty of the law." If He did not endure the literal penalty, He did not endure the penalty at all, for there is no other penalty; but we will let that pass. That we have incurred the penalty of the law by our transgressions, and are liable to its infliction, needs no proof to any one that acknowledges the truth of the Scriptures; and Christ has said that not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. Now, if Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law for his people, and they do not suffer it themselves, what becomes of the penalty? for it is manifest that it is never inflicted; and thus that part of the law which gives it its condemning power fails, or else we are still exposed to its infliction. But the apostle says there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. The same author says that Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law, but something else--something less. In what sense, then, were His sufferings vicarious? If He did not suffer that which we should have suffered, I am not able to see how His sufferings could be properly vicarious. That the atonement has special respect to the law, is so abundantly taught in the Scripture as to preclude the necessity of particular reference. But if Christ, in making atonement, did not suffer the penalty of the law, we can see no connection between the atonement and the law; for it is precisely in that very point--the penalty--that the connection subsists; and if the penalty of the law may be set aside without being inflicted--merely dispensed with--the obligation may be dispensed with also, for it has lost its power to enforce its authority. Such a transaction is not atonement; it is simply a compromise--a compromise at the sacrifice of the justice of the obligation and the truth of the threatening.

But, aside from these considerations, what is the bearing that this scheme must necessarily have upon other doctrines? In what light does it place the faithfulness of God? He makes a most solemn threat, founded on a verity more stable and permanent than the heavens and the earth, and then disregards it--or, to say the best, He evades it! What now am I to think of His promises? He threatens death through the law, and fails to execute the threatening. He also promises eternal life through Jesus Christ, and may He not as easily recant His promise? I should suppose the truth of the one would be as sacred in His eyes as the truth of the other. What a precarious foundation for the believing sinner to rest upon! He can never attain to the "full assurance of faith." I might extend this argument further, but I will only say: "We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The Extent of the Atonement.

I believe that theological writers generally speak of the extent of the atonement in its relation to the number of those for whom the atonement was made. In bringing this subject under discussion, it will not be impertinent to make a few preparatory observations:

1. I understand by "the atonement," that satisfaction for sin which Christ, by His death, rendered to the Divine law on behalf of sinners. It is in this sense that I shall use the term, believing it to be the only proper theological meaning,

2. Any theory of atonement that does not actually and effectually secure all that for which an atonement was necessary, is essentially defective and erroneous. It must perfectly accomplish the design and all the legitimate results which it contemplates, both in its relations to God and also to men.

3. On this subject we can know nothing except what God has revealed in His word. All reasonings, except legitimate inferences from the inspired word, are worthless; all speculations and arguments drawn from the analogies of nature on the extent of the atonement are inadmissible.

4. The atonement is, in itself--in its nature, in its intrinsic merit--sufficient for the redemption of the whole family of mankind. Considered irrespective of any design in its application, it is sufficient for all the human family. If, as we have stated in our second observation, the atonement does completely fill and satisfy all its relations to God, it must be sufficient for all; for, in its relations to God, if it is not sufficient for all, it is not sufficient for one. To the principles laid down in these observations, we shall probably have occasion to recur as we proceed.

Viewing the atonement in the light above presented, we will attempt a brief discussion of the extent of the vicarious death of Christ, in its subjective and personal relations.

It is not my intention to review every theory of atonement which has been proposed to the ignorance and credulity of the religious world; for of some of them I suppose I know nothing, and of some that have fallen incidentally under my notice I am unacquainted with the arguments by which they profess to establish or defend their systems. But I know that they do not build upon Scripture evidence, because their schemes are so utterly remote from any thing taught in the word of God that I should have to go too far out of my line to take any notice of them; and my readers will be none the worse off by remaining ignorant of them.

There are four different theories of atonement which we shall attempt to examine, and the greater part of what we shall say on the extent of the atonement will be included in the discussion of these different schemes.

1. It has been held that the death of Christ was, so much suffering for so much sin; and hence that the atonement was not only intended for the elect only, but that it was not sufficient for any more. This has been called the commercial view of atonement.

2. Another theory is, that atonement was not made for persons at all--that it was simply made for sin, irrespective of the persons who were to be made partakers of the benefit. This has been styled indefinite atonement.

3. Others maintain that the atonement is strictly personal, and that it was made for all persons--for every person, and for every one alike--and in the same respects. Not only that it is sufficient in itself for the whole race of mankind, but that it was designed for all, and for one as much as for another--for those that are lost as much as for those that are saved. This view is properly denominated a universal atonement.

[Note.--I have here stated this view of the atonement as correctly as I know how, according to my understanding of their views.]

4. Again, there are some who hold that the atonement is strictly personal; and was made specially, as atonement, for those only who will be ultimately saved, but that in its nature and inherent merit it is sufficient for the redemption of the whole world. This is called particular or special atonement. Of these several schemes of atonement we shall discourse in the above order, and we shall endeavor, as far as we are able, to do impartial justice to each--that is, so far as I shall extend the discussion. It would be as lawful for me as for any other man to present all the arguments and scriptures at my command, on one side of the question, and leave entirely out of view such as might be alleged on the other side. But I am not sure that the Judge would approve such an ex parte examination. I. The theory first laid down, which has been called the commercial view of atonement, was the subject of much controversy some years ago, but as I do not think it has many advocates in the present age, I shall not dwell upon it at great length. It is the most restricted scheme of any that has ever been adopted. There is something in it which appears plausible at the first sight; but it is liable to some objections, which its adherents have not been able to remove. It is objected by those who oppose it, that it is inconsistent with the universal call of the gospel. Sinners are universally invited to the blessings of the gospel, on the ground that Christ has died for sinners. If therefore, the atonement is sufficient for the elect only, and the merit and efficacy of the death of Christ are not sufficient for any more, the non-elect are invited to that which, in point of fact, has no existence. I do not see how this objection can be obviated; for if sinners are saved only through the atonement of Christ, and can not be saved in any other way, it is not even within the power of God to save any except those who will be saved. Indeed, I think we may safely extend this principle still further, even to the whole length of saying that it was not within the power of God to make any provision for the redemption of the non-elect; for I am fully persuaded that all has been done that could be done--that is, by way of atonement. God has given His well-beloved Son to become incarnate, and to die for the redemption of sinners, and what more could He give? If He had also given the whole creation in addition, it could not have added any thing to the worth and power of the death of Christ as atonement. Such a bloodless sacrifice could have accomplished nothing as a satisfaction for sin, for it had no adaptation to such an end. If I am correct in these views, it follows necessarily that it never was within the power of God to provide for the salvation of any more of the human family than what will be saved; but of any such inability on God's part, we have no hint in the Bible--the contrary seems to be every where assumed, and in many places plainly taught. In saving sinners, God acts in the freeness of His will, and not under any limitations of His power.

2. That scheme of atonement which has been termed indefinite, supposes that the atonement was not made for persons; but simply that it was made for sin, or on account of sin, without reference to sinners personally. This impersonal view of the death of the Son of God has something in it so distant, so cold and abstract, that it would require some force of evidence to make that it acceptable; nevertheless, if it could be substantiated by the word of God, it ought to be received. I object to it, in the first place, because it appears to me to exclude the love of God from atonement. It is very clearly taught in Scripture that it was because God loved us that He sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and if His love was personal, the propitiation must be personal also. It is also taught, with equal clearness, that Christ died for us because He loved us. The exercises of Divine love must, of necessity, be personal; and if atonement is not personal, love is excluded.

I object to it, in the second place, because, so far as I can see, the death of Christ can not be vicarious. Any view of atonement that excludes, or does not admit, the substitutional principle as essential to a proper atonement, can never obtain my assent; but if Christ did not die for persons, His death can not be vicarious. If He died merely for sin, having no respect to personal sinners, He was either not a substitute, or He was the substitute of a mere abstraction.

I object to it, thirdly, because, so far as atonement is concerned, it excludes the mediatorship of Christ. It is an indispensable condition of mediatorial action that there should be two parties; but if Christ, in making atonement, had no respect to persons, there was but the one party. "A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. That the atonement belongs to the mediatorship, admits of no debate.

There is yet a fourth objection which I must oppose to an indefinite atonement--an objection which, if tenable, would supersede the necessity of making any other; and that it is tenable, I have no doubt: I find it impossible to reconcile this indefinite scheme of atonement with a great number of scriptures. Both the meaning and the very words of Scripture contradict it. If a text speaks of the atonement, on the one hand, and, on the other, if the language is plainly personal, that is all that is necessary to prove the point. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." "For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." In these passages the references to the atonement are too plain to be doubted; and that the atonement thus referred to relates to persons, is evident, for the personal pronouns we and us will admit of no other application. The attentive reader of the New Testament will find a number of others without my quoting them here.

3. Those who maintain the doctrine of universal atonement do not deny that it is personal. They hold that Christ, by His death, made atonement for the whole human family--for all and for every one, and for all alike--for one as much as for another. To do justice to this scheme of atonement it is proper to say that it differs from the one last considered, in that it fully recognizes subjective personality. Its advocates contend that atonement was made for persons--for personal sinners. It differs also from that which is called the commercial plan of atonement. They maintain that the atonement was sufficient for the world, and also that it was designed for all. It may be proper to remark further, that the difference between this scheme of universal atonement, and the theory next to be considered, has been signified on a preceding page, and will come more fully into view as we proceed with our discussion of the general subject.

Those who advocate the doctrine of universal atonement rely (if I understand them) mainly on three sources of evidence to support their theory: 1. On arguments drawn from the analogies of nature; 2. On arguments derived from fundamental truths revealed in the Scriptures; 3. On particular texts of Scripture.

1. The arguments drawn, professedly, from the analogies of nature are so foreign, so inappropriate and inapplicable, as to be unworthy of the reader's notice. I shall therefore not tax his patience by stating them.

