

THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE
OF THE
APPROPRIATION
WHICH IS IN THE NATURE OF
SAVING FAITH,
STATED AND ILLUSTRATED:
IN SEVERAL DISCOURSES.

BY
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WITH A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,
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*We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
we shall be saved.* ACTS, xv. 11.

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THE

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE doctrine concerning Saving Faith will readily be acknowledged, by all Christians, to be very important, and just views of it to be very necessary ; as it is the appointed mean of our enjoying that salvation which is made known to us in the glorious gospel. Hereby, we receive Jesus Christ, who is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption : By this faith, we are justified, as the Scriptures often declare : Hereby, we are sanctified, and have our hearts purified, Acts, xv. 9. xxvi. 18. ; yea, he only who believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.

It is an eminent article in the mystery of godliness, that God manifested in the flesh hath been believed on in the world, 1 Tim. iii. 16. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : Accordingly, the Scripture doctrine about faith in Jesus Christ, is strangely perverted, and misunderstood, by carnal men ; yea,

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even many gracious men have confused, indistinct views of it. Beside many other causes of this, it has been too common to confound it with other graces of the Spirit; thus, eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, includes both faith and love. Another source of mistakes about it, is not properly distinguishing between the assurance belonging to the nature of faith, and the certainty of persons being actual believers: The most direct and satisfying evidence of the sun's existence, is seeing him shining in his meridian brightness; but we may also be certain of this, by his light, heat, and other effects, when we do not, or can not, see him.

Saving Faith is a divine persuasion or conviction of the truth of the testimony of God, concerning Jesus Christ, and salvation through him, with a particular application to our own souls. We have as full and sufficient warrant for believing the grace and love of God to us through the Redeemer,—as this is testified to us, in the supernatural doctrines, the precious promises, and the gracious calls, of the gospel,—as we have for believing, that he requires us, in his law, to love him with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Faith

Faith in Jesus Christ, though a most reasonable exercise, is not founded on rational arguments; by which a rational speculative conviction of the divine authority of the Scriptures, is produced in many, who never receive Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer: But the real believer relies on the Divine Testimony alone as the ground of his faith, 1 John v. 9, 10.; by accounting Him faithful who hath promised. Many, under the dispensation of the gospel, persuade themselves that they are believers in Jesus, and hope for salvation; but if they be questioned about the reason or ground of this persuasion, it will be found, that it rests, not upon a divine testimony, but upon their convictions, their experiences of certain measures of delight in hearing some preachers of the word, on certain subjects, with great stirring of affection, or upon their abstaining from many sins and performing many duties, &c.: But this is not faith; it is only fancy, opinion, and the working of a legal temper.

Many authors have written on this important subject to good purpose; yet I have scarce seen any who have not some things exceptionable. The learned know where to apply for information on this subject;

subject; every system of divinity contains something relative to it. Beside those mentioned and referred to by Mr Anderson; P. Van Maeſtricht, the author of a valuable system of divinity, published a Treatise on Saving Faith, about the year 1671, in Latin. Placette, a French Protestant minister, published also on this subject, in four volumes 12mo, 1716, in French. Private Christians may receive useful information, by consulting Ball, and Sedgwick, on Faith; Ezekiel Culverwell; Rutherford's Trial and Triumph of Faith; Polhill on Precious Faith: all writers of the last century. There are several excellent thoughts concerning faith, in a Treatise by Nathaniel Taylor, London, 1700: Also in a Treatise by Abraham Taylor, published about 1732: (This author wrote well against the Arians; he was the son of Richard Taylor, also a minister in London, whose sermons and discourses are well worthy of the attention of Christians, though little known in this country.) So late as the year 1786, there were published, at London, by a Mr James Dore, some Letters on the Nature of Faith in general; which may also be consulted. The writers against the New Law scheme, in England and Scotland,

Scotland, called Marrow-men, have very just views on this subject, in various parts of their writings.

The following Sermons upon the Appropriation and Assurance of Faith, appear to me the best I have seen on the subject; and I have authority to declare, that this is the judgment of several Ministers, of very respectable character, in the religious society to which I belong, and also of several others of different denominations, whose acknowledged reputation, and attachment to the interests of religion, would be a powerful recommendation of these Discourses to the perusal of their Christian friends and connexions, both in North and South Britain.

The Author is a native of Northumberland. He was always respected and esteemed, by his more intelligent acquaintances, as a very judicious, pious, and favourable preacher; though his talents for writing are more distinguished than his gifts of utterance. He is now employed also, in training up students for the holy ministry, in a country where the harvest is great, and the faithful labourers are but few. He has likewise, lately, published Four Sermons upon the Divine Ordinance
of

of Singing Psalms, from Mat. xxvi. 30. ; which may also be reprinted here, some time hence, if the following Sermons be well received by the public.—It is not expedient to say much more of a living author.

I have taken the liberty to insert a very few Notes ; marked (R.), to distinguish them from the Author's own Notes.

That the blessing of Christ may accompany the perusal of these Discourses, is the prayer of

JAS. ROBERTSON.

KILMARNOCK, }
April 17. 1797. }

THE

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

READER,

OUR LORD JESUS directs his people to go forth by the footsteps of the flock ; and the faith we should seek to obtain, is like precious faith with that of all true believers who have gone before us. It is a great encouragement to hold fast the doctrine concerning the Appropriation in the nature of Saving Faith, which is insisted upon in the following Discourses, that there is a remarkable harmony among the Confessions of the Protestant churches in asserting it. " We believe," say the Reformed churches of France, in the 20th article of their Confession of Faith, " that we are " made partakers of this righteousness [of Christ] " by faith alone : as he hath said, that he suffered " for the procuring of our salvation, that whoso- " ever believeth on him might not perish. And " this is the case, when the promises of life which " are given us in him are appropriated to our " use ; and they rendered effectual to us, when " we receive them, not doubting ; being assured " by the mouth of God, that we shall not be dis- " appointed." The Confession of the Belgic churches, as it was revised and approved by the Synod of Dort, says, in the 22d article, " We " believe, that the Holy Spirit kindles true faith " in

" in our hearts ; which faith embraces Jesus Christ,
 " with all his merits, appropriates and makes him
 " its own, nor ever seeks any thing without him."

The Aulburgh Confession, article 20th, " We are
 " to hold, that the remission of sins is given unto
 " us, and of unjust we are made just, that is, re-
 " conciled, accepted, and sons of God, freely for
 " Christ's sake ; not for the sake of the worthiness
 " of our contrition, or of any other works going
 " before or following. This benefit is to be re-
 " ceived by faith ; whereby we are to believe,
 " that, for Christ's sake, remission of sins, and
 " justification, are freely given to us."—" The
 " faith we speak of, does not only signify histori-
 " cal knowledge, but the belief or confidence of
 " the promise of mercy, which comes to us for
 " the sake of Christ the Mediator." The Con-
 fession of the churches of Saxony, which was pre-
 sented to the Council of Trent, in the year 1551,
 in the article of the remission of sins and justifica-
 tion, we have these words :—" Faith signifies not
 " only historical knowledge, such as is in devils ;
 " for they are said to *believe and tremble* : But it
 " signifies the embracing of all the articles of
 " faith ; and particularly of this article, *I believe*
 " *the remission of sins* : I believe, that this remis-
 " sion is given not only to others, but to me also :
 " —This faith is a confidence, acquiescing in the
 " Mediator, beholding and embracing the promif-
 " es." The National Covenant of Scotland :—
 " We detest and refuse his [Antichrist's] desperate
 " and uncertain repentance, his general and doubt-
 " some faith." Larger Catechism of the West-
 " minster

minster Assembly, question 73.: "Justifying faith
 " is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sin-
 " ner, by the Spirit and word of God; whereby,
 " he not only assenteth to the truth of the pro-
 " mise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth
 " upon Christ, and his righteousness, therein held
 " forth, for the pardon of sins, and the accept-
 " ing and accounting of his person righteous in
 " the sight of God, for salvation." To be satis-
 fied that the Assembly mean the same fiducial ap-
 plication of Christ, and his righteousness, as is
 meant in the other confessions of the Protestant
 churches, the reader is desired to consider their
 words in connexion with the texts of Scripture
 which they quote, namely, Phil. iii. 9. Acts xv. 11.

A few sentences may be added from two emi-
 nent lights of the Church. Augustine, Serm. 16.
 de verb. Apost. "If we say, we have no righteous-
 " nefs, we lie against the gifts of God, nor have
 " we any faith. If we have no faith, we are not
 " Christians." Again, in Psal. 31. "We ought
 " to put no works before faith; I mean, works
 " that can be called good: The works that are
 " said to be before faith, however commendable
 " they may appear to men, are mere vanity.
 " They seem to me to be but great strength
 " exerted in running out of the way. Let no man
 " reckon upon his works done before faith:
 " Where there was no faith, there was no good
 " works."

Pareus in Themate Seculari de fugiend. Pap.
 Rom. "The saving faith to which we believe
 " unto righteousness, is not only a knowledge of,
 " or assent to these things which are written in
 " the

“ the word of God ; but especially, a confident
“ persuasion of the promise of the gospel concern-
“ ing the remission of sins, for the sake of the me-
“ rit of Christ. To believe that God is God, and
“ that Christ is Christ, without application to thy-
“ self, will avail thee no more, than to believe
“ that Venice is a most opulent city, while you
“ have not a house, nor the least concern in it.”

The faith which is described in the ensuing Sermons, prevailed in the hearts of the patriarchs and prophets, martyrs and confessors, by which they *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises* ;—it is that faith which leads the soul directly to Christ, as offered in the promises of the gospel, without waiting for any previous qualifications, and to improve him for sanctification as well as justification, by looking unto him for all the endowments necessary thereunto.

February 1793.

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THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE
OF
S A V I N G F A I T H.

DISCOURSE I.

I JOHN iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his SON JESUS CHRIST.

MANY are forward to make the profession which we have in the 22d verse of this chapter, *We keep the commandments of God*; who, if they had a right understanding of the following words, *This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*, would be no less astonished and confounded, than a certain young man was, when our Lord Jesus said to him, *Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor.*

The doctrine of believing in the name of Jesus Christ, though declared in Scripture with great plainness, is so very remote from our natural apprehensions, that, while we discourse on the OBJECT, the ACT, the DUTY, and the EFFECTS, of this believing, we have peculiar need to look up to the Father of lights for his pity and direction.

We are *first* to consider the OBJECT of faith, or that in which we are to believe, which is, *The name of Jesus Christ the Son of God.*

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The name of Jesus Christ is Himself, as made known to us by supernatural revelation in the Holy Scriptures: So the name of God is God himself, made known to us in his word and works. Again, the name of Jesus Christ denotes his person; for so the word *name* is used in Scripture, Acts i. 15.

But to enter into some particular consideration of this name, we observe,

In the *first* place, That the object of saving faith is THE SON OF GOD: not in the sense wherein saints and angels are called sons of God; but in such a sense as carries in it necessary existence and supreme Deity. He denied not, but allowed the justness of, the inference which the Jews drew from his declaring that God was his Father, namely, that *he made himself equal with God*, John v. 18, 19. For when they told him so, he *answered and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.* Now, it would be blasphemy to say of any one who is not equal with God, that whatsoever God the Father doeth he doeth likewise. So we must understand the profession which the Ethiopian eunuch made of his faith in order to baptism, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; that is, he is so the Son of God as to be himself the only true God; *whose name alone is Jehovah, the most high over all the earth*; who made all things, and without whom was not any thing made that was made; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Indeed, it is
manifest,

manifest, that none can rationally or warrantably be believed or trusted in for the salvation of our souls, but He who is God all-sufficient; who claims the honour of being a Saviour as his incommunicable prerogative, Isa. xliii. 11. *I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour.* The glorious object which faith apprehends, is the Great God our Saviour, exerting his infinite perfections in the work of our salvation.

The name of the Son of God implies, that in the absolute unity and simplicity of the divine Being or Essence, there are more persons than one; for Son supposes Father: Accordingly we are assured, that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. So that when we believe in the Son of God, we believe, that in the only true God there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we also believe, that the Father sent his only-begotten Son in the character of Mediator; and that the sending of him in that character supposed him to be the Son of God, but did not make him so, the name Son denoting his personal relation, not his office. He is the Son of God by eternal and necessary generation; whereas he is Mediator by his voluntary undertaking. Thus, there can be no believing on the Son of God, while the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity is rejected. By the denial or the corruption of this truth, which is the foundation of the Christian religion, multitudes, at this day, are bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

In the *second* place, The object of faith is JESUS; a word of Hebrew original, signifying, *the Saviour*; intimating what we are to believe in him for, namely, salvation, or deliverance from sin and wrath, Mat. i. 21. *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.* 1 Thess. i. 10. *His Son Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath which is to come.* The Saviour of the world is the character wherein he is set forth to us in the gospel. 1 John iv. 14. *We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world.* The salvation of sinners was the errand on which he came, 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* Luke xix. 10. *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* By his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, he obtained, not what some call easy terms or conditions of salvation, but salvation itself. He finished the work that the Father gave him to do, having fully satisfied the demands of law and justice, so that nothing remained to be done in the way of procuring; nothing remained but that each of his people should, according to the order settled in the covenant of grace, enter, first, upon the begun possession of salvation in the day of effectual calling; and, afterwards, upon the full and eternal possession of it in the other world.

The supposition that the design of Christ's obedience unto death was to obtain easy terms of salvation for men, is contrary to the nature of the covenant of grace; according to which the gift of God

God * is eternal life, in the beginning, the progress, and consummation of it, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to the absolute exclusion of creature boasting; particularly of that boasting, to which the creature's performance of certain prescribed terms or conditions gives occasion. The purport of the everlasting covenant is, *I will give you the sure mercies of David.* It leaves no room for the scheme of suspending our salvation upon certain terms or conditions to be performed by us,—since there is nothing that can be considered as a condition of salvation, but what is to be found among the promised blessings of that covenant; being a part of the promised salvation: This is manifestly the case with respect to faith, repentance, and new obedience: *In his name shall the gentiles trust; I will give them a new heart; a new spirit will I put within them: I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh: I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.* Besides, in the promises which the Father made to Christ, the fulfilment of all righteousness, or Christ's going through a course of service and suffering in a state of humiliation, is represented as the only condition upon which

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* Rom. vi. 23. *The gift of God*, by way of eminence; his gift to poor sinners, who, in themselves, are as worthy of eternal death, as the labourer is worthy of his wages. That which is most worthy of God, as being of all his gifts the freest, the richest, and the most glorifying to all his perfections, is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord; that is, eternal life given us freely for the sake of Him whose name is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

the salvation of his people, or their attainment of grace and glory, was suspended, and by which it was to be fully and infallibly secured. *When thou shalt make his soul, or, when his soul shall make itself, an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities: Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great; and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.* Now, it is manifest, that the whole salvation of his people, their faith, holiness, and comfort, are included in Christ seeing his seed, in his seeing the travail of his soul, and being satisfied: and therefore, since Christ bearing the iniquities of his people in obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, infallibly secured the latter, that is, his seeing his seed, or the travail of his soul; it no less infallibly secured the former, that is, the faith, holiness, and comfort, the whole salvation, of his people.

Thus the object of faith is Jesus the Saviour. Those who regard any thing besides Him, as what they are to rest upon, in whole or in part, for salvation, whether it be under the notion of merit, or of a condition, or of a recommending predisposing qualification, are attempting to rob him of the glory of his name. *He is despised and rejected of men; of all who do not rely on him for the whole of their salvation.* In the name Jesus, faith beholds the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, of our salvation. This name is to all
believers

believers as ointment poured forth; an unfailing spring of comfort in all their tribulations. Blessed Jesus! they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: the desire of their souls will be to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

In the *third* place, The object of faith is called CHRIST, a word of Greek original, signifying *Anointed*. This name hath respect to his being set up from everlasting as the Covenant-head and Surety of his people. Prov. viii. 23. *I was set up*, or, as some read it, *I was anointed, from everlasting*: As also, to the Father's sending him in his incarnation. John x. 36. *Say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?* and to the public and illustrious manner in which the Father declared his acceptance of the person and righteousness of his beloved Son as our representative and surety, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*; and when he was raised from the dead, and received up into glory: and, lastly, to the superabundant measure in which the Holy Spirit was communicated to his human nature, fitting him for the execution of his mediatorial offices. John iii. 34. *For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*. This was signified by the Holy Ghost descending upon him at his baptism in the form of a dove; and had been fully declared in the Old Testament, Isai. xi. 1, 2. *And there shall come a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;*
and

and lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.* The Spirit, which God gave not by measure unto him, rested and abode upon him through the whole course of his humiliation; but was eminently and illustriously upon him as a spirit of gladness, in his state of exaltation: Psa. xlv. 7. *Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* As David was thrice anointed to the kingly office; first, at Bethlehem by Samuel; and next, at Hebron by men of Judah; and again, at Hebron by the tribes of Israel: So there were three remarkable anointings of our Lord Jesus: the first, at his incarnation; the second, at his baptism, when he was entering upon his public ministry; and the third, which was of all the most illustrious, in his resurrection and ascension*.

He who is the object of our faith is called **CHRIST**, or, *the anointed One*, in relation to his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, and in allusion to the instances we have in the Old Testament, of persons being anointed when they were invested with these offices. Instances of anointing to the kingly office are common in the Old Testament. Of anointing to the prophetic office, we have an instance in the case of Eliha the son of Shaphan. With respect to the priestly office, the command is express, Exod. xxviii. 41. *Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister in the priests office.*

Faith

* Witius in symbolum, de nomine Christi.

Faith views its glorious object as our Great HIGH PRIEST *, unspeakably excelling the priests of the order of Aaron. These were but mere men; He is a Divine person, the only true, the supreme, and necessarily existent, God. Their offerings were of no value but as they served to shadow forth the one offering of Christ, and to direct the faith of church-members to Him. They were made without an oath; but He with an oath, by Him that said unto him, *Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*. Of his three offices, the priesthood alone is confirmed with an oath; because it is a matter of supernatural revelation, most remote from our natural apprehension; and because it is the foundation of the other offices †: for he could not be a Prophet or a King of his people, but on condition of his submitting as their Great High Priest, to give himself for them, *an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour*.

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* Faith receives Christ as Priest, King, and Prophet: though as Christ, in the order of his offices was first a Priest, undertaking to satisfy for sin; then as a Prophet and King, to rule and guide his people to eternal life: so faith, in order of nature, first looketh on him as a Priest for reconciliation with God; then as a Prophet and King for illumination and sanctification. —Troughton's Lutherus Redivivus, chap. x.

† Some have quarrelled this expression, that Christ's priestly office is the foundation of his prophetic and kingly offices.— But, whatever may be said about the mode of expression, the sentiment appears exceedingly just. Christ would have had no business among sinning men, more than among fallen angels, as a Divine Teacher, by his Word and Spirit; had he not become their Surety, to redeem them from the curse, and procure a special right to dominion over them, and in them, as their

Sovereign

The priests under the law were said to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The sacrifice that Christ offered was Himself, in respect of his human nature. His divine nature was the altar which sanctified the gift or offering, rendering it of infinite value and virtue. The offering up of himself was begun in his incarnation, carried on through his life, and finished at his death. The effect of it was nothing less than the expiation of all the sins of his people, and their full reconciliation to God. *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Hence the Lord represents the efficacy of this offering, by saying, *I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day,* Zech. iii. 9. In this oblation, faith beholds the sure foundation and full security of our pardon and acceptance with God.

It was part of the office of the High Priest under the law to intercede for the people: but the intercession of our Lord Jesus is infinitely superior; which is not barely the offering up of a desire to God, like the intercession of the saints for one another; but is a glorious representation of that *will* of Jesus whereby we are sanctified, founded on the dignity of his person, on his infinitely meritorious obedience unto death, and on the everlasting covenant or council of peace, which was between the Father and him from eternity: and therefore, his manner of speaking in his intercessory prayer, is so majestic and peremptory, as would be unbecoming and presumptuous in any other

Sovereign Lord. Rom. xiv. 9, 9, &c. So it was *most necessary*, that Christ should be a communicant of our nature, in order to serve, suffer, and intercede, as a Priest.—See Owen on Heb. vol. i. p. 225. of the Exposition.—(R.)

other than him who is the Son of God, the Father's Equal, the Surety of the better Covenant; *Father I WILL that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory:— I will, not I beg or intreat.* Such is the dignity, authority, and efficacy, of his intercession, that it can no more, without blasphemy, be ascribed to any other, than his oblation, on which it is founded, and with which it is inseparably connected. The prevailing intercession of our Lord Jesus proclaims to the whole church, that *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake*; and that every believer is *blest for ever with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*; and that whatsoever we ask in Christ's name, shall be given us: believing prayer being a sort of echo of Christ's intercession.