2. To reason from general and fundamental truths, clearly revealed in the inspired writings, is perfectly lawful; and on some subjects we have no need of more forcible and decisive arguments

than legitimate deductions of this kind; but in general they require very close and critical examination, lest we should accept larger inferences than the premises will justify.

I have read comparatively but few authors on the doctrine of atonement; and of the few whose works I have examined, some appear to me to neglect the distinction between the sufficiency of the atonement and the design. That there is a real distinction, is obvious, and must be acknowledged by every one who will give the subject a little reflection; and while the writers alluded to recognize this distinction, and occasionally advert to it, yet in their arguments they seem to lose sight of it, and to interblend the two topics so much that it is scarcely possible to know to which of the two they direct their arguments.

I lay it down as a fundamental principle, that the atonement made by the death of Christ does effectually and perfectly answer all the ends and designs for which it was made. It meets and fills the whole necessity which required the intervention of an atonement. This, I suppose, will not be contested. Hence, in all its relations to God as Sovereign Lawgiver and Judge, it must be absolutely perfect and complete, both essentially and comprehensively; for any defect or deficiency would vitiate the whole transaction, and render all its contemplated results abortive. From these considerations it must follow that the atonement, in its nature--in its intrinsic worth and merit--is sufficient for the redemption of the whole family of sinful men, provided it were the will of God to apply it to all. And not only is it a sufficient ground to admit of the salvation of all, but it must insure the certain and inevitable salvation of all to whom an application of its benefits is made; but the fact that it is in itself sufficient for all, is no proof that it was intended that all should have a personal interest in its provisions.

It would be inconsistent in the extreme, even to the point of absurdity, to suppose that the all-wise God would, at so great a sacrifice, provide an atonement for lost sinners which would not be sufficient to satisfy His own will, and competent to answer all His own purposes. And if it is conceded that, so far as an atonement was necessary, that which was made by the death of the Son of God is, in itself--in its merit and efficacy--sufficient for the necessity of all the human family, so that nothing more, by way of atonement, would be necessary, if the salvation of all were intended, it will follow that, whatever limitation there may be in its application to sinners, such restriction must depend upon the sovereign purpose of God; so that arguments to prove the sufficiency of the atonement, which would be relevant and appropriate, would prove nothing at all respecting any limitation of the design for which it was made.

1. It is thought by some that an inference may be drawn from the nature of the atonement, that it was intended to have application to all men. They allege that the atonement is just what we might suppose it would be on the supposition that it was intended for all men. Now, it is a sound maxim in logical reasoning, that "an argument that proves too much, proves nothing;" and this argument would have the same force and the same propriety if urged in favor of universal salvation. If it had been the purpose of God to save the whole human family, the nature of the atonement would be just what it is. The argument, therefore, proves too much. On the other hand, the nature and intrinsic worth of the atonement is just what it would be if it had been made for but one sinner. Whatever weight the argument might have, if employed to prove the sufficiency of the atonement, it can have no propriety of application to the design of its personal application.

Those writers who plead for a universal atonement speak of the nature of the atonement as being such that, it is applicable to all men, and as having some reference to all men; thus adopting modes of expression of the most vague and indeterminate meaning. While professing to show how far the atonement was designed to be extended in its saving relations, they only show how far (by the will of God) it might be extended; thus losing sight of the distinction between the sufficiency of the atonement and its design. To tell the reader that the atonement must have some reference to all men, will afford him very little instruction, unless I tell him that it was the purpose of God that it should have the same reference to all men alike; for this seems to be the idea they wish to convey to the reader's mind.

Some of the advocates of universal atonement admit that "if Christ endured the literal penalty of the law, the doctrine of a limited atonement must be true." Now, there is no other penalty of the law but the literal penalty; but we will waive that. But as certainly as it is the determined purpose of God to maintain the honor of His law and the truth of its threatening, so certainly the penalty of the law must fall somewhere; and if it did not fall on Jesus Christ as the sinner's substitute, it will fall on the sinner. Let every sinner--even those writers themselves--be prepared for this; for it is inevitable. Let me here propose a few questions to the reader: Is not the penalty of the law death? And did not Christ suffer death for sinners? If these should be answered in the affirmative, what perverse sophistry it is to say that Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law.

2. These writers, by a similar mode of reasoning, draw the same inference from the Divine dignity of Him who made atonement; and this argument is liable to the same objections. It proves too much. The dignity of the Son of God is such that we may as rationally infer that He was as able to save eternally the whole human family as that He was able to make atonement for them; and the Universalist is as much entitled to the benefit of this argument as the believer in a universal atonement. They suppose that the idea of a universal atonement better "fits in" with the rank and dignity of Him who made it than a limited atonement. And would not a universal salvation also better "fit in" with the dignity of the Son of God (in foolish man's conception) than a limited salvation? Let me treat the reader to a specimen of their systematical reasoning. They say: "If the atonement had been made by a mere man," it would necessarily have been limited; or, "If it had been made by an angel," it must also have been limited. Thus they tell us very seriously what would have been the result if a natural impossibility had come to pass. It would be equally as rational, and equally as creditable, to speak of an atonement being made by a mouse, as by an angel or a mere man. And, after all, what is the difference? We admit that an atonement made by a Divine person must possess in itself a value and glory corresponding with the dignity of Him who made it; but if it is a real, a veritable vicarious atonement, it must be as capable of application to the whole world, if made by an angel or a mere man, as if made by the Lord of glory. The rank and dignity of the Redeemer are supposed to be such as they would be on the supposition that the atonement was intended to be general. This is true; and it is also true that they are just what they would and must be if the atonement was intended to save but one sinner. If Christ were not the Son of God, He could not make any atonement at all. Such flimsy and spurious arguments may have, in some measure, the effect intended by the authors, but their insignificance is very easily exposed. The very terms employed in discussing the subject are sometimes highly objectionable, and even offensive to the heart of a pious and intelligent Christian. They speak of Christ as having been selected for the work in consequence, or on the ground of His rank and dignity, with a view to

guard us against the supposition of any limitation of the atonement. The term selected implies that there were others as well as He who might have been chosen; and though they were inferior in rank and dignity, yet they were competent, for otherwise there was no propriety in speaking of His being selected. How disparaging to the honor of the Son of God to be told that there were others who could have redeemed lost sinners if He had declined the service.

3. It is supposed that data may be found in the mediatorial administration of the Divine government to warrant an inference in favor of universal atonement. Arguments legitimately derived from the mediatorship of our great High Priest are certainly worthy of the highest consideration; and any argument professing to have its foundation there should not be disregarded. It is a very easy task to prove that Jesus Christ is invested with the administration of the universal government of God; and this argument proceeds on the hypothesis that the atonement is the basis of His mediatorial government. This hypothesis will admit of debate; and I ask permission, without giving offense to say a few words: If we accept this assumption, it must be on certain conditions and with some modification. It involves a theme that opens a wide field to our contemplation. To explore this field even very partially, would impose upon us more labor and intense reflection than would comport with the design of this work--more, indeed, than I would be willing to impose upon the reader or upon myself. I must therefore, content myself with making a few brief suggestions:

All things in the natural and moral creation are mediatorially related to God through Christ; for so the Scriptures plainly teach. But when I speak of the mediatorial government of Christ I have special reference to His being a Mediator between God and sinners for the purpose of reconciliation; and as, in this point of view, He is the Mediator of the "New Covenant," His mediatorial administration is comprehended within, and bounded by, the conditions and provisions of the New Covenant. It would, therefore, seem to me more proper to say that the basis of His mediatorial government is the New Covenant; for the atonement is certainly a fundamental condition of the covenant of grace, and it is also a part of His mediatorial administration. In ascertaining and defining the extent of the atonement, I do not see that we are authorized to go beyond the extent of His strictly mediatorial administration; nor do I see how we can consistently carry either of these beyond the extent of that covenant of which He is the Mediator. I confess it appears to me that if we pass the boundaries of the strictly mediatorial administration of Christ--as the Mediator of the New Covenant--we fall at once under that universal moral government of God, of which Christ is the administrator, but not a mediator--using the term mediator in its evangelical sense.

I had made up my mind not to take any notice of this particular point; but, considering its important bearing on the question of the extent of the atonement, I doubted whether I would be justifiable in the omission; especially as I thought an intimation in that direction might be acceptable to some who may read this work. But aside from the considerations presented above, let us ascertain what inferences the aforesaid hypothesis will justify, and whether the arguments founded upon the proposition are legitimately derived.

I find myself at a loss how to proceed in attempting to canvass the arguments employed to support the validity of their deductions. The reason is, their language is so general and indefinite that I am unable to ascertain the precise idea that they seem willing to convey to the mind of the reader.