Again, faith views its glorious object as our anointed PROPHET. By nature we are utterly blind to the things of the Spirit of God: for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them. For this deplorable case, we have an adequate remedy in our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is set forth in such passages of scripture as these: *Isai. xlii. 6, 7. I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the gentiles, to open the blind eyes: xlvi. 17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go.* The prophets under the Old Testament instructed the people, foretold things to come, and confirmed their doctrine by miracles. Our Lord Jesus was, no doubt, greatly superior in what he spoke and did, in the course
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of his personal ministry among the Jews, to all the prophets that went before him. Yet we would have a defective and erroneous notion of his prophetic office, were we to consider it as wholly or even chiefly executed in his personal ministry; while he was in that state of humiliation, the proper and peculiar design of which was the fulfilment of his priestly undertaking: Here we are to distinguish between the general nature of Christ's prophetic office, and the peculiar manner of his executing it in a state of humiliation, as a minister of the circumcision, and in obedience to the law as a covenant of works, which bound him to teaching, as well as other good works: When we consider his teaching with respect to this manner of it, or as what he did in the character of a bond servant, we justly maintain, that it belongs to his surety-righteousness, which was wrought out for, and is imputed to, his people for their justification. But with respect to the general nature of Christ's prophetic office, which is the revealing of the will of God to his people for their salvation, the execution of it was no way peculiar to the time of his personal ministry in the days of his flesh, but has been going on from the giving of the first promise till now. The external revelation that he gave to the church under the Old Testament, while there was only a part of the Scriptures in the hands of church-members, was more obscure: But the external revelation that he gave to the church under the New Testament, by completing the canon of Scripture, is far more clear and full. He has now given to his people all the external revelation of the will of God for their salvation,

that they have to expect till the end of time. The Bible, as we have it in our hands, is Christ's last will and testament, to which nothing is to be added, either by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Christ is even now externally executing his prophetic office amongst us, in his word and ordinances: In these he is *speaking to us from heaven*. Christ teaches inwardly and effectually by his Spirit: He not only gives outward instruction, but an heart to receive it:—He opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures. The supernatural teaching of the Holy Spirit, is necessary to our attaining of the saving knowledge and application of what we are taught in Scripture; but adds no new matter to what we are taught there. The teaching of the Spirit attends the teaching of the word; and we have no ground to expect the former, where the latter is wanting. Christ is bringing in his sheep, by the effectual working of his Spirit, in those places only in which he is teaching by his word, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Farther, faith beholds its object as that glorious KING, whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion. Faith views him as the irresistible Conqueror of that enmity which naturally reigns in the hearts of sinners: Psal. cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*: and as the irresistible Conqueror of Satan, in whose possession the sinner is by nature. Luke xi. 21. *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace*: Thus our poor souls are by nature Satan's

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palace; of which he is represented as having peaceable possession, because there is a willing subjection to him, or, which is in effect the same thing, to the dominion of sin. But, it follows in the next verse, *when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoil.* The stronger One than Satan is our Lord Jesus Christ, who binds Satan; so that he has no more that absolute commanding power over the soul which he had before. Again, *all his armour is taken from him* wherein he trusted, when the soul is delivered from the law as a covenant, so that Satan can no more exercise his power over the soul, by virtue of that broken law from which the soul is fled to Christ: and when the soul is renewed in all its faculties; so that, though there be still remainders of corruption, yet these, being effectually opposed by the newly implanted principle of grace, cannot give Satan that absolute dominion which he formerly had. It is added, *he divideth the spoil*; he gives everlasting salvation to the poor soul, and takes all the glory to himself. — Again, faith beholds the King of Zion, not only as the almighty Conqueror, but as the faithful Keeper, of the soul. John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of mine hand.* 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* Faith beholds him, not only, as our Great High Priest, who hath delivered us from the law as a covenant; but also as our King, giving forth the same pure and

and perfect law as a rule of life. Though believers are not under the law as in the hand of God absolutely considered, or according to the covenant of works; that is, either to be justified or condemned by it; they being justified already, and set free from liableness to condemnation; so that they have nothing to do with the law in that respect, it being dead to them and they to it: yet the authority by which the law, as a rule of life, is given forth to believers, and is binding upon them, is the authority of God Creator as well as of God Redeemer: for it can lose nothing of its authority or obligation by being in the hand of Christ, who is *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* The law that believers are under as a rule of life being regarded as in Christ's hand, is called the law of Christ: Gal. vi. 2. *Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* 1 Cor. ix. 21. *Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.* And how persuasive and endearing is the manner in which he gives his commands to his people: He says to each of them, *My son, bind thou them continually upon thine heart, tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.* According to the measure or exercise of faith, it will be the great desire and endeavour of believers to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. This is their great encouragement, that he calls his people to no duty without allowing them a

sufficiency of grace and strength to carry them through the performance of it: saying to each of them, *My grace is sufficient for thee; and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness: As thy days, so shall thy strength be.* Faith likewise beholds a gracious exercise of his kingly authority in the correction or chastisements of his people: for he will *not suffer sin upon his people: he will in any wise rebuke them:* Both his love to them, and the glory of his infinite holiness, require that he should manifest his displeasure with sin regarded in their heart, or breaking out in their practice. Rev. iii. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.* Exod. xxiii. 21. *Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions,* that is, he will not connive at or countenance their transgressions, but will have them brought to a deep and humbling sense of the heinousness and aggravations of them. Surely a gracious heart would tremble to think of the heavy corrections by which the Lord often manifests his displeasure with the sins of his own people. Hence the Psalmist says, *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Though a person that has truly believed on the Son of God shall never be cast into hell, yet a sort of hell may, for a time, be cast into him. Such was the case of Job, described in these words: *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirits.* But faith gets a satisfying view of the heaviest correction, under the management of their merciful and gracious King, as not against their persons, but against their corruptions, and as *light afflictions which are but for a moment,*
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working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The enemies of our salvation, within and without, are numerous and powerful; but if we have the true faith of that glorious victory over them, which our King and Head hath obtained in his own person; and in our name, we will have a real persuasion, that, through him, we shall be overcomers at last. He may, indeed, for holy and wise ends, suffer believers to fall grievously; but he will raise them up again, as he did Peter, with bitter weeping, restoring their souls, causing them, with renewed strength, to walk in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Faith beholds the warfare in believers against indwelling sin, Satan, and the world, as going on under the hand of Zion's King, to a complete victory and triumph. Hence the apostle, having uttered that mournful complaint, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* immediately adds, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;* or, as it may be supplied from 1 Cor. xv. 57. *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Faith beholds the power and authority of Zion's King illustriously displayed in the erection and maintenance of his visible church in the world; in preserving the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, pure and entire; and in directing all the concerns thereof to a most blessed and glorious issue. Is there one of the truths or institutions of our Lord Jesus Christ which men are peculiarly intent upon having buried in oblivion? faith beholds, in his kingly office, good security for the resurrection of such a truth or institution,

stitution, and for its being made to shine forth with distinguished lustre. *His Name*, which includes all the truths and ordinances wherein he makes himself known, *shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun.* The preservation of such truths and ordinances is the cause of his people; and their *Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause.* By the revival of such truths in the profession and power thereof, he will carry on the work of building up his church, which belongs to him as her King. For, *Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a Priest upon his throne.*

Thus we have given some account, from the Scripture, of that Name which is the object of faith, which is *as ointment poured forth*, and which all believers will dwell on to eternity, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What we have farther to offer on this part of our subject, shall be in answer to three questions.

The *first* is, Whether such principles as the being of God, the immortality of the soul, a future state of rewards and punishments, as they are known by human reason in its present corrupted state, are to be considered as objects of faith, or as the foundation on which the gospel, or the faith of the gospel, is built?

Answer. It is absurd to call such truths, as those now mentioned, objects or matters of faith, while they

they are known and considered no otherwise than as matters of reason. Faith is a particular way of apprehending things; and nothing can be said to be the matter or object of a divine faith, but as it is apprehended to be revealed in the word of God; as it is seen in the light of a supernatural testimony, or in the face of Jesus Christ*.

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* The doctrine contained in these words of the apostle, Heb. xi. 6. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; is far more sublime than any thing that can be known by the light of nature. For, 1. To believe *that God is*, is to give credit to the testimony wherein he hath revealed his name, his perfections, and the riches of his all-sufficiency. For faith is knowledge founded singly on the testimony of God. And since God hath revealed himself in his word, as well able to be the salvation of the sinner; it follows, that a person does not truly believe that God is, unless he believes the gospel, as it gives God the praise of his being well able *to justify the ungodly*. For this is included in the notion of God, as he reveals himself in his word. 2. God might be *what he is*, as to his all-sufficiency, though it were not his will to be the God and salvation of the sinner. Hence faith does not stop here; for it also believes that God is actually *the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; according to his own declaration, Isa. xlv. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain*. 3. Another principle of faith is, That *God is to be sought* as our chief good, with diligence and deep concern; and that *we must come to him*. Here it is supposed, that God has given us a testimony wherein he hath shewn us the way wherein poor man, in his present fallen condition, may seek him and come to him. It is certain, the sinner cannot *seek God*, unless he seek also the righteousness of God; nor may he look for salvation, but in such a way as declares and magnifies that righteousness; Rom. iii. 26. Nor is it fit that he should *come to God* without such an atoning and interceding High Priest as the apostle says *became us*, Heb. vii. 26. or otherwise than is included in Him who *engaged his heart to approach unto God* on our behalf, in our name, Jer. xxx. 21.

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We allow that there are many truths concerning the being and perfections of God, and concerning the relation we stand in to him, which our reason, corrupted as it is, does not fail to suggest. These truths, not as matters of faith, but as dictates of reason, are supposed and implied in all the doctrines of revelation; and whoever is an enemy of the former, must be much more an enemy of the latter. On the other hand, the knowledge of things by reason, is a different kind of apprehension from that of faith; as the way of apprehending things by the outward sense, is of a different kind from both the former: And though there can be no real contradiction among the truths of God, yet such is the natural corruption of the human mind, and so great is the distance between the truths that are knowable by human reason, and the peculiar doctrines of revelation, that the latter can never be so represented to the understanding of an unrenewed man, as to make him discern that they have a sure and satisfying condition in the former. Nothing less than this can be meant by the apostle in 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* *.