They assume, as a first principle, or at least as a primary proposition, that as all power and authority are given into the hands of the Mediator, and as this dominion is given to Him on the ground that He has made atonement, this atonement must have some reference to the whole human race. But right here the question will present itself, What reference has the atonement to the whole human family? Does it have the same reference to those that are saved that it has to those that are lost? This is precisely the question that requires solution; and while they propose to discuss this question, they seem to me to direct their arguments against those who advocate the commercial scheme of atonement, and the prime question receives very little attention. They hold that the atonement has a bearing or influence on the whole creation, and especially on the angels, who are desirous to learn the glorious mysteries of the cross. This we do not deny; but does the atonement have the same reference to these angels that it does to those sinners who are washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb? The dividing of the waters of the Red Sea had a very important reference to the Canaanites and to the Egyptians, and even to us, and to all in every age and every place where the Bible is found; but were the waters of the Red Sea divided to make a way for us to pass through? Was it done for the benefit of Pharaoh and his army? Was it intended to be an advantage to the Canaanites? Did that miraculous interposition have the same reference to the Egyptians that it had to the Israelites? To speak, therefore, of the atonement as having some relations to the whole race of man, without indicating whether such relations are saving relations--without signifying whether it has the same relation to those who are saved that it has to those that are not saved--without making any allusion to the specific design of God in providing the atonement--I say to treat the subject in this way conveys very little instruction to the mind of an ingenious inquirer. The whole work of making atonement is the same, whether it was the divine purpose that many shall be actually saved by it or only a few. And the reward of the Redeemer for this service--that is, His exaltation--is the same, whether in its personal relations it extends to all or only to a part; and as His elevation to the throne of government is the reward of His humiliation and obedience unto death, I do not see how it justifies the inference of a universal atonement any more than it would justify an inference in favor of a universal salvation. In His exaltation, He becomes "Head over all things to the Church"--to the Church, for the Church's sake. The grand object to be accomplished by the atonement was the redemption of His Church. But why should we extend the efficacy of the atonement, considered as atonement, beyond the necessity that required it, and apply it to objects which were never affected by sin, and never could be? It was sin that made an atonement necessary; and when that necessity was fully met and supplied, atonement, as such, can have no further action or proper application. The fruits of atonement--its various results or consequences--may be extended far and wide, both as it respects Him who made it and those for whom it was made; but these do not belong to the essence or inherent nature of the atonement. In connection with the mediatorial government of Christ, and by the same process of reasoning, an inference is drawn in favor of universal atonement, from the fact that Christ is to judge the world at the last day. But this argument is liable to the same objections as the other, and may be answered in the same way. In the final judgment, the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed," etc.; and to those on His left hand, "Depart, ye cursed," etc. Now, the question is, Does the atonement have the same relation to one of those parties that it has to the other? Both parties stand in the same relation to Him as a Judge. Do they stand in the same relation to Him as a Redeemer? Or, taking the question in another form and more directly to the point under discussion, Was the atonement designed (intended) for one of those parties as

much as for the other? If the atonement does not have an equal relation to both, and was designed to effect as much for one as for the other, the argument proves too much; and the same may be said of the argument in favor of universal atonement as deduced from the fact that all--both the just and the unjust--will be raised from the dead through Christ; for some will come forth "to resurrection of life," and others "to the resurrection of damnation." Shall we attribute the damnation of the wicked to the atonement? I repeat, that those writers, if I understand their arguments, do not observe the distinction between the sufficiency and the design of the atonement. If their object is to prove the sufficiency of the atonement, their arguments may be entitled to consideration; but I do not think they adopt the best method of attaining the end in view. The true way of establishing this doctrine is to examine it in its relations to God. If it meets and satisfies these relations; if it completely vindicates the integrity and honor of Divine justice; if it fully and effectually satisfies all the demands of the law against sinners, this is all the sufficiency that the necessity requires. If its sufficiency is such that God is "well pleased" with it, it must of necessity be sufficient for all the purposes of an atonement in its relations to us; for it must, of course, remove all legal obstacles out of the way of any sinner's acceptance with God; that is, there can be no legal ground why God may not apply its benefits to any sinner, so far as it is His good pleasure to extend it. And that the atonement is sufficient for these purposes, we need no other proof than the fact that Christ rose from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I do not say that no other proof can be adduced, but it is sufficient to supersede the necessity of additional proof. But let the sufficiency of the atonement be established on as strong grounds as it may, it will prove nothing to the purpose as to the design for which it was made, in a personal and numerical point of view: There being no limitation in respect to its sufficiency, whatever limitation there may be must respect the design for which it was made in regard to its application. Hence those writers admit that "by the sovereign purpose of God," in the appropriation of its benefits, it might be limited to a part only of the human family; and that the reason why all are not saved through the atonement is to be sought for in the Divine purpose. This is coming exactly to the point. It is the pivot upon which the whole question turns; and the discussion might very properly be confined to this topic; but they have but little to say on this essential point. When the advocates of universal atonement resort to the analogies of nature for arguments to support their theory, we refuse to follow them. We know they can never find the atonement of Christ out of the Bible. But we freely accord to them the privilege of reasoning from Scripture doctrines; and we have endeavored to consider their arguments derived from that source as impartially as we could. But they do not rely upon these sources alone for proof, but claim to be sustained by the direct statements of Holy Scripture. We shall now therefore take into view those texts which it is thought support their scheme. In doing this, we shall state their own arguments founded on those scriptures; and also submit to the reader's attention what has been said, or may be said, in opposition to their views. I do not see how I can be impartial without presenting, as fairly as I am able, both sides of the question. But there is one thing that the reader should keep constantly in his mind; it is this: When any particular text of Scripture is offered in proof of a particular doctrine, we must first ascertain the true meaning of the text itself; for if the passage in its true meaning does not support the doctrine, it is no proof.

11c Atonement

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER XI.

ATONEMENT. In the third chapter of John (John 3:16-17) we read: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." This passage is relied upon with a great deal of confidence. But, on the other hand, it may be said that there is no direct reference to the atonement in the text. I do not say there is nothing in the text that has a favorable bearing on their doctrine; but I think that when the text is fully and fairly examined it will be seen that it is far from being conclusive. They lay a great deal of stress on the term "world," and this they must do, or they can not make the text available to their purpose. But if they adhere to this rule, it will prove more than they would be willing to admit; it would answer the purpose of those who would use it to prove the doctrine of universal salvation as well as it does to prove universal atonement. In fact, I am not sure but the Universalist can frame a more plausible argument upon it than the other. As a proof-text, the degree of evidence it affords must depend largely upon the true interpretation of the text itself. Let us then look at their own exposition. They say our Savior was intending to teach Nicodemus that His religion was not to be confined to the Jews, but was designed for the benefit of all nations. This interpretation is plausible, and, indeed, we may say it is rational, for we know the strong prejudices of the Jews in regard to the Gentiles, and it is often referred to in the New Testament. We must admit that it is not stated in the passage, that our Savior had this object in view; but I can find no evidence to the contrary. If, then, we adopt this interpretation, it will fully justify the form of expression used by our Savior without the least allusion to the atonement; and it is certain that there is no reference to the atonement in the passage, except by a distant implication.

If we will correctly understand those scriptures in which we find this general phrase, "the world," we are compelled to have recourse to the connection and to the object of the writer, so far as that can be ascertained; for if we adhere tenaciously to the meaning assigned to it by the writers referred to, we shall find it difficult, if not impossible, to defend the inspired writers from the charge of self-contradiction. And we shall find it equally difficult to avoid universal salvation; and as there are other passages adduced by those authors in support of their views, it may not be amiss to make a few observations on this subject, with a view to guard ourselves against the danger of false interpretations. Whoever will take the trouble--and the trouble would not be great--to collate and compare those places in which John uses the phrase "the world," will be convinced, if he has any candor, that this apostle uses it with a great deal of latitude. It is alleged that the language in the text is as general as can be used. But they themselves would not pretend that the phrase is always to be understood in a strictly universal sense. It is a good rule to compare scripture with scripture; and it is especially necessary to compare the language, in different places, of the same

inspired writer when he uses the same terms. In the First Epistle of John (1 John 5:19) it is said: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." But the context proves that the phrase "the whole world," must not be applied in a strictly universal sense; and I will not contend obstinately for the application of a rule of interpretation to a passage which seems to give support to my views, when I will not submit to its application to one that is contrary to my sentiments.

Now, in connection with the text referred to in John's gospel, let us consider some other passages which contain the same phrase, and which are relied on by the advocates of universal atonement with a great deal of assurance. 1 John 2:2 : "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." On this passage we find the following remark: "No language could express the universality of the design of the atonement more clearly or strongly." But let us not be terrified by this confident and defiant manner of speaking; for, to say the least, it is no credit to those who employ it; and I have no doubt the writer himself could have expressed the universality of the design of the atonement in terms stronger and clearer than the words of the quotation.

1. In the first place, it is said, on the other side, that the apostle is addressing his instruction to believers who are already reconciled to God through the atonement; and this will not be denied. They, therefore, think the apostle means all believers in every age and in every part of the world, and this explanation of the text is supported by the context.

2. It is further argued that Christ is "a propitiation through faith in His blood." And we presume that no one will pretend that He is really a propitiation to unbelievers; or a propitiation to any in any other way, and consequently this clear and strong proof is no proof at all to their purpose.

3. In addition to the above, it may be considered that the passage under consideration has a direct reference to the intercession of Christ. There is no direct reference to the atonement proper, though, of course, there could be no intercession without the atonement. "My little, children"--a form of expression which the apostle does not apply to the whole world of mankind. The passage in the First Epistle to Timothy, where it is said, "He gave Himself a ransom for all," etc., can not, with any propriety, be applied in a universal sense. The context requires a different construction. The believers in the doctrine of a universal atonement rely with a great deal of assurance on a passage in the second chapter of Hebrews--"That He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." This text is, in my judgment, the most difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of personal limitation in the atonement, of any that we find in the Bible. But it is said, on the other side, that the word "man" is not in the original, and that it should be translated everyone; and it is so translated by the Bible Union. I could not give the reader a clear view of my idea of the meaning of the text without entering somewhat at large into the doctrinal part of the epistle, and that would lead me too much out of my way; but the verse in which the words occur, and the following verse, are very intimately connected, and I suppose that the inspired writer had the same persons in view in the ninth verse when he says "every one," that he had in the tenth when he speaks of "many sons."

There is a passage in the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians which is thought to give strong support to the doctrine of universal atonement. It reads thus: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and

rose again."

Whether this scripture affords any proof of the universality of the atonement, depends entirely on the true interpretation of the text; for no one will pretend that the word all must in all cases comprehend the whole human family; and if that is not its meaning here, it will yield no support to the doctrine of universal atonement. Some of those who contend for this doctrine understand the apostle to teach the universal depravity of human nature. They allege that the apostle takes it for granted, as a doctrine admitted by all, that Christ died for the whole human family; and thence argues, that this being so, the whole human family were dead in sin. But to take this for granted is a very violent assumption. I apprehend that it is not true, in fact, that it was a doctrine admitted by all, that Christ died for the whole human family, and there is no proof given or offered to sustain the assumption. And I would also remark that the depravity of human nature is not the subject of the apostle's discourse, and is not alluded to in the chapter; neither is the subject of the total depravity of human nature discussed in the whole epistle.

I would also further observe, that even if it were admitted that Christ died for every one of the human race, it would not prove the total depravity of human nature. It would prove that all are under the curse of the law, but not that all are totally corrupt. Total depravity might be proved by the work of the Spirit, but not by the atonement of Christ; and it is not the practice of this apostle to prove his points by fallible arguments. Whether the doctrine is true or not, I can not accept this interpretation of the text.

There are others who give a different interpretation of the text in question. They suppose that it was not the design of the apostle to teach that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom Christ died. This construction agrees much better with the succeeding verse, and indeed it is more in accordance with the scope of the passage; and they allege that a more literal rendering of the original would be, "then were they all dead." So that the extent of the word all in the first member of the sentence is to be determined by its meaning in the latter.

I believe this exposition is sanctioned by our best theological writers; yet if I may be allowed the privilege of submitting my own views of the passage, I should incline to an interpretation somewhat different. I think the apostle refers to that federal relation which Christ sustains to His people. Paul frequently refers to it in his epistles. If Christ, the Surety and Head of His people, died for them, then they all, as members of His body, are considered as dying in Him. The same doctrine is taught in this text that we find in other scriptures: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." (Romans 6:8. See also Romans 6:6, ib.) "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." (2 Timothy 2:11) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Galatians 2:20) Hence the apostle's reference to the resurrection, in the text under consideration, is quite pertinent; and the argument is this: That as Christ died and rose again into a new life, and we (mystically or federally) died in Him and rose, in Him, we ought henceforth to live, not unto ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. The same idea is brought to light again in the last verse of the same chapter. We will give the rendering of the Bible Union translators, which, though in harmony with the common version, is probably more strictly literal: "Because we thus judged, that if one died for all, then they all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for them died and rose again." If this translation is

correct, it bears favorably on the interpretation presented above. Of one thing I feel assured--throughout the whole chapter the apostle is speaking to believers and of believers. The reader may examine for himself.

There may be some other scriptures brought in support of the theory of universal atonement, but the arguments on both sides, I presume, are very similar to those already considered. There is, however, one more passage which impartiality requires us to examine; and I shall notice it the more willingly, as giving the reader a specimen of the way in which learned men, who are conscious of possessing some reputation for biblical scholarship, would force their opinions upon unsuspecting readers by positive and unqualified assertions. The text referred to is 2 Peter 2:1 : "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Of this text it is said--and I quote literally--"It is expressly said that some for whom He (Christ) died, will perish." And again: "There could not be a more unequivocal declaration that some for whom Christ died will perish." Thus we see in what bold and unqualified assertions some learned writers will indulge themselves, in order to force their own peculiar opinions upon their readers. In this way they foreclose inquiry, and expect implicit submission to their dictates. Now the assumption of the writer is, that "some for whom Christ died will perish." Let us attend to his arguments and explanation of the text. He says, "When the word bought occurs elsewhere in the New Testament, with reference to redemption, the allusion is to Him" (Christ); and he proceeds to give us a number of examples, all of which are plainly to the point, though in some of them it was unnecessary to speak of an allusion, seeing Christ is expressly named. But who ever doubted that when the words bought, purchased, and redeemed are used in reference to redemption, that Christ is the person referred to? It was incumbent on him to show that redemption--the redemption of Christ--is referred to in the text by the word bought. This he does not attempt, though he well knew that it is a controverted point. The numerous passages adduced by him prove that which no one doubts, but this is proving nothing to the point; and that which his object requires to be proved, he would have us to take for granted. Why does he not prove, or attempt to prove, that which requires proof? What the author wished to impress on the mind of the reader was, that Christ is the person referred to in the text by the word Lord: this he fails to do, and he is religiously careful never to give the reader a hint that the word translated Lord is nowhere else applied to Christ in the New Testament. Hence it is doubtful whether He is the person designated as "the Lord." Moreover, it is by no means certain that the word "bought" is used in its literal sense of purchased; for the word is used frequently in the Bible where there is no reference to the payment of a price. And again, there is no proof in the text, or in the whole chapter, that the death of Christ is intended, and of course there can be no certainty that the apostle had any reference to the atonement; and besides this, the term "destruction" is often used without any allusion to everlasting punishment. And yet our learned author affirms that the text proves "expressly" and "unequivocally" that Christ died for them, and that they perished. In this way he would override the private judgment of the reader, and carry his point by downright dogmatism. Testimony that is exceptionable in so many points of view can never be considered by the judicious and candid inquirer as decisive; and if it would be illiberal to impeach the author's candor, we shall then be reduced to the necessity of doubting his critical judgment. He could not plead ignorance to these objections to his view of the text, notwithstanding he makes no allusion to them.

It has been objected against the commercial scheme of atonement that it excludes grace in respect to the pardon of sin. Now, it is not incumbent on me to defend a doctrine which I reject from the attacks of its opposers; but it is incumbent on me to defend the truth, so far as I am able, from unfounded objections; and the objection, as they state it, is as applicable to the true doctrine of atonement as it is to that against which they urge it. I do not think I misapprehend the ground upon which they found this objection, because their own illustration makes it unmistakably plain. If Onesimus owes Philemon a debt, and Paul pays it, Onesimus has a right to claim a discharge, and Philemon is bound, by simple justice, to release him. If a creditor (it is said) receives the whole amount of his demand, no matter whether from the debtor or from a third person, it can not be said with propriety that he forgave the debtor. There is no room for grace in the transaction. The objection, so far as I can see, is founded on a supposition that the atonement of Christ is not a perfect and complete satisfaction for sin, and, therefore, did not fully satisfy the claims of Divine justice. Indeed, the figure by which they illustrate it fixes the objection to that very principle. If Christ died for every human soul; or, if He died for a select few, provided His death was a full and complete atonement, or satisfaction, for the sins of those for whom He died, such atonement would as effectually exclude grace from their pardon in the one case as in the other. I regret to see this objection employed by those who contend for the all-sufficiency and infinite value of the atonement of Christ.

I will present the reader with the result of some of my reflections on the subject, and in doing so I shall lay down two fundamental propositions, viz:

1. That the pardon of a sinner is an act of grace--pure and special grace and mercy.
2. That Christ, by His death, rendered a complete and perfect satisfaction to the claims of Divine justice. To these propositions I shall adhere; and if it can not be shown that they are consistent with each other--if it can not be made to appear to my satisfaction that both way be true at the same time--I will cheerfully ascribe it to my own blindness, but my postulates I will not renounce. The objectors contrive, by their mode of illustration, to give the objection a plausibility which disguises the truth; but there is that in the very face of the objection which ought to awaken suspicion and provoke a critical examination of the figure by which they attempt to illustrate their argument. If we assume that the Divine government is not administered on principles of strict and exact justice, we would have room enough for the exercise of mercy in the pardon of sin; but mercy thus extended would be at the sacrifice of justice. Or, if we take the ground that Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law, we might find scope for the dispensation of mercy in remitting the penalty of the law; but then we might be met with the question, "Do we then make void the law" through the atonement? and the only admissible answer would be, We do; and Christ thus becomes, not a fulfiller of the law, but a nullifier of the law.

Let us examine this figure by a comparison, and see whether it is, indeed, analogous to the subject which it professes to illustrate.

1. In the first place it is contended by those very persons who admit this objection, that there is not, in every respect, a proper analogy between commercial law and criminal law. That crime is quite a different thing from pecuniary debt. In this they are certainly right; and yet their argument seems to be founded upon the supposition that there is a true analogy between commercial justice and criminal justice. I think we should hesitate before we apply this figure.

2. In the second place, I say that no creditor, debtor, and intervening friend ever stood, or can stand, in the same relations to each other that the parties concerned in atonement and pardon stand to each other. The relations existing between those parties are perfectly unique, and admit of no parallel. In this respect there is a very great want of analogy; and I may add that this want of similarity is one that has an important bearing on the issue in question; but it is sufficient at present that we recognize the fact of this want of parallelism.

3. When a creditor receives the payment in full, he has no other claims upon the debtor. There are no other demands to satisfy, and the parties stand upon terms of perfect equality with each other, and the debtor is under no other obligation. The case is very different in respect to atonement and pardon.

4. When a friend pays the debt of another, the expedient originates with himself. His specific object is not to secure the rights of the creditor, but to confer a favor on the debtor in releasing him from pecuniary obligation. It is not an expedient resorted to by the creditor himself out of kindness to the debtor. The creditor has no concern in providing the means for the debtor's release; neither does he make any sacrifice in any respect that he may extend favor to the debtor. Analogy is wanting here in its most vital point. The payer might entertain an implacable hatred toward the creditor, and the creditor might bear equal ill-will to the payor. The creditor might also cherish a bitter enmity to the debtor, yet the transaction would, in itself, be legal and just. Not so in the pardon of sin. There is scarcely the shadow of applicable analogy.

5. I shall now take higher ground. I assume that Christ has made full and complete satisfaction to Divine justice for sin, and that the remission of the penalty of the law may be claimed as a right--it may be demanded as a legal and equitable right on principles of justice. But here I must enter my protest against the method of stating an acknowledged truth with an inference as if it were a simple proposition. Their argument is this: Christ has satisfied the claims of Divine justice; therefore the sinner has a right to claim his discharge. The proposition is true, but the inference is not legitimate. If the sinner himself had satisfied the claims of the law he would, as far as I can see, have a right to demand remission. If a creditor receives the full amount of his due, though at the hand of a third person, his claim is liquidated, and, according to the mere forms of judicial law, the debtor may plead it in bar of judgment; but every one must see that he has no claims of his own upon which to found a plea. The creditor is not brought under obligation to the debtor to release him. If the debtor is released, it is to him an act of pure grace. But there is another capital deficiency in their mode of illustration, which shows that it ought never to be employed in that application. The supposition is, that a friend--an isolated, disinterested, and independent friend--pays the debt. But this is not the character and relation in which Christ made atonement for us. He became onewith us. He was our Surety--our Substitute. He assumed an obligation to make satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins, and paid the debt--calling it debt--in discharge of His own obligation for our sake. He has therefore a firmly founded right to demand the release of those for whom He paid the debt, and whose Surety and Substitute He was in the whole transaction. If He, as Surety, is discharged, those for whom He acted in that relation are virtually discharged also. He, as Surety, and in the sinner's place, pays the debt, and, officiating still as Surety and in the sinner's place, claims, as a matter of right, the sinner's discharge.