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They utterly mistake the apostle's meaning, who suppose that there is nothing in the words now considered, but what natural religion teaches: for the knowledge of God, such as it is, which men attain by the light of nature, is not *faith*; nor is it sufficient to salvation; nor by it can any one *please God*.

* The natural man, so called by the apostle, *homo animalis*, the rational man, who has no other principle of action than his

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The embracing of a divine truth, upon the immediate view that a renewed understanding has of God's authority shining in some passage of the Holy Scriptures, where that truth is really taught, is a very different thing from our assent to a truth, because

own mind or natural reason, does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God; they exceed his reasoning powers; and, after all his efforts, he cannot know them, so as to form a right judgment of them. Wherefore? because they are spiritually discerned. They belong to a sublimer sphere, which the axioms or principles of natural reason do not reach.

There is another cause why men cannot discern a foundation for the peculiar doctrines of revelation, in the axioms or principles of reason, beside the sublimity of these doctrines; which is, that the reason of all natural men is now so corrupt, and even blind, especially with respect to the things of God, that they are continually taking gross errors for axioms and principles of reason.

Excellent are the words of Lord Bacon, in his Treatise concerning the Improvement of the Sciences, in the beginning of the ninth book. "The prerogative of God", says he, "extends to the whole man; to our reason as well as our will: for man must deny himself altogether, in coming to God. Wherefore, as we are bound to obey the divine law, notwithstanding the reluctance of the will; so we are to give credit to the word of God, notwithstanding the reluctance of reason. For if we believe those things only in the Scripture which are agreeable to our reason, we assent to the reasonableness of the things, but give no credit to the Testifier of them: as we use to deal with witnesses of a suspected character. Moreover, there is something more excellent in believing than in mere knowledge: for, in knowledge, the mind is acted upon by sense, which results from material things; but, in faith, the soul is acted upon by a soul," says Lord Bacon; I would rather say, by the Spirit of God, who is a nobler agent,

The hearts and minds of unregenerate men are far from being thus subjected to the authority of the word of God. Such, however, may have a knowledge of much revealed truth: and
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because it is agreeable to our natural reason. The dictates of natural reason may, indeed, be made use of to shew men the inexcusableness of their unbelief, and to excite believers to the more lively exercise of faith. But they may in many cases be sufficient to answer these purposes; and yet be utterly insufficient to be a foundation of faith. Thus our Lord excites the disciples to a cheerful trust in the providence of their heavenly Father, from this consideration, that they were better, or
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with respect to the variety and arrangements of their notions, and suitable utterance, they may, and, it is probable, often do, excel real Christians. But this is not to be ascribed to the force of the ordinary light of natural reason and conscience, but to the peculiar heightening of that light by the common influences or operations of the Holy Spirit, which persons partake of in the visible church for her benefit.

But the light of that knowledge is of a different kind, which, being inseparably accompanied with the love of the truth, and with the sanctification of the inner man, is kindled in the souls of the elect by the Spirit of Christ, which he purchased for them, and which flows from him as the head, into them as the members of his mystical body. The Holy Spirit endues them with a new spiritual capacity of apprehending spiritual things; a capacity no less peculiarly adapted to the purpose of apprehending spiritual things in their reality, glory, and suitableness, than the eye is adapted to the purpose of seeing, or the ear to that of hearing. He also gives them the use or exercise of this capacity, by opening and unfolding the word of God to them, by causing them to behold the infallible truth and excellency of it in its own light, so that their persuasion thereof is no less full and satisfying, than their persuasion of the existence of the sun, when he shines upon them in a clear day. See a dissertation of Witsius, which he addresses, *ad amplissimum virum Ulricum Huberum*. This is the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 1. Art. 6. "We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word."

of more importance, than the birds and beasts, of which they saw his providential care so conspicuous. This rational consideration was proposed as a motive to their faith, but not a ground of it : for all that is to be seen, in the ordinary course of providence, is utterly insufficient to be a ground of that special confidence in God's fatherly love to which they were exhorted,—without that special revelation of his good-will to them in his word of promise.

Faith embraces the truths revealed in the word of God, not because it apprehends them to be agreeable to, or founded upon, reason, but because it immediately discerns the word wherein these truths are revealed to be the word of God,—a word which bears a manifest, undeniable impression of His authority, majesty, wisdom, power, holiness, righteousness, mercy, and truth. So the apostle tells the Thessalonians, that when they received the word of God, they immediately received it, not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God. To receive a truth as the word of man, is to receive it as agreeable to or founded upon the principles of natural reason : a way of receiving the truths of religion which here stands opposed to the receiving them as the word of God ; that is, to the receiving of them by faith. Nature affords us some image of faith's immediate discernment of the voice of God in his word, particularly in that immediate, indescribable manner in which we distinguish one person from all others, by his countenance, by his voice, and sometimes by his manner of expression. It seems

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to be in allusion to this, that faith is represented as our *seeing Jesus*, and our *knowing his voice*.

At the same time, this faith does not hinder, but rather promotes, the right use of all the faculties which God hath given us. No mathematical demonstration is more suitable or satisfying to our rational nature, than the light of God's word, when let into the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. When reason sets itself above divine revelation, or refuses to submit thereto, it is perverted, and works its own overthrow; whereas, while it acts within its own sphere, and in due subordination to divine revelation, its exercise is ready, uniform, vigorous, and beneficial. What a noble field does revelation open for the due exercise of reason! in discerning, for example, the propriety and significancy of the words employed by the Holy Spirit; in tracing the connection of revealed truths with one another, as so many links of one beautiful chain; and in observing the harmony and agreement between the word of God, and his works of creation and providence.

The *second* question is, Whether the whole word of God, and whatever is contained in it, be the object of faith?

Answer. The whole word of God is, indeed, the general object of faith: But, as Mr Calvin observes, "In the word, which is its general object, it seeks a special object, in which it may find and receive reconciliation with God, and remission of sins." It may be farther observed, That the word is to faith what light is to the eye: it is that wherein faith apprehends its only suitable

able and fully satisfying object, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As to other things contained in the Scripture, they all meet in Christ as their centre. Thus, the law shews us the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, and so our unspeakable need of Christ. The examples of the saints shew us what others have received, and what we may expect to receive, out of the fulness of Christ. The threatenings declare to us the infinite hazard that attends our neglect of Christ: The voice of the threatenings, as they stand connected in the Bible, is like that of the angels to Lot, when they brought him out of Sodom, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee: escape to Jesus Christ the Son of God, lest thou be consumed." In Christ are all the promises of God Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God. The grand scope or design of all the Scripture is to testify of Christ; to declare, what he is in himself, what he is to us, his doing and dying on earth, and his intercession in heaven, with the manner in which we are brought to the enjoyment of fellowship with him.

Question third, How is God the object of faith?

Answer. Luther had good reason to say, *Nolo Deum absolutum*: I will have nothing to do with an absolute God, or with God according to the revelation which he makes of himself in the law of works*. A person that has sinned and come short of the glory of God, (as all mere men have
D done),

* Often, (says Luther), and willingly, do I inculcate this truth, T at you should shut your ears, and say, you know no God out of Christ.

done), has nothing to look for from God, absolutely considered, but judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries. Faith cannot see God as the God of our salvation but in Christ. It is only in Christ that faith terminates, or comes to rest, upon God, upon his power, wisdom, mercy, and truth, as working salvation for the church, and for us in particular. To this purpose it is said in 1 Pet. i. 20. *Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.* If we see Christ aright, we will see God in him; we will see that we need not go out of Christ to seek any knowledge of God: for in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: God's name, nature, all his perfections, are in him. He and the Father are one God. Hence he says, *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.*

JESUS CHRIST was the object of faith under the Old Testament dispensation. He was revealed to faith in the first promise concerning the seed of the woman, and in all the ceremonies and sacrifices of divine appointment. The Old-Testament church is expressly enjoined to believe in Christ, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. *Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way.—Beware of him, and obey his voice,—for my name is in him.* Psal. ii. 11. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.* The name of Christ was faith's plea under the Old Testament as well as now. Psal. lxxxiv. 9. *Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.* Dan. ix. 17. *Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate, for the Lord's sake.* The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,

Jacob, was God as revealed in the promises of the covenant of grace, God in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. In a word, the same righteousness of God which is now, under the New Testament, more clearly manifested, was all along *witnessed by the law and the prophets.*

DISCOURSE II.

I JOHN iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST.

WE have considered Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as the object of saving faith: And surely what the Scriptures teach concerning all his glory, and all his suitableness to our case, should awaken in us an earnest solicitude to have that faith by which he dwells in our hearts.

Let us proceed to another head of inquiry: What it is that, properly and strictly speaking, constitutes the ACT of believing in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Here some things may be premised for the better understanding of what we aim at.