Let us view this subject of atonement and remission in its twofold relations, both as it respects the sinner and as it respects Christ as Surety. The atonement is a plea for both. It provides and supplies the sinner coming to a throne of grace in prayer for pardon, with a good, and acceptable, and prevailing plea, authorized by the promise. Oppressed with guilt, and coming to a throne of grace as a helpless sinner, an unworthy and wrath-deserving beggar--the only attitude in which a sinner ever ought to come, or can come acceptably--he may successfully plead the atoning blood of Christ for the remission of his sins: and this is a privilege which is graciously given to the believing sinner; and he exercises it as a precious privilege, and not as a rightful claim. On the other hand, Christ, as Surety, comes before the Judge officiating in judicial law and authority, and as the representative and Advocate of the sinner; and in this relation the atonement supplies him with a legal, judicial, equitable, and available plea, upon which He can legally claim and demand, in judicial administration, the discharge of the sinner from penal liability. Thus we see that though they both bring the same plea substantially, there is yet an immense and essential difference in the principles upon which they respectively present this confessedly good plea. Christ pleads on the principle of judicial right--the sinner on the principle of special grace. I might enlarge on this topic to a much greater extent, and would be glad to do so, but I forbear.

There is one more aspect of this subject, in which it is specially necessary that we examine it--it would be unpardonable to overlook it. The argument of those who contend that there is no grace, on the ground that the debt has been paid by a friend, extends no further than to mere legal exemption. They can not pretend to carry it further, for the principle upon which they found the argument contemplates nothing more. The creditor says to the debtor: "Your friend has discharged your debt, and it would be unjust in me to require it of you--I, therefore, release you." And so, in like manner, the Divine Judge says to the sinner: "Christ has suffered the penalty of the law for you, and therefore it would be unjust in me to inflict it upon you--I discharge you." Would such forgiveness as this fill the desire of a true lover of God? It may be, and probably is, as much as the unrenewed heart would expect or desire; but the true child of God can not be satisfied with this; he knows that his God has just cause to be angry with him, and he feels that he can not have peace with Him, except God is reconciled to him. David did not execute the penalty of the law upon Absalom, but he said, "Let him not see my face." The pardon for which I pray includes something more than mere legal absolution. It is not enough that my Father should say to me, "Thou shalt not die;" let Him also say, "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." I want to be precious in His sight--to be honorable before Him--and to be the object of His love, even of His forgiving love. Let my reconciled Father say, "Is he my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." The truly contrite spirit desires such pardon as is exemplified in the father of the prodigal. Forgiveness in this point of view can never be charged with the absence of grace--it is an act of grace--special grace. There is nothing but grace in it. The satisfaction made to the law by the atonement does not reach it. It is the forthgoing of eternal love. The truly penitent soul wants that kind of pardon which is stipulated in the everlasting covenant: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The atonement was interposed to make way for grace to abound--for grace to reign--in the pardon of sin. That kind of remission which the objector's argument implies, might consist well enough with the remembrance of sin, for it might be extended without one spark of love to the sinner--simply an exemption from the legal penalty--a great blessing, truly, in itself, but coming far short of that forgiveness of sin by which the grace of God is so much glorified. The

Specific Design of Atonement. In the further prosecution of our inquiries into this subject, I shall lay down some fundamental truths which I consider as being indispensable preliminaries to a proper and correct understanding of the true theory of atonement. And I shall, in the first place, premise--

1. That the atonement is a true, complete, and perfect satisfaction to Divine justice for sin. If it is not, it is not atonement in any proper sense of the term.

2. That the atonement is, in itself--in its nature and worth--sufficient for the sins of the whole family of Adam.

Nothing more, therefore, would be necessary, by way of satisfaction for sin, if it were intended that the whole race of sinners should be saved by it.

3. In the third place, that it did actually and effectually accomplish all that for which it was designed.

4. That the atonement was strictly vicarious. Christ died in the room of sinners. He died that the sinner might not die. He suffered the penalty of the law in the place of the sinner, that the sinner might be saved from the penalty of the law.

5. That the atonement is truly personal in its primary relation. It was made for persons; not merely for sin in the abstract, but for the sins of personal sinners.

If it was not, it is wrong to call it vicarious.

6. That the great object--the primary and special design--of the atonement is to redeem sinners from the curse of the law.

Any theory of atonement that does not secure this object, is neither worth confirmation nor refutation.

Now, keeping these preliminaries in view, we are prepared to inquire into the true extent of the atonement. And I shall not select general and indefinite modes of expression that may mean more, or may mean less, but the most pointed and definite terms that my limited knowledge of the English language will supply. In the second of the foregoing postulates it is assumed that the atonement of Christ is, in its objective fullness--in its intrinsic merit and value--sufficient for the redemption of the whole world. This attribute of the atonement, I believe is not denied by many at the present day, and I shall not, at this time, solicit the reader's attention to this topic; but I must ingenuously own that I do not see the relevancy of some arguments alleged in support of it.

If any shall say that by the death of Christ there were other objects accomplished besides the redemption of sinners, I shall not controvert their position. The death of the Son of God was accomplished to make atonement for sin, as the Scriptures abundantly teach, though other objects, as consequential or incidental results, might, and certainly did, follow. But I shall still contend that so far as we, sinful men, have any interest in the atonement, the primary and special object of the atonement was the redemption of sinners. Outside of this object we are under no necessity of discussing the subject, though it is the privilege of all to investigate the subject to any extent that the Scriptures will authorize. By the third postulate assumed above, it is affirmed that the atonement did effectually accomplish all that for which it was designed; by the fourth, that it

was strictly vicarious or substitutional; and by the fifth, that it was strictly personal. Now, if the atonement was any thing that can with propriety be called atonement, I do not see how these premises can be denied; and if they are conceded as true, I am at a loss to see how it can be universal, without also admitting universal salvation. So that the precise point to which we must direct our inquiries, is the design of the atonement in its relation to sinners personally. And if we admit that God had, in providing atonement, a determinate design or purpose to save sinners--personal sinners-- through the atonement, the question for our present consideration will be reduced to this: Was it the Divine purpose to save all the sinners of the human family by the atonement, or to save those only who will be actually saved ? That God had a fixed and determinate purpose to save sinners, I suppose would be admitted by all, whatever might be their views of the atonement; and, indeed, it can not be made a question if the authority of Scripture is to be respected. And as He saves sinners in no other way than by the atonement of Jesus Christ, He provided the atonement that He might accomplish His purpose of saving sinners. And whatever purpose He might have respecting those who will not be saved, it surely will not be pretended that He did not design to save those who will eventually be saved; for the supposition involves so many absurdities that the rational mind rejects it intuitively.

Without atonement there is no salvation. That is the foundation upon which our salvation stands. Now if, in laying this foundation, it was the Divine purpose to save the whole world of mankind, then all the world will certainly be saved, or the Divine purpose fails. In so far as the Divine purpose fails, God sustains a defeat, and Satan obtains the victory; and it seems to me this is bound to be the inevitable result if the atonement is universal in its personal design. If the atonement was designed for the redemption of all, and there are any who do not obtain all for which it was made, it is manifest that the atonement does not accomplish all that for which it was designed. I can see no possibility of the contrary; for that there is a failure is too obvious to admit of debate. This subject is important, and to arrive at the truth is, in the highest degree, desirable. It is right, therefore, that we should examine it in every light in which it can be proposed to our consideration. With this in view we say:

If the love and grace of God has ever been manifested to this lost and guilty world, it is brought out into most conspicuous exhibition in the death of the Son of God--in the fact that He died for sinners; in other words, that He made atonement by His death for our sins. The grace of God shines in every part and every act of this most marvelous transaction. It is a fountain of grace--a treasure of grace--to personal sinners. Now, if this atonement was made for all persons, then every person must have a personal interest in all its gracious provisions, equal to, and corresponding with, the personal relation in which he stands to this universal atonement; and thus all are comprehended within the boundaries of atoning grace, for all are included within the design for which the atonement was made. But, notwithstanding, it is admitted that all will not be saved; and that, because it was not the design of God to make it savingly efficacious to those who are lost. According to this scheme, those who are finally lost have a secured interest in the grace of atonement--secured by the purpose of God--because Christ died to make atonement for them; but it was the Divine purpose not to make this atoning grace savingly efficacious to them, but He did design to make it savingly efficacious to those who are saved. By this arrangement--this limited design in the application--the grace of the application is not only withheld from those who are lost, but they are actually, and by design, excluded from the grace of the atonement which was already

secured to them by their interest in it. The sovereign discriminating grace of God, in making atonement specially for a part, and not for all, has been stigmatized as partiality. But in this scheme of universal atonement there is something that looks worse than partiality--it is sovereignty with a vengeance. And I can see no way to escape this offensive consequence if we contend for one unlimited personal design in making atonement, and another distinct and limited personal design in applying its benefits; but I see no necessity for more than one design. The object and design of providing atonement is to save sinners, and the object and design of applying its benefits is to save sinners. The object in both is the same; and why should there be more than the one design? Neither do I think they can show any good result that is gained by the supposition of two distinct purposes--the one comprehending all, and the other only a part; whereas, by the objective limitation in the second design, the universality of the first is rendered objectively nugatory in the exact proportion to the number of those who fail of salvation. The atonement, in its nature and as a means of grace to sinners, is sufficient for all, and is free to all, and was designed to be so; but I see no advantage arising from the theory of circumscribing the design of the application within narrower limits than the design of the atonement.