1. The faith under consideration is a saving grace; of which the apostle speaks in Eph. ii. 8. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; in 1 Tim. i. 16. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for*

a pattern to them who should afterwards believe to life everlasting; and in Heb. x. 39. We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul. It is true, there are counterfeit faiths as well as of the other graces of the Spirit. Simon Magus, Agrippa, and others, are said to have believed; the stony-ground hearers are said to have received the word: Persons in the apostolic age, destitute of charity, might prophesy and work miracles; and in our own times, a counterfeit faith may be attended with many spiritual gifts, and even with a semblance of love, repentance, devotion, carefulness about good works. But the faith concerning which we now inquire, differs, not only, as some suppose, in degree, but even in kind or nature, from the counterfeit faiths now mentioned, and from all that can be found in unregenerate men. If the difference between saving faith and mere historical faith, as it is called, were only in degree, then, instead of saying as the apostles did to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," they should have said, "Believe in such a degree, and then thy faith will be saving:" whereas their way of speaking gave the jailor ground to conclude, that if he believed at all in the sense wherein he was called to believe, he should be saved. True believers are sometimes represented as weak in faith, as of little faith: If the difference between saving and historical faith were only in degree, then Simon Magus might be represented in the same manner.—Again, that there must be a difference between saving faith and that which is not so, in some other respect than

than in degree, is evident from the account that is given of Judas and other apostates: it is not said of them, that they did not believe in a sufficient degree, but that they did not believe at all. John vi. 64. *There are some of you that believe not; for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* Several properties of saving faith shew that it is of a different nature from whatever semblance of it may be found in natural men. It is *unfeigned faith*, 1 Tim. i. 5.; *most holy faith*, Jude 20.; *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 1.; it is a faith of *the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead*, Col. ii. 12. These are properties that belong to the smallest degree of this faith, as well as to a great degree of it. If it be allowed, that there are degrees of faith in unregenerate men of the same nature or kind with saving faith, the former must be allowed to be a good preparation for, or rather a progress toward, the latter: and it will follow, that man has some natural ability to prepare himself for saving grace, or to move toward it: Whereby the Scripture doctrine of man's natural inability to do any thing spiritually good, or to prepare himself for it, is overturned, and the old popish doctrine about merit of congruity is introduced. This scheme tends to mislead persons in the weighty and important duty of self-examination; for, in examining ourselves, it should be our first concern to inquire, whether our exercises and attainments are of a saving nature or kind, rather than whether they have been in such a degree. The contrary way of managing this exercise tends to gross delusion: accordingly, many persuade

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themselves, that they have extraordinary attainments and high degrees of grace, while they have ground to fear, what they give themselves no trouble about, that they are destitute of the reality, or of that which is of a saving nature. It is high time to purge the leaven of such corrupt doctrine out of the church of Christ.

2. The subject of our present inquiry, is the act of believing in the name of Jesus Christ, abstracting from such things as accompany or follow it. Regeneration, for example, must be considered as, in the order of nature, before believing; faith, or believing, being an act of a soul that is spiritually quickened. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; he cannot see the Son, nor believe on him.* With respect to any law work, as it is called, which may be, in the order of time, before faith, or while there is no believing on the name of Jesus Christ, it is, in its own nature, or as to the exercise of the soul under it, no other than what may be, and actually is, found in reprobates, as in Cain, Judas, and others. Legal terror, unaccompanied with any believing views of Christ as the soul's only hiding-place, is, in persons under a gospel-dispensation, the working of inexcusable ignorance, enmity, and unbelief; and its native tendency is to produce blasphemous thoughts, more and more hardness of heart, and desperate obstinacy in departing from the living God: and therefore, as one justly observes, such terror is rather to be accounted pangs of the second death, than of the new birth. It is certain, however, that God, who knows how to bring good

good out of evil, makes his people profit by such a law work at last ; and as soon as the supernatural principle of faith is implanted in the soul, the experience of these legal terrors will afford many motives which contribute, under the agency of the Holy Spirit, to stir up the soul to the immediate and diligent exercise of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, when a person is in some measure savingly enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel, the discovery that is made, under legal terrors, of the deceit and desperate wickedness of the heart, will be of use to promote the necessary conviction, That his case would be hopeless, were it not for the sovereign and super-abounding grace of God in Jesus Christ : The experience he had, under these terrors, of the vanity and falsehood of all the refuges to which he used to have recourse, is, under the hand of the Spirit of faith, a powerful incitement to adhere stedfastly to the only true remedy : And the sense he had of the dreadful reality of God's wrath, and of its full execution as near at hand, shuts him up to an immediate and earnest essay to *flee for refuge that he may lay hold on the hope set before him.* Indeed there is a real and thorough conviction of the utter sinfulness, helplessness, and misery, which we are under as the children of the first Adam, necessarily supposed or implied in every act of saving faith. But this conviction, so far as it is of a peculiar nature, and distinguishes the Lord's people from others, is not before saving faith, nor a previous qualification in order to saving faith, but rather a necessary ingredient in the very act

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or exercise of it* : accordingly, it is implied in many representations of faith in Scripture, as in *fleeing from the wrath which is to come* ; in *fleeing as doves to their windows* ; in *looking to Christ that we may be saved*. It is not this conviction, however, though it is constantly implied in all that we teach concerning the nature of faith, but faith's application of the remedy, which we have more particularly in view as the subject of our present inquiry.—Again, the act of believing, of which we treat, is to be carefully distinguished from

* This is agreeable to that scriptural definition of justifying faith, which we have in our Larger Catechism : “ Justifying
 “ faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by
 “ the Spirit and word of God ; whereby he, being convinced
 “ of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and
 “ all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition,
 “ not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel,
 “ but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness,
 “ therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting
 “ and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God
 “ for salvation.” Excellent, to this purpose, are the words of
 an eminent divine. “ I would not,” says he, “ willingly speak
 “ of preparations to faith ; because it putteth men upon search-
 “ ing something in themselves, upon fashioning their own
 “ hearts, and trimming them, to come to Christ : whereas no-
 “ thing can be acceptable to him but what cometh from him.
 “ But, I think, all that men intend, when they speak of prepa-
 “ rations, may be gained this way,—by holding out to men
 “ the impossibility of coming to Christ, till they be emptied of
 “ themselves : Not that the one is a thing going before, to be
 “ done by us ; but because they are all one. It is one motion
 “ of the soul, to come out of itself, and into Jesus : It is one
 “ thing, to distrust ourselves, and to trust in him : And, by
 “ this means, when the true nature of faith itself is holden out,
 “ men might examine themselves rather by it, whether they
 “ have it, than by the preparations to it.” MR HUGH BIN-
 NING, on Isa. xxvi. 3.

from those things which necessarily attend it as concomitants, evidences, fruits, or effects; such as love, godly sorrow for sin, new obedience, or desires and purposes of obedience. Considering the act of saving faith as distinct from these things, is by no means a needless affectation of accuracy, but of great necessity and importance; because it is well known, that Papists, and many called Protestants, who have lost a relish for the purity of gospel doctrine, contend, that a resolved subjection to, or compliance with, what they call, the precepts of the gospel, ought to be included in the definition of saving faith*. But such a definition is contrary to all these places of Scripture which represent love and obedience as distinct from faith. Gal. v. 9. *Faith worketh, or manifesteth itself, by love.* 2 Pet. i. 5. *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and*

* Faith, as it respects the kingly office of Christ, is the soul's resting on him for sanctification, and for deliverance from all evil. The language of it is, The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us. But the absolute surrender of ourselves, or our resolved subjection to his laws, is a native and necessary effect of faith, but is by no means faith itself. Faith is not our resolving, undertaking, or promising to do, but our persuasion of what Christ is, and of what he has undertaken and promised to do. When we say, that faith is not a resolution of subjection to Christ, we do not detract from the necessity of such a resolution; because we maintain that this, and other things, are as necessary in the Christian character, as faith itself. Thus the necessity of repentance and holiness is represented in as strong terms as that of faith, Luke xiii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. Without these, faith would be dead, and unprofitable to salvation, James ii. 14, 17.

and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. 1 Tim. i. 5. *The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* Neither love, nor repentance, nor the desire or purpose of these, can be opposed, as faith is in the matter of justification before God, to works, to all works of obedience to the law. Rom. iv. 5. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* Gal. ii. 16. *We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* Here is a plain reason why faith is to be considered as distinct from love, repentance, good desires, or purposes; because these cannot, like faith, be distinguished from them, and opposed to the works of the law; for love, repentance, good desires, and purposes, cannot justly be considered otherwise than as works of the law, or instances of conformity to the law. It is true, faith is a duty required in the first commandment; and is allowed, in that respect, to be a work of the law. But in the matter of justification, faith is of no consideration as an instance of obedience to the law; it has no place in this matter, but as it is that in or by which we receive the justifying righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is capable of being considered as no work, but merely our receiving a free gift at the hand of a gracious God in Christ. *Therefore, says the apostle, it is of faith, that it might be by grace;* if it had been of love, repentance, good desires and aims, it would have been by works, and the whole design of the gospel would

would have been frustrated. The scheme of including love, repentance, or good resolutions, in the notion of faith, renders it quite uncertain what we are to understand by faith : whereas the sacred writers are particularly careful to ascertain what it is, by representing it as no less distinct from other things with which men would confound it, than a cause from its effects ; by opposing it, in the matter of justification, to all our own works, or personal conformity to the law ; and by the descriptive names that are given to it, such as, persuasion, assurance, trust, confidence, believing or receiving a testimony. Farther, the act of believing under consideration is to be distinguished from any consciousness of, or reflection upon, our own attainments. It is one thing to believe on the Son of God ; it is another thing to know that we have believed in a true and saving manner. What we inquire after is, that direct act of faith which neither looks to itself, nor to its effects, but only and immediately to its glorious object, the Lord Jesus Christ ; according to the call in Isa. xlv. 21, 22. *There is no Saviour beside me. Look unto me, and be saved.*

3. The subject of our present inquiry is not, what this or that person takes to be his own exercise in believing, but What is that which, in the Scripture account, constitutes believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? or, it is not what a believer's own faith appears to himself, through a cloud of unbelief, and other prevailing corruptions ; but What is that direct act of faith which corresponds with the ground and warrant of it in the word of God ;

God; and the lively exercise of which we should seek, in the use of all appointed means, to attain?

These things being premised, we observe, that a person may justly give the following definition of saving faith: That it is a real or unfeigned persuasion, wrought in my heart by the Holy Spirit, that, in the gospel record or testimony, God gives his Son Jesus Christ, with his whole salvation, to sinners of mankind indefinitely, and to me a sinner in particular.

Here we propose, first, To take a view of the record of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ; and, then, To consider the nature of this persuasion.

As to this record of God, the great subject of it, is that which we considered in the preceding discourse, that is, the name of his Son Jesus Christ. We may now consider it somewhat more particularly, according to its formal nature, or as it is the ground of saving faith.