It is not in place for the advocates of universal atonement to say that the reason why any sinner is lost is because of his unwillingness to accept, or seek for, the blessings procured by the death of Christ; for although this is strictly true in fact, yet it is not to the point, and as an argument it will weigh as much against one scheme as the other; for those who are saved are naturally, of themselves, as unwilling as they that are lost. And no sinner is ever really and truly disposed to seek and accept the blessings of the atonement before the grace of the atonement is applied--it is the application of this grace that makes him willing. The great design of the atonement, in its relation to us as sinners, is to procure the gift of the Holy Spirit--to open up a pathway of mutual reconciliation and spiritual communion between God and His alienated children--to destroy the enmity of the sinner's heart and to subdue his perverse will and bring it into subjection to the gospel. This is the prime, comprehensive blessing procured by the atonement. The gift of the Spirit is itself the application of the benefits of atonement; and till this gift is received there is no true and real willingness of desire to seek or receive the application of the atonement in the hearts even of those who are saved. If this is not correct, it is in vain to talk of salvation by grace. Such talk would be like clouds without water. And if it is true, the question remains essentially the same. Did God design to give the Holy Spirit to every sinner alike, through this medium of atonement, or to those only who will be saved by it? If the atonement was made designedly for--specifically for--every one personally, and the Spirit, in consequence, is given to every one personally, the question must arise, "Why is not every one saved?" I confess myself unable to answer it without admitting a disastrous failure--a failure both in the work and in the design of the atonement; for it is manifest that the atonement does not accomplish all that for which it was made and designed. It may be asked: If Christ did not die to make atonement for the sins of the whole family of man--for every sinner--why should all men universally be called upon to accept of its gracious provisions? But, on the other hand, it may be inquired: Why should a true, effectual, and complete atonement be made for some when it was not the will of God to make it efficacious to their salvation, as the saving benefit was contingent upon the Divine will? That there is matter couched in such questions that contains solid and sound argument, I have no doubt; but it may not be very easy, in every case, to determine with positive certainty that our conclusions are legitimate. Leaving the latter of these questions to the reader's reflection, we will proceed to offer some thoughts on the former. To arrive

at a satisfactory solution of this problem, it is necessary to determine, in the first place, what in the atonement will constitute a sufficient ground to justify universal invitations to sinners to believe the gospel and accept of salvation through Christ. As the atonement was made for sinners, if it is sufficient for all sinners, I am not able to see what more is necessary to warrant any preacher to extend the invitations of the gospel to all sinners; nor what more is necessary to warrant any sinner to come to Christ, having the assurance of the promise that he shall obtain the blessings of the atonement.

I am willing, and I sincerely desire, that our view of the atonement should be subjected to the severest scrutiny; for I desire that all should know the truth, whatever the truth may be. And if our doctrine can not stand before the truth, by all means let it fall; for this reason I would like to keep before the mind of the reader as clear and precise a conception of the point under discussion as possible. I will attempt an illustration; and being unskillful in the art of constructing figures, I will borrow one from the prophet, which, though used by the prophet for a different purpose, will, as a figure, answer mine very well: "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." (Isaiah 43:19-21) Here the Lord is represented as making rivers in the desert, through which His people had to pass in their return to their own land. The beasts of the forest, and the wild fowls, even the most hateful of them, might freely drink of these waters; and they are said to honor God for these rich and free supplies. There was water enough there for all, and it was free to all, and even the enemies of the Lord, and of His Israel, were not prohibited the use of these waters; but the purpose, the specific design in providing these waters, is expressly declared to be to "give drink to my people, my chosen." So the provisions of the atonement are sufficient for all, and are free to all, but the special object in making the atonement was the redemption of the Church--even all that will ever be finally saved..

Expounding the doctrine of the atonement and calling sinners to repentance, are different things; and, in the latter work, the minister has no business with the Divine purpose as it relates to persons. His office is to show the sufficiency of the death of Christ for the redemption of sinners, even the chief of sinners; that salvation is free to all that believe; that Christ has promised to save all that believe in Him. Some have labored hard to show that the sufficiency of the atonement for the whole world of sinners is not enough to authorize a sinner to believe in Christ for salvation, but that the sinner must be assured that Christ died for him personally. But their arguments are not satisfactory, and can not be made to agree with the teachings of our Savior and His apostles; and the minister who invites a sinner to come to Christ on the ground that Christ died for him in particular, goes out of his proper line of work. Neither do I believe there is any thing in the Scriptures, either as doctrine, or in the examples of Christ and His apostles, to justify any such specific mode of exhibiting the gospel of salvation; and the preacher who adopts it subjects himself to a degree of difficult and unnecessary labor, which he may not be able to perform; for if the sinner doubts, as he often, if not always, will do, the preacher is bound to prove to the sinner's satisfaction that Christ did die for him in particular; and in this he will seldom or never succeed. The only way in which he could hope to succeed would be by attempting to prove that Christ died for every sinner; and if he could convince the sinner of the truth of this doctrine, it would not satisfy his doubts, for he would still say, that although Christ died for all, yet thousands would be forever

lost, and how could he know that himself would not be one of them! he would still be left in the dark. But if we preach Christ as the Savior of sinners: that He died for sinners; that His blood cleanses from all sin--which is easily proved--and show them from the word of God, that whoever believes in Christ as the Savior of sinners, shall have eternal life--and the Scripture proofs are abundant--the work of preaching the gospel is, in this respect, easy. We have no need to resort to theological niceties. The whole business of inviting sinners to Christ is plain, and our work is ready prepared to our hand.

If the atonement was not sufficient for any more than those who will be saved by it, it would indeed appear to be inconsistent to call upon all sinners to believe and be saved. But that doctrine of atonement which we present is liable to no such objection; for if the atonement is sufficient for all sinners, and every sinner is assured that he who trusts in this all-sufficient atonement shall be saved, what more can be necessary to authorize the universal invitations of the gospel? To bring the design of the personal application of the atonement into the gospel call, is to put it in a place where it does not belong, and where, I believe, the Scripture never puts it.

It is alleged that it is the duty of all men to believe in the atonement, and to trust in it for salvation; and if Christ did not die for all men, but for a part only, it follows that it is the duty of those for whom atonement was not made, to trust in that which is not true. Now, with all my profound respect for those who argue in this way, I must insist that their argument is radically defective. It confounds things that are different; it makes belief and trust identical, which they are not; it leaves the promise totally out of view in respect to the act of trusting, whereas reliance on the atonement, without a promise, would not be trust, but presumption. To say that it is not the duty of a sinner to believe the gospel, unless atonement was made for him, is not sound theology. No atonement was made by the death of Christ for the fallen angels, yet it is the duty of Satan to believe the doctrine of atonement; and I have no doubt that he does believe it. It is the duty of every intelligent creature under the Divine government to believe every word that God speaks. When the Almighty declared to Satan that the Seed of the woman should bruise his head, it was the duty of Satan to believe it; and I do not doubt that he did believe it, so far as he understood the import of the language. But it will be said that Satan could not trust in the mercy of the atonement, because the atonement was not made for him. It is true it was not made for him, and it was not his duty to trust in it. Neither would it be the duty of any guilty man to trust in it for life, if there had been no promise of life given to those who do believe in it. Our trust has immediate respect to the promise. If there has been an atonement made by the death of Jesus, which is in itself sufficient to satisfy for all the sins of all the human family, and God has promised eternal life to every sinner who believes in this atonement for life, it is the duty of every sinner to believe in it; and it is also the privilege and the duty of every one who does so believe to trust in the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promise. I reject the doctrine of trusting in the atonement without a promise. The promise is made to those who believe in Christ, and a sinner has no right to inquire whether the atonement was made specially for him, before he believes the promise. And for a sinner to believe that Christ died specially for him, is not what he is required to believe in order to his salvation. But it is said that the gospel call comes from God, and not merely from the minister. And this is true. Their object seems to be to defend the Divine character from the supposed inconsistency of inviting all sinners to the gospel feast, when it was designed specially for only a part. But if the provisions of the atonement were amply sufficient for all--if there is "bread enough and to spare"---the Divine character stands

in no need of apology. As it is God who calls, so it is God who gives. He is the only rightful owner of the provisions, and He only has right to dispose of them; and He bestows them upon whomsoever He will, according to His good pleasure. He has made known to all the world that it is His pleasure to give the bread of life to every hungry soul that is willing to partake. The only question that can be pertinent, if God invites, is, whether he has an exclusive right to invite all, and to give eternal life to every sinner who will accept of it? "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Shall we be told that the sinner must be assured that he is one of those whom the Father has given to the Son before He is warranted to come? That if he is not one whom the Father gave, he can have no assurance that Christ will not cast him out? And shall he stand aloof and refuse to come till he gets positive evidence from God himself that he is verily one who was thus given, when Christ is telling him in the strongest terms that He will not cast him out? The doctrine that a man must believe that Christ died for him specially, before he has a right to take comfort and cherish hope, I regard as a pernicious doctrine. It casts a stumbling-block in the way of the coming sinner, and can not be reconciled with the Scriptures.

If the reader has not been detained upon this topic till his patience is quite exhausted, I will offer an illustration of my views in respect to the sufficiency and the design of the atonement. We will suppose that ten men of our country have committed some depredations upon a neighboring nation, to the value of ten thousand dollars, for which they are arrested and confined in prison. The ruler of that nation is willing to release all of them whenever the whole injury is repaired, but will not release any one of them till the whole amount of the damage is made good. Now, among these unhappy culprits I have two sons, whom I am resolved to redeem. To effect this object, I pay the ten thousand dollars in full, for the definite purpose of delivering these two sons; whereupon the ruler acknowledges himself satisfied, and issues his mandate to open the prison door and announce full liberty to all the prisoners. Deliverance is as free to all as it is to my two sons, for whom personally the redemption price was specially paid. Would there, then, be any inconsistency or impropriety in my telling all these prisoners that I had paid the ransom price in full of their liberty, and procured the opening of the door for all? And if I persuade and entreat them all to avail themselves of the purchased deliverance, shall it be said that I am "mocking them," "trifling with them," "tantalizing" them with vain hopes and insincere professions of good-will? Would not such an impeachment be positive slander? Any limitations or restrictions in my design in making the payment would make no limitation in the fullness or value of the payment, nor in the liberty procured by it, nor in the freeness of the proposed deliverance; neither would it pertain to any of them to inquire into the extent of my design before they would accept of the purchased benefit. The atonement of Christ is sufficient for every sinner, and is free to every one; and the benefit is promised to every one that believes. The Divine design in regard to the personal application constitutes no condition authorizing the sinner to believe, nor interfering with his privilege to believe, whether such sinner is included in that design or not.

Atonement and Intercession.

We shall now, in the last place, examine the doctrine of atonement in its relation to the intercession of Christ as our Great High Priest.

According to the line of discussion which I had marked out for myself, I might confine myself merely to the design of the atonement in respect to the persons for whom it was made. In this point of view the question would still be, whether the atonement was designed to be universal, and the design included all men, or whether it was designed for the redemption of those only who will eventually be saved by it? But there are other aspects of intercession that are highly edifying besides the particular bearing it has upon the mere extent of the atonement. The general plan of this work, take it as a whole, would seem to require that I should indite a separate chapter on the subject of Christ's intercession. I had made up my mind, however, that I would treat of intercession in connection with atonement; but if I should confine my discussion to the single topic above stated, I could not do justice to the subject of intercession, neither would I do justice to the reasonable expectations of the Christian reader. The intercession of our Advocate with the Father is a subject so replete with spiritual instruction; so rich in sources of comfort and consolation to the believer; so well suited to impart spiritual strength to the children of God, and to establish them in the faith of the gospel; and it sheds so much light on the great plan of salvation, that to omit it in a work of this kind, or to view it in only one of its aspects, would hardly be excusable; and besides this, it would be difficult, if not impracticable, to gain clear conceptions of the subject in that one point of view without taking a more enlarged view of the general doctrine. On the other hand, it is not possible to arrive at any thing like an adequate understanding of the doctrine of intercession without considering it in connection with the atonement; for the relation between the two is so intimate, that there could be no real intercession without atonement; for intercession founded upon any thing else would resolve into mere influence, which is utterly inadmissible. An intercession of this nature would be in the highest degree derogatory to the Divine character, and would, in fact, devolve on our Redeemed a service which it would be impossible for Him to perform. But this part of the service of our High Priest is a far more noble work--a work worthy of His Divine dignity and of His high preeminence. It is a service consistent with His present glorified state, and worthy of His employment as the Son of God; a work for which He, and He alone, is every way competent, contemplating objects of infinite importance, and both requiring and insuring certain and infallible success.

It seems necessary, therefore, that we should take a more general view of the subject, and ascertain, as nearly as we may, or at least as nearly as our present object requires, what are the prime and essential characteristics of our Lord's intercession in behalf of His people. To obtain this consideration it is necessary to inquire what the intercession of Christ is--in what does it essentially consist? And I think we have abundant data to direct our inquiries. The chief difficulty will be found in making a proper and skillful use of the materials already provided and presented to our use in the subject itself. And we have the inspired word as the test by which we may judge of the soundness and appropriate adaptation of these materials.

We shall endeavor to be as brief and concise in this discussion as the importance and utility of the doctrine will admit. We have already said that the intercession of Christ is not the exercise of any influence on the mind or disposition of the Father, inducing Him to do that for us which it is not His will and desire to do. This would be impossible. God is self-moved in every thing He does. He is in one mind, and none can turn Him. He is God, and changes not, and He will do all His pleasure. It is not possible that any thing external to Himself can exert an influence on His mind. The doctrine that the intercession of Christ is necessary, or is designed to have an influence on the Father,

inducing Him to entertain gracious dispositions towards us, or to bestow favors upon us, otherwise than what is already His merciful purpose to do, involves so many absurdities, and is so degrading to the Divine character, and is so inconsistent with the sacred Scriptures, that I think it needless to enter upon a systematic refutation. And there is no necessity for an intercession of that nature. If it were not the good pleasure of our Heavenly Father to do all for our salvation which it is necessary He should do, no intercession, no entreaties, no beseeching or persuasion which could be employed by our High Priest could prevail with Him to change His course of proceedings with us. "And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you." (John 16:26-27) There is no need that Christ should intercede with the Father to love His children, for He loves them and delights to bless them independently of intercession.

Effectual intercession, such as can be acceptable with God, must be based upon a principle of fundamental justice. It must be founded on a plea, and such a plea as will triumph over every opposing resistance that can be set against its validity and success. If such a prevailing plea can not be found in the blood of atonement, it will be in vain to seek for one elsewhere. Christ as crucified--as offered up and sacrificed for our sins on earth--is the atonement; and Christ, as having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, is essentially the intercession in heaven. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the atonement which cleanses us from all sin; and the same blood carried within the veil (so to speak) and sprinkled before the mercy-seat, is the plea which constitutes the intercession.

Having now taken the ground (and it is the only true and tenable ground that can be taken) that the intercession of Christ, to be successful, must be founded on a plea--or, rather, that it is the presentation of a valid and righteous plea--and that this plea is the atonement made for our sins--let us examine this plea in some of its relations and characteristics.

1. The plea, considered in its relation to God, must be perfect and competent to answer all the ends, and accomplish all the objects contemplated by the intercession. It must be well pleasing to the holiness of the Divine nature, and capable of satisfying all the demands of Divine justice, so as to demonstrate that God is just in justifying them godly. It must be such as will sustain all that the intercession itself is intended to effect. As the intercession is made to God it must be acceptable to Him, and such as He will approve in judicial administration. It must be a righteous plea, and possess in itself the element and all the virtue of a perfect righteousness; not only a plea that may prevail, but one of such efficacy that it cannot fail. And the plea which our Intercessor presents on our behalf is "the precious blood of Christ." We need not enlarge here on the merit and worth of this plea. It speaks for itself.

2. The Intercessor's plea, in its relation to those for whom it is offered, must be competent to effect all that their necessities require. It must be infallibly efficacious to procure all the privileges and blessings that their condition and interests make necessary, and such as will effectually preclude the possibility of any exceptions. To the same extent that intercession is necessary and appropriate, so far must the efficacy and success of the plea extend and prevail; for if we allow any lameness, defect, or deficiency in the matter of the plea, the intercession founded upon the plea will accomplish nothing for us. But as the perfect atonement made by Christ is the plea of intercession, and as this atonement is already accepted in heaven, there can be no danger, nor indeed any possibility of failure, except the intercession were to be extended beyond the limits of

the atonement. Those attributes of the Divine nature which make an atonement necessary, also require the ministration of an intercession; for both are related to God in the same respects, and both are related to us in the same respects. The great end for which atonement was made, in relation to us, was our salvation; and the great end for which intercession is made, in the same relation, is our complete salvation. The two are co-extensive, the one being neither more nor less extensive than the other. And this view corresponds most exactly with the typical representations of the priesthood of Aaron, which was a very significant and instructive ceremony of typical service. The blood of the sacrificial lamb, offered for sin, which made atonement at the altar of burnt-offerings, outside of the sanctuary, was applied to that altar; and the same blood was taken into the sanctuary and applied to the altar of incense, inside of the sanctuary, and was also sprinkled before the mercy-seat, which was in the most holy place, and the high priest officiated in the whole transaction; and all was done throughout for the same person, or for the same community, in whose behalf the offering was made. And, further, the end or object for which the service was performed never failed of its complete accomplishment.

3. As we are now inquiring into the nature of intercession, we should notice some of those relations in which our Intercessor stands to Him to whom the intercession is made. And this brings into view most directly and prominently the priestly office of Christ, for His intercession is comprehended within, and pertains exclusively to, his priesthood; and the office includes two branches of official service, but it is but the one work--but the one whole service. Christ must first offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin--as a whole burnt-offering for us--and then He must present Himself, with His perfect work, in the presence of God for us, as our Intercessor. Neither of these alone, independently of the other, would effect our complete salvation.

Although Christ took upon Himself this office of High Priest, with all its incumbent duties and burdens, willingly, and of His own choice, yet He did it by the appointment of the Father. (Heb. iii. 2.) He was ordained of God. (Hebrews 5:1) God glorified Him to be made a priest, and conferred on Him this high honor because He was the Son of God. (Hebrews 5:5) He was made a priest by the oath of God. (Hebrews 7:20) And was consecrated by the oath of God to an everlasting priesthood: "Thou art a priest forever." (Hebrews 7:28) Thus we see He was divinely appointed, and solemnly consecrated by God to a special official service. The Father assigned to Him His official work--a service to be rendered to God. He was ordained and consecrated to do the will of God: "Lo! I come to do Thy will." A great deal by way of legitimate inference may be deduced from these considerations, but there is one inference that is unavoidable: It is not possible that God should appoint His Son to an office, and invest Him with all its official functions, and assign to Him a work and service in that office, had He not known that His High Priest was both able and faithful to perform and finish the whole duty pertaining to the official institution. Neither would He institute an official ministration that would not be adequate to the purpose for which it was ordained; for it is not God's method of proceeding, nor is it consistent with His infinite wisdom to choose and establish a fallible and precarious system of operation. And this inference is decisively confirmed by the Scriptures in reference to both branches of the priestly service of Christ. In regard to His atonement it is said, "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that were sanctified;" that is, those for whom the offering was made. And again: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." And in reference to His intercession it is written, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." And also Jesus said to His Father, "And I knew that Thou

hearest me always." I believe that no instance can be referred to where a priest of Aaron's order officiated, whether for an individual or for the whole congregation of Israel, that the service was not completely successful, and infallibly procured the good or averted the evil for which the sacrifice was offered. The offering up of the sacrificial victim at the altar of burnt-offerings, and the application of the blood to that altar, was the type of atonement; and the priest taking the blood into the sanctuary and applying it to the altar of incense, and sprinkling it before the mercy-seat, is the type of intercession. And shall we suppose that the official priestly action of Christ is less efficacious and successful in behalf of those for whom He officiates than the merely typical transactions of a temporary and rudimental economy that could make nothing perfect, and was designed to vanish away?