1. It may be observed, that there is no salvation for poor sinners of Adam's family, but in Jesus Christ, as held forth in this record. Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* All the advantages which the things of the world, together with the help and favour of men, can afford; all the opinions, sincerity, devoutness, good-meanings, and the most assiduous endeavours to walk according

ing to the law, being without Christ, are of no avail to our salvation. So the Heathen, being without Christ, are without God and without hope in the world. And where men are without the record of God in his word, they are also without Christ, according to the Apostle's declaration in Rom. x. 13, 14, 15. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?*

2. This record of God is an exhibition of the all-sufficiency of his Son Jesus to accomplish our salvation. Heb. vii. 25. *He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, is such an infinitely valuable ransom and satisfaction to the law and justice of God, that they can demand no more in order to the justification of the most guilty of the human race. Rom. v. 18. *As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* Matth. xiii. 31. *I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.* The unpardonableness of that which is peculiarly called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, is no diminution or disparagement of the atoning or cleansing virtue of the

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blood

blood of Christ; but is only the declared consequence of a wilful, deliberate, malicious, fixed, open, and avowed contempt of the whole profession of Christianity; and particularly of justification by the blood of Jesus; by a person who has been as much enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, and has tasted as much of its sweetness, as is consistent with an unrenewed state. Such a person perishes, not from an insufficiency in the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ, nor properly for any want of a right of access to that blood; but because he not only puts it away from him, but persists in treating the application of it by the Holy Spirit with open and avowed scorn, and fixed malicious rancour. The all-sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ to save the vilest sinner that comes to him, shines with conspicuous lustre in the names that he bears; such as, the Saviour of the world, 1 John iv. 14. the Saviour of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. Immanuel, God in our nature, God with us, or on our side, Mat. i. 23. Jehovah our Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. Jehovah our Peace, Judg. vi. 24. Jehovah our Healer, Exod. xv. 26. our Hope, 1 Tim. i. 1.; and also in the offices which he executes as Redeemer. Is there any spiritual blindness that he cannot deliver us from, as our Prophet? Is there any guilt which the blood of our Great High Priest, cannot expiate? Is there any promised blessing that we may not expect on account of his righteousness? What bondage of corruption will he not set us free from, as our King? In respect of these three offices, he is set forth to poor sinners as made of God to them, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

redemption. The sufficiency of Christ, exhibited in the gospel, is a sufficiency of good-will to the salvation of sinners; a sufficiency of loving-kindness as well as of power, Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good-will toward men.* John vi. 37. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Titus iii. 4. *The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.* Psal. xxxvi. 7. *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* Luke xiii. 34. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings; and ye would not!*

3. In this record of God, we have a free gift and grant of Christ crucified, and of eternal life in him, to sinners of mankind without distinction. This grant is sometimes expressed in the most formal manner; as in Isai. xlix. vi. *He said, (the Father said to the Son), It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth:* and xlii. 6. *I will give thee to be a covenant to the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house,* Here it is obvious, that those to whom the Father gives his beloved Son as a Surety and Saviour, are Gentiles, blind, prisoners, that is, according to the import of these metaphorical expressions, to man-

kind sinners indefinitely, who are all, as the children of fallen Adam, in a state of alienation from God ; in a state of spiritual blindness and bondage. Another text to this purpose is in John, vi. 32. Where Christ is speaking to the promiscuous multitude, many of whom, it is evident from the context, particularly ver. 36. were still in their natural state, unbelievers, and enemies to Christ : *My Father, says he, giveth you the true bread from heaven.* Christ is here comparing himself to the manna which fell about the tents of Israel in the wilderness. As the simple raining of the manna around their camp, even before it was gathered, is, in the 31st verse, called a giving ; so the revelation or offer of Christ in the word of the gospel, even before actual believing, is called a giving of him *. To the same purpose, we read in 1 John v. 11. *And this is the record, by the disbelieving of which men bring upon themselves the guilt of making God a liar, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* The giving here meant, is not a putting persons in possession ; but such a giving, in the way of grant or tender, to sinners of mankind, that each of them, to whom this record comes, is bound to believe that it is a giving to him in particular ; otherwise he makes God a liar. We have a very remarkable representation of this grant in John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* This giving of his only-begotten Son, is such a giving as warrants any of the

* See Calvin on the place.

the human race, or whosoever will, to believe on him. But the giving of Christ to some men, as to the elect, in the decree of election, and in the intention of Christ's death, or to believers in actual possession, cannot be a warrant to all men, that whosoever of them will, may believe on him, or receive him. The giving of an entertainment to some individuals only of a company, never can be a warrant to the whole company, that whosoever of them will, may come and partake of the entertainment. But the giving, here meant, is a giving which is prior to believing, and upon which we are to proceed in believing; which can be no other than the revelation of Christ in the way of grant and offer to sinners of mankind indefinitely, warranting whosoever of them will, to believe on him for everlasting life. This giving of the only-begotten Son of God, is illustrated by the simile made use of in verse 14. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The brazen serpent was given and lifted up as a common good to all the stung Israelites, that whosoever of them should look on it might be healed. So Christ is given to a lost world in the word, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life *. This grant is also expressed in free and absolute promises: in promises directed to those who are destitute of every good

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qualification:

* See Answers to Twelve Questions, put to some ministers by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in the year 1721.

qualification.—In a promise, for example, of pardon to the guilty, *Isai. xliii. 24, 25. Thou hast made me serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and will not remember thy sins:*—in a promise of purification to the most polluted sinner, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you:*—in a promise of the new heart to those who have nothing but the old stony heart: *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh: and I will give you a heart of flesh:*—in a promise of faith to the unbelieving, *In his name shall the Gentiles trust:*—in a promise of repentance to the impenitent, *Isai. xxx. 22. Ye shall defile also the covering of the graven images of silver, and the ornament of the molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence:*—in a promise of the Spirit, *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes:*—in a promise of Christ himself, *In him, who according to the flesh is the seed of Abraham, shall all the families of the earth be blessed:*—in a promise of God in Christ, *I will be your God.* Such are the free and unconditional promises, which are a principal part of that gospel, which the ministers of Christ are commissioned to teach to every creature under heaven, saying to their hearers, *The promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Let us fear lest a promise being left us,*
of

of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.—O sinner of mankind! to whom the word of God comes, know, that whatever thy case or character be, a promise is left thee of entering into God's rest. Let it be thy great concern, that thou mayest not come short of it by unbelief.—This free and unconditional grant is also declared in the many calls and invitations to an immediate participation of Christ which are directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely. Thus, in Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* These words can signify nothing less, than that God gives *the water of life* to mankind sinners in such a manner, that any individual of them all may freely or immediately take it home to himself, because the divine grant has already made it his, for application, use, and enjoyment. Suppose a number of persons to be in a room where a table is covered with plenty of food: suppose the master of the house coming in, should say to them all, *Whosoever will, let him eat and drink of what is on this table, till he be satisfied, it shall cost him nothing: might not each of these persons, esteeming the master of the house to be an honest man, and as speaking these words in earnest, justly consider these provisions as his own, for present or immediate use, no previous terms or conditions being proposed or required? And why should it not be deemed warrantable to make the same conclusion, when the God of truth condescends to use the same language? Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. And again, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy*

buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Those that thirst are men in their natural state, who (as you may see by consulting the passage, *Isai. lv. 1, 2.*) are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. Surely no poor sinner of mankind, to whom the word of God comes, can warrantably reckon himself excepted in such calls as the following: *John vii. 37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Isai. xli. 12, 13. Hearken unto me, ye stout hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry. Prov. viii. 4. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men: and ix. 4, 5. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled.* These being calls or invitations to an immediate receiving or partaking of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation; and being directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely; necessarily carry in them the notion of that free gift or grant of which we speak. Surely, he who brings a benefit to our hand, and entreats us to accept of it, and make it our own, without money and without price, that is, without requiring any previous compliance with terms or conditions,—entreats us to make it as much our own, as we do what we buy for our own use, or what we eat and drink for our own refreshment,—may well be said to make a gift and grant of that benefit: and the

the record in which it is made, being written, sworn, and sealed, may, with the greatest propriety, be called, **A DEED OF GIFT AND GRANT.**

It may be asked, Since Christ is thus given or granted to mankind, how can any of them come short of him ?

Answer. Because a thing that is presented as a free gift may be despised and rejected ; in which case, there can be no possession. That this may be the case with the gospel-grant of Christ, and of salvation through his name, is the more evident, as it is expressed in gracious invitations, as well as in absolute promises. And that the Lord may give an absolute promise to those who, in the event, never come to the actual enjoyment of the promised blessing, is manifest from the instance of the promise made to the Israelites of the land of Canaan : This promise, as it is recorded in **Exod. iii. 17.** is free and unconditional. *I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.* This promise was given to the children of Israel, as a nation, to be rested on by them as good security for their introduction into and possession of that good land. But the bulk of that generation, despising this security, and persisting in their unbelief, never saw the promised land : They could not enter in, says the Apostle, because of unbelief. This is a type or emblem of the gospel-promise, wherein Christ, and eternal life in him, are made over to us as a free gift. Such as will not credit the promise, nor accept of the

the gift, will justly come short of the promised rest. The Lord says to such, as he said to the Israelites, Numb. xiv. 34. *Ye shall know my breach of promise*: that is, as it is with believers according to their faith; so it shall be with you according to your unbelief. Since ye account my promise unworthy to be trusted in, it is fit that ye should never experience the accomplishment of it; but that there should be, in your case, a seeming breach of it. But we now proceed to observe,

4. That the record of God, which faith receives, is the gospel, as contra-distinguished from the law. The law is a perfect rule of righteousness; there is nothing good in man's nature, dispositions, or actions, but what it requires. All the commands of God, therefore, not excepting those of faith and repentance, belong to the law. On the other hand, the gospel, strictly and properly taken, has no commands, no prescriptions of duty in it. Thus the law and the gospel differ,—not as one precept of the law may differ from another, in respect of objects and occasions, in respect of more easiness or difficulty in the performance,—but in their nature, as a command differs from an absolutely free grant or promise. It is true, the law, too, has its promises; but neither promises nor threatenings constitute its formal nature or distinguishing character. The law might have been without the promise of eternal life: the revealed will of God would have been the rule of obedience to man, as his morally dependant creature, though no such promise had been given. And that the law may be without the threatening, is manifest from its being a rule of obedience to the confirmed

confirmed angels and glorified saints ; in the case of whom, it must be allowed, to have no threatening annexed to it. Thus, we say, the formal nature of the law is a revelation of God's commanding will to men as reasonable creatures. And, even in this respect, it must be carefully distinguished from the gospel, which, in its formal nature, is purely a revelation of God's giving and promising will towards poor sinners of mankind, in Jesus Christ. The sum of the law is, *Thou shalt love God, thy Maker and Preserver, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* On the other hand, the gospel was revealed to our first parents in these words, directed to the serpent, *He, even the Son of God, shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* The gospel, as the Apostle tells us, was preached to Abraham in these words, *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* The gospel was proclaimed, at the birth of Christ, in these words of the angel to the shepherds, Luke ii. 10, 11. *I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people : For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* The gospel is this faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners :* and this, *That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* The gospel is good tidings of good to sinners of mankind, through Christ crucified, dead and buried, ascended and interceding. Such is the difference between the formal nature of the law and that of the gospel.