11d Atonement

CHURCH-MEMBERS'

HAND - BOOK OF THEOLOGY.

CHAPTER XI.

ATONEMENT.

It comes in place now to take some notice of what the intercession of Christ effects or procures for those in whose behalf He intercedes; and here we have large scope for very interesting discussion--much larger than we shall attempt to occupy. This topic should be a delightful theme of meditation to every true believer in Christ.

Keeping in mind, then, that the intercession of our High Priest is the presentation of a prevalent and all-sufficient plea, on our behalf, that will justify the Father in removing from us the condemnation incurred by our sins, and in bestowing upon us such blessings as our necessities may require; and keeping in mind, also, that this plea is the satisfaction made to the Divine law for our sins, by the death of Christ, and we have the subject of discussion laid plainly before us in such order as makes the prosecution of our inquiry an easy task, for the merit of atonement is the efficacy of intercession.

We shall not undertake to make a full representation of every particular case, but we will exhibit the subject somewhat in detail; and the reader, being in possession of our rule, a few exemplifications will enable him to apply the rule in any requisite case; for every covenant blessing, and every spiritual grace, comes to us through the intercession, as founded upon the merits of that one competent and comprehensive plea.

Let us look at those blessings and blessed relations secured to the believer in the provisions of the covenant of grace, as they are related to this plea.

1. And first, we are guilty rebels against God; we are justly liable to His wrath; we are the objects of His righteous displeasure; we fear His anger, because we are conscious we deserve it, hence we need forgiveness; we desire reconciliation with Him. What plea now can we make? What better plea than that which our Intercessor makes for us? for "without shedding of blood there is no remission." But the Intercessor says, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." And again: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

2. We have transgressed the Divine law, and have incurred the penalty, and we must stand before God in the judgment. What plea can our Intercessor make for us that shall avail to avert the execution? "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."

3. Our redemption in full is ascribed to the death of Christ. To this we owe our deliverance from sin, and from death, and from the grave. In a word, if the question is asked, "Who is he that condemneth?" the plea and the answer is, "It is Christ that died." Can you supply your Intercessor with a better plea than this? Or can you add anything to this plea that shall give it efficacy and merit?--any thing that shall give it a value and sufficiency which it does not possess in itself, independently of any supplementary considerations ?

4. But we will consider this plea in relation to those spiritual graces which constitute true Christian character. And here opens to us a larger field for contemplation than we can undertake to survey at present; but a few words to the wise may be sufficient to guide the earnest and inquiring mind to the treasures contained in it.

5. There is a general and comprehensive view of the subject which embraces all that we have need to say on this topic; and this we will present to your consideration as a kind of groundwork for what may follow.

It is through the intercession of Christ that the Holy Spirit is given. I would hardly suppose this fact has escaped the notice of attentive Bible readers; but because we find it stated in such intimate connection with the atonement, it may be well to refer to a few scriptures: "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 8:39) "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth," etc. (John 14:16-17) "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John 16:7) I might refer to other places, but as no one, I presume, will deny the doctrine, I need not detain the reader on this point.

Now the gift of the Spirit is fallen man's great necessity. Without it, he must perish in his sins. The Spirit must give him life, enlighten his mind, subdue the enmity of his heart, and, in short, make him a new Creature. The gift of the Spirit virtually includes every thing that is necessary to prepare us for the service of God in this world, and to enjoy His blessed presence in heaven. Thus we see that it is through the intercession of our High Priest that spiritual life, with all its sanctifying operations, is given to us, and maintained in us with all its holy exercises. But as it may be that many of the younger class of Christians might be edified by seeing the application of the fundamental plea, or its relation to our more particular needs, we must give a few examples.

We need the intercession of Christ to gain acceptance for our prayers. It is through the atonement that we have access to God by a new and living way, which Christ has consecrated for us through the veil--that is to say, "His flesh;" and our interceding Priest has given to Him much incense, which He offers up with our prayers, whereby our supplications gain acceptance, and we obtain an answer of peace. We offer our prayers in His Name, and His Name makes them well-pleasing to God.

We have grace, mercy, and peace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has "made peace by the blood of His cross."

While we dwell in the flesh, and sojourn in this world, beset with temptations on every hand, and too often unwatchful, we are apt to be betrayed into sin. We then need, and feel our need, of the Divine complacency: "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." In this text we see that the propitiation is the plea

of intercession. And as He ever lives to make intercession for us, and His intercession never fails of success, He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him.

It remains, now, that we examine this subject of our Redeemer's intercession, in its relation to the design of the atonement, in its personal application; for it is through the intercession of Christ that the benefits of the atonement are applied to us, and in no other way. If it was the design of God that the blessings of the death of Jesus should be assured to every one of Adam's lost family, then of necessity the atonement must have been intended for all, and all must have been included personally in the design for which the atonement was made. Not only must it have been sufficient in itself for the redemption of all, but all must have been included, specifically and personally, in the special design of redeeming grace. This theory would agree very well with the doctrine of universal salvation; but we reject that doctrine, because the Bible condemns it. But if effectual intercession is made by the Mediator for those only who will be saved--and I believe this is conceded--and yet the atonement was made for all personally, then it follows inevitably that, in a personal point of view, the intercession is limited, while the atonement is unlimited and universal. And it is almost impossible to repress the inquiry, Why should not the intercession be co-extensive with the atonement, and as universal in its design? The merit of atonement is the all-sufficient and efficacious plea of intercession, and the only plea that the Intercessor presents in behalf of those for whom He intercedes; and as this plea is sufficient for all--if it was designedly provided for all--why should some of those for whom it was provided be denied the benefit of it? To account for this, the believers in a universal atonement have recourse to Divine sovereignty, and that is the only alternative. But to the thinking mind it will seem at least to be an incongruous and unsuitable place to introduce sovereignty; for the application of the fruits of the atonement is made in sovereignty to all to whom they are applied, whether to a part or to all the family of man; and to interpose an act of discriminating sovereignty at this stage of the proceedings, can have no other effect than to exclude from the benefits of the atonement a part of those for whose benefit the atonement was purposely made. But let us take a more enlarged view of this sovereignty, as it acts and operates in the plan of salvation; for Divine sovereignty obtains throughout the whole scheme of man's salvation from beginning to end, as it does also in all the works of God. But, in the great arrangement for the salvation of sinners, this sovereignty is the sovereignty of love. It was the sovereign love of God to sinful men that gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and this love--this sovereign love--characterizes the whole plan and proceeding from its origin to its final consummation. The Supreme, independent God was under no obligation to sinners to give His Son for our redemption. This gift was the forth-going of His sovereign love; and if we exclude discriminating sovereignty from the exercise of this love in providing atonement, and say that all men alike are the objects of this love, and that it was the gracious design of the Father that all men should have an equal interest in this great atonement, this redeeming love; and say also--which a Universal atonement necessarily presupposes--that the Son of God, in the exercise of this same sovereign love, died to make atonement for all and every one equally and alike, excluding all discriminating sovereignty from the design in its relation to persons, and we have a universal atonement in all its fullness, the production of an indiscriminating sovereign love of the Father and the Son. And this atonement is the foundation and basis of a process of intercession to be made by the Son in behalf of the persons for whom this universal atonement was accomplished. But right here--just at the transition from atonement to intercession--we must introduce a discriminating exercise of sovereign love, which leaves out of its range vast numbers who were the personal

objects of that love which provided and achieved a universal atonement. There is such manifest incongruity in this arrangement of a sovereign procedure that, as I said before, makes it apparently a very inappropriate place to introduce a sovereign constitution; and if we postpone the introduction of a discriminating sovereignty to any subsequent stage of the operation of sovereign love, the same unwelcome result must necessarily ensue. Sovereignty in the plan of salvation must be admitted; there is no possible way to exclude it, and I would hope that no Christian would wish to exclude it; and if we recognize it in the beginning as first in order--the only place where I think it can be consistently admitted, and, indeed, the only place where there is any room for it--we can then see the consistency of sovereignty in every subsequent step of the progressive operation, and we see it as sovereignty shining in all the beauty of Divine love. Sovereignty admitted at the beginning may be defended, and, indeed, it will defend itself; but if interposed at any subsequent stage of the process, I can not see how we will defend it; and if we seek for a reason or a propriety for its subsequent intercession, I apprehend we shall not find it in the perfections of the Divine character, nor in the testimony of His revealed word. It would not be a sovereign choice of love, but a sovereign rejection of some of the objects of sovereign love. I am ready to doubt whether the advocates of a universal atonement themselves would admit the inbringing of a discriminating sovereignty that would exclude from the intercession any of those for whom the atonement was personally intended. Will any say that the atonement was not sufficiently meritorious and efficacious to satisfy for all for whom it was made? I suppose not. Or will any say that the intercession of the Son of God is too weak and imperfect to prevail for all those for whom intercession is offered up? Neither will this be admitted. Or must we assume that Jesus our High Priest refuses to intercede for any of those for whom He suffered and died? Why should He? And if not, what then? Must we allow that the Father will not hear His intercession? If nothing of all this is contended for, I see no alternative; we must reject the doctrine of an atonement made for all personally and for every one alike. I must leave it to those who contend for a universal and personal atonement, and deny a universal and personal salvation, to assign to its proper place the exercise of a sovereignty that makes the difference in the final destiny. That the atonement of Christ is sufficient for all--that it is free to all--and that its benefits are assured to every one that will, I have no doubt; and this is quite sufficient to devolve responsibility on every one that hears the gospel; and every one being left to his own choice, he must abide the consequences of his own voluntary decision.

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