But

But if the law be considered as a covenant, which all men are under as the children of fallen Adam *, promising eternal life as a reward of debt

* There is, perhaps, some inaccuracy, or at least ambiguity, of expression, in many valuable authors, about the state of men under the Covenant of Works.—It is certainly true, that all men are under the Covenant of Works, if this implies, that they are under the curse of it as a broken Covenant; and they are also cursed who continue not in all things written in the law, as the rule of their obedience, while they have no interest in the righteousness of the Surety.—It is also true, that all men are under the command of the Covenant of Works, if this be understood only, as affirming, that all men have contracted, in their representing head Adam, a debt of obedience, which they can never pay in their own persons; yea, to which, while strangers to Christ, they are continually adding, by the transgression of the law as a rule of duty.—Now, believers are honourably delivered from this, by the obedience of Jesus Christ:—Sinners are under it, as desperate debtors, who can give no satisfaction to law and justice.—But the Covenant of Works was never renewed with any sinful man, after Adam broke it; either in, what some have called, its natural state, as including the whole moral law, which Christ fulfilled, and the curse of which he endured;—or in its positive state, as summed up in abstinence from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.—It has no promise of life now to any man, either in the Pagan or Christian parts of the world.—Such scriptures as Jer. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 11. declare only what was the original tenor of this Covenant. All who enjoy the word of Christ, instead of being encouraged so much as to endeavour obedience to the law as a Covenant, are required to renounce all hopes of salvation in that way, to seek it by faith in Christ, Rom. iii. 19, 20. Gal. iii. 10,—12.; and though men are, under the influence of ignorance, and a perverse disposition, disposed to seek righteousness by the law, especially when awakened and convinced of sin in some measure,—yet in regard of moral obligation, and gracious revelation, they are required and encouraged to seek salvation only according to the New Covenant plan. Now, as the law has no more any promise of life to sinners, and a promise is an essential part of a Covenant, it may be questioned, whether it be so proper to assert, that sinners are under the commanding power of the *Covenant of Works*, except as desperate debtors. (R.)

debt to him who performeth the condition of perfect obedience, and threatening eternal death as the wages of every the least transgression; the law in this sense, and the gospel, are not only different, but opposite to one another. The law, as a covenant, declares, that every sinner is cursed: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*: but the gospel declares that sinners shall be *blessed in Christ*; blessed with deliverance, both from sin, and from that wrath and curse of God which every sin deserves. The law says to every sinner, *Thou art condemned already*; the gospel says to him, *There is no condemnation to thee who art in Christ Jesus*. The law says, *Thou hast destroyed thyself*; but says the gospel, *Thy sure and all-sufficient help is in the Lord Jesus Christ*. The law-covenant says, *That eternal life is the reward of debt to which thy own personal obedience gives thee a title*; but the gospel says, *Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. The law-covenant says, *Thou hast no right to the promises, till thou hast performed the condition of them*; the gospel says, *Jesus Christ, thy Surety, hath perfectly fulfilled the condition of all the promises in his obedience unto death*; so that in him, or for his sake, thou hast a good right to them; in him they are free and unconditional to thee; in him all the promises are *Yea*, and in him *Amen*. Hence it appears the essential difference between the promises of the law-covenant and those of the gospel is, that the former are conditional to us; whereas the latter are to us free, unconditional, and absolute.

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But

But it is objected, that many promises of the gospel are conditional, as declaring that they belong to persons of such and such characters. Such, among many, are the following. *He that believeth shall be saved. The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. He that overcometh, shall inherit all things.*

We answer, 1. When we say the promises are absolutely free, or unconditional, we are very far from meaning, that any of the promised blessings of the gospel can be received or enjoyed separately from the rest, or from the great comprehensive blessing of a real vital union to Christ. On the contrary, they are so inseparably connected, that whosoever receives one, shall receive all. There is, for example, such a connection between the overcoming or mortification of sin, and inheriting all things, that they must be miserably deceived who expect the latter without the former.

2. There is a certain order, according to which, and not otherwise, we are to expect the enjoyment of the promised blessings of the Covenant of Grace. Thus, we are not to expect the attainment of a holy walk, before faith in Christ; nor assurance of sense, or experience of the comforts of the Holy Spirit, before we be brought into the gospel-way of studying holiness. A life of grace here; is before a life of glory hereafter. Thus, when it is said, *That they who mourn shall be comforted,*

comforted, and That they who endure to the end shall be saved; the meaning is, that, according to the order established in the everlasting covenant, there is a mourning before the sensible enjoyment of spiritual comfort; an enduring to the end, before we can come to the full possession of salvation.

3. The surety-righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only proper condition of all the promises taken together. The redemption which we have through his blood, includes all the blessings of the New Covenant. Hence, though we find one of those blessings promised to those who have begun to possess another, we are not to consider the begun possession of the latter as the proper condition of the former; but rather both of them, as alike freely and absolutely promised to us, for the sake of Him whose name is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. We should consider all the promises as one: *This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life*. Those which have been called conditional promises, are only declarations of the inseparable connection among the various blessings contained in that one promise, and also of the order according to which the Lord is pleased to bestow them; for when we take a view of the whole comprehension of the gospel promises, we find all these blessings made over to poor sinners in the same free and absolute manner; the righteousness of Christ being always understood as the only proper condition. Hence that which has been taken for the condition of a promise in one part of Scripture, is absolutely promised in another. Thus faith is absolutely promised in Mat. xii. 21; and

perseverance in grace unto the end, in Jer. xxxii. 40. Hence we see how the Apostle came to render one of the texts quoted in the objection as he does, in Rom. xi. 26. *It is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* So that, according to the Apostle, the Prophet's saying, that Christ would come to them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob, implied a free, absolute, and unconditional promise, that *he should turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Thus, when we read this promise, *Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,* we are to understand the absolute promise as implied; as if it had been said, *I will put my fear into your heart, and to you shall the Sun of righteousness arise.*

4. Sometimes the promised blessing is connected with such characters as infallibly evidence persons to be already partakers of that blessing. As when it is said, *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* Now, this godly fear, is such as evidenceth a person to be already a partaker in Christ of God's fatherly pity. In like manner, when it is said, that Christ is *the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him**; only such obedience must be understood, as certainly evidenceth the person to be already a partaker of that salvation. Such characters as these may be evidences, but cannot be any proper conditions of the promised blessings to which they are annexed.—Sometimes the promised blessing is represented

* Christ is the author or cause of eternal salvation to all who by hearing, attentively listen to him, which includes faith in his promises and doctrines, with obedience to his commandments, and compliance with his gracious invitations. Rev. xxii. 14. (R.)

represented in propositions of the same form, as belonging to persons in poverty, affliction, temptation, or the like circumstances, which no one will be so absurd as to reckon conditions. *Blessed be ye poor ; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted ! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires :—and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children.* From these and the like passages it is evident, that a character given in the word of promise to those who either are or may be partakers of the blessing promised, is a different thing from the prescribing of terms or conditions. The design of the former is no more than to encourage persons to receive freely what is, for Christ's sake, freely granted to them in the divine promise as peculiarly suited to the case or character described : whereas the design of the latter, is to shew upon what ground a person may warrantably claim the blessing promised*.

F 3.

5. If

* If it be objected, that in the gospel there are promises of life upon condition of our obedience, as in Rom. viii. 13. " If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live ; " we answer, The promises of the gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker ; and to the worker, not for his work, but for Christ's sake according to his work. For example, the promise of life is not made to the work of mortification, but to him that mortifies his flesh ; and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, and his mortification is the token and evidence thereof. PERKINS on Gal.

It is a very just observation of Dr Smith, of Pequea, in the 2d of his Three Sermons on Faith, lately published, to this purpose:

5. If the gospel-promise be conditional, then the condition of it either is or is not promised; if our opponents should say that it is not promised at all, they will fall into gross error. For it is evident, that faith, repentance, prayer, and whatever has been represented as a condition, are included in the promises of the Covenant of Grace. To give one example from a multitude, most, if not all, such conditions are comprehended in that promise which we have in Zech. xiii. 9. *And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: They shall call on my name, and I will bear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.* Besides, it is allowed by those that hold the promises to be conditional, that the condition is the gift of God. But every gift that we receive from him is either natural or supernatural: If the condition of a promise be a natural gift of God, then it is no other than what may be found in unregenerate men; and then it will follow, that there are natural attainments, to which God hath secured saving grace by his promise; which is the old exploded error of Pelagius. But if this condition be a supernatural gift, or something given in virtue of the Covenant of Grace, then it is promised; for there is nothing peculiar given to men by virtue of that Covenant, which is not promised in it.

But

pose: That the distressful case is mentioned in Mat. xi. 28. not as a condition either of the person's right to the blessing, or of his right to come for it,—but to point him out as it were by name, and invite him to come to Christ for free salvation. He justly represents the sinner as under a fatal mistake, when he attempts to appropriate the promised blessing, not because it is freely offered, but because he has something to offer for it.

But if they say that the condition is promised, then we ask, Whether it be promised absolutely or conditionally. If they say it is promised absolutely, they yield the matter in question; for what is promised absolutely, cannot, with any propriety, be called a condition required of us. If they say it is promised conditionally, the question recurs, Whether this second condition be promised absolutely or conditionally? If it should be answered, Conditionally, it may be still asked, How the third condition is promised, and so on without end.

6. It seems absurd to represent faith as a condition necessary to warrant the application of the promises to ourselves, not only because faith is a promised blessing, but also because, properly speaking, it is itself the only application of the promises to ourselves as yea and amen in Christ. This is undoubtedly the scriptural notion of saving faith; but when people consider faith as a condition of the application of the promises to ourselves, they must either have a quite different notion of faith, or they make faith the condition of itself; the application of the promises, the condition of our application of them; our receiving of a gift, the condition of our receiving it *!

We

* To say that the grant of Christ and all his salvation in the promise is not free and unconditional, because what is thus granted cannot be actually possessed and enjoyed unless it be believed, or, in other words, received, is to say in effect, that there never was, nor can be any such thing as a free gift or unconditional grant of any thing; for no gift can be so free, no grant so absolute, but, in the very nature of the thing, a man must accept, before he can actually enjoy the benefit of it. Mr WILSON'S Palamon's Creed Reviewed and Examined, vol. ii. p. 63.

We shall only add, that the new scheme of gospel conditional promises, no more excludes boasting than the conditional promise of the Covenant of Works did. Because, according to the former as well as the latter, it is our compliance with the terms or conditions that entitles us to the promised blessing; so that, according to both schemes, the reward is of debt. The common pleas, that it is not merit, but the free grace of God, that makes such an act or such a qualification a condition of salvation; that what is required as a condition is easily complied with; that this compliance is not of ourselves, that it is the gift of God; that a humbling sense of our unworthiness, and of our unprofitableness to God, belongs to our performance of the condition; are of no avail to distinguish their new gospel-covenant from the Covenant of Works: for it is very obvious, that all these things belonged to the Covenant of Works, as it was made with upright Adam. For who can deny that it was not merit, but the free grace of God, which made Adam's abstaining from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the condition, by the observation of which he was to secure eternal life to himself and all his posterity; that there was no imaginable condition easier to be complied with; and yet if he had actually complied, he ought to have ascribed his doing so wholly to the upholding grace of God, acknowledging his weakness as a creature, his insignificance before God, who is glorious in holiness, and his unprofitableness to Him who is infinitely blessed in and of himself. So that so long as persons are standing upon conditions, to be found in themselves, whether supposed to be attained.

attained by nature or grace, as giving them a right or claim to Christ or his salvation, all the most humbling acknowledgments and mortifying exercises in the world; will not exempt them from the charge of persisting in the cursed attempt of rebuilding the old Jericho of the broken Covenant of Works. The evil of this scheme, though it has often been solidly evinced, both in preaching and in writing, is still very little attended to by church-members: it is, however, a bitter root; and is at the bottom of that decline of the life and power of godliness, which at this day is matter of mourning and lamentation with all the true children of Zion.

Thus, the gospel, properly taken, is to be carefully distinguished from the law. But it is allowed that the word Gospel, is sometimes to be taken in a large sense, which includes the law; that is, it is sometimes to be understood as comprehending the whole gospel-dispensation, not only what is properly the doctrine of the gospel, but all the doctrine of the law, as being subservient to the gospel. According to this dispensation, there is a twofold subserviency of the law.

1. As it is a covenant of works, it sets before us the sinfulness and misery that we are under as the children of the first Adam; in whom we sinned and died. As it reveals the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and declares us all dead men, it is the great mean which the Holy Spirit makes use of in awakening us to a true sense of our lost and undone condition. It may be said to shut us up to the gospel way of relief, as it discovers the vanity of

of all other ways. It proclaims, with terrible and inflexible severity, its high and extensive demands, and our utter inability to answer them. It proclaims us naked and destitute of any justifying righteousness, and that we must continue so for ever, unless we receive that righteousness which was finished upon Mount Calvary.

2. Our Lord Jesus, having in his flesh perfectly fulfilled the law as a covenant or condition of life, (in which sense, through his fulfilment of it, believers are dead to it), still enjoins it on them as the rule of their thoughts, words, and actions. In this injunction all his authority as King in Zion is displayed; and their compliance with it, is secured by the promise of the New Covenant: *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* The law, in this view, is greatly subservient to the gospel, as, by setting it before his people in his word and ordinances, and by writing it on their hearts, he makes them partakers of that leading and unspeakably precious benefit of the Covenant of Grace, sanctification. Therefore we are to meditate on the law of the Lord night and day, mourning for whatever is opposite to it in our hearts and ways, being deeply concerned that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us, to conform us more and more to this pure and perfect rule. Whoever neglects the study of conformity to the law in heart and life, is undoubtedly slighting and despising the gospel.

Thus the term Gospel, is sometimes used in a large sense, for the gospel-dispensation; including not only the gospel properly so called, but also, in subserviency thereto, the doctrine of the law, both

as

as a covenant and as a rule of life. But it is necessary to remember, that we cannot use the law as we ought, in subserviency to the gospel, unless we understand and maintain the distinction between them. The confounding and blending of them has been a most fatal source of error and corruption in the Christian Church. The divine truth, with respect to this distinction, shone with peculiar lustre in the morning of the reformation from Popery, and had a principal share in dispersing the deep shades of error and superstition, which had so long overspread the face of the visible church. It was Luther's favourite theme; and he was often at a loss for words to express the sense he had of its importance. He reckoned it one of the most necessary qualifications of a minister of the word, to be able to distinguish rightly between the law and the gospel. "It seemeth," says he, "to be a light matter to mingle the law and the gospel, faith and works, together; but it does more mischief than man's reason can conceive. It not only clouds and darkens the gospel, but overthroweth it utterly, taking away Christ, with all his benefits."

We have dwelt the longer upon this part of our subject, in regard that our view of the direct act of faith must be according to our view of the record of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ.

We come now to consider the act of saving faith; or to inquire what sort of a persuasion it is.

First, We observe, that it is a persuasion wrought in our hearts by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. Faith is such a receiving of the things

things of the Spirit of God, as natural men are incapable of, 1 Cor. ii. 14.; to such the gospel is hid, 2 Cor. iv. 3.; to such Christ crucified, is a *root springing out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2. Nay, the mind of man, by nature, is full of enmity against the Lord and against his Christ, Rom. viii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 4. Hence the Scriptures represent, as necessary to the production of saving faith, not only the outward proposal of God's record concerning his Son Jesus Christ, but also the supernatural teaching, and illumination of the mind; together with a display of almighty and irresistible power in drawing us, Mat. xvi. 17. John vi. 44, 45. 2 Thef. i. 11. Eph. i. 19. And faith is represented as our seeing the Son in a special and supernatural manner. John vi. 40. *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.* Heb. ii. 9. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.* This faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God: not a natural gift, as a common benefit, which the ungodly may partake of; but a supernatural gift, which comes to us in virtue of the New Covenant, as a proper fruit or effect of Christ's purchase. *It is given us, in the behalf of Christ, to believe on him,* Phil. i. 29. The Holy Spirit, is called the Spirit of Faith, because the working of faith in our hearts is peculiarly ascribed to him as the applier of the purchased redemption, John xvi. 14. *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you.* We should be much in this consideration, that however near Christ crucified

cried be brought to us in the outward dispensation of the word, yet we cannot get the least saving sight of him, till the Lord the Spirit open our eyes. It is proper exercise for a gospel hearer to be saying with blind Bartimens, *Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

Secondly, We observe, that it is a sure persuasion. Grounded on the word of God, and wrought in us by the Spirit of God, it must carry in it a real assurance. It is our seeing the light of God's word in the light of his Spirit. The language of faith is not, we are almost persuaded, as Agrippa said; but we are fully persuaded; or, as the Apostles expressed themselves, *we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God: we believe that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.* The doubts of salvation by Christ, which often sadly prevail in believers, are to be ascribed to remaining unbelief, legality, and other corruptions; and are carefully to be distinguished from the nature of faith: for, true and saving faith evidences assurance to be its nature, by wrestling, according to its measure, against all these doubts; and by its never failing to overcome them at last.

Thirdly, It is an appropriating persuasion; or a belief of the gospel-record, with application to ourselves in particular. It is a persuasion that Christ is ours, for all the purposes of justification and salvation, upon no other ground than the gospel-grant. None can have this persuasion without being actually put in possession of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation. Thus, no person, in believing that Christ is *his* Saviour in particular,

lar, his righteousness and strength, upon the ground of the gospel-grant, can be deceived or disappointed; because the Lord assures every believer, that it shall be to him according to his faith. Sinners, we call you, or rather Christ himself calls you, to believe that he is yours, his righteousness and salvation yours, by God's grant thereof in the gospel *. And herein you are not called to believe a lie: But you are assured, that whosoever of you all, be his case and character what it will, is enabled to make such an appropriation of Christ to himself, singly upon the ground of the gospel-grant, shall not be ashamed; but shall find that, in believing, he is become an actual partaker of Christ, and of his whole salvation: Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed.

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* He calleth you:—"Go then unto him, I beseech you; and if he come and meet you, (as his manner is), then do not you unadvisedly say with Peter, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord, Luke v. 8. But say in plain terms, O come unto me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Yea, go on further, and say, as Luther bids you, Most gracious Jesus and sweet Christ, I am a miserable poor sinner, and therefore do judge myself unworthy of thy grace; but yet I having learned from thy word, that thy salvation belongeth to such a one, therefore do I come unto thee, to claim that right, which, through thy gracious promise, belongeth unto me." *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Ch. II. Sect. iii. § 3.

 DISCOURSE III.

I JOHN iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his SON JESUS CHRIST.

MANY and various are the artifices which Satan employs to darken or obscure the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, and to hinder its light from shining in our hearts. Some he seduces to the embracing of gross heresies; as in the case of those who, with Socinus, reject the divinity and satisfaction of Christ, or, with Pelagius and Arminius, deny the effectual and victorious operations of his grace and Spirit upon the souls of men. For those, again, who make a general profession of the truth, in opposition to these abominable errors, he has more subtle schemes and deviations from the truth of the gospel: which, though they seem, at first, but trivial, and differing little but in explicitness of expression from the doctrine that we have learned, yet secretly tend to enervate and reduce all that serves to distinguish it from the doctrine of Papists and Arminians, to a mere nothing. Thus, many insist on the necessity of coming to and improving him by faith; who will by no means allow, that the gospel affords every poor sinner of mankind that hears it, an immediate and a sufficient warrant to trust in the promises, grounded upon the law-magnifying righteousness of Christ, for his own everlasting salvation. But their aversion to this manner of ex-

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pression (while they use many expressions which, according to the true scriptural sense of them, imply the same doctrine) might appear no way dangerous, did it not proceed from an unscriptural notion of saving faith, as not consisting in the sinner's fiducial and applicatory persuasion of God's record concerning his Son, but in his compliance with certain terms and conditions prescribed, as they say, in the gospel.

This doctrine of conditions, (of which we have already spoken), as it is commonly understood, namely, as signifying some good and commendable qualifications, exercise, or attainments, the consciousness of which is necessary, in order to warrant a sinner's appropriation of Christ crucified to himself, is, in truth, the very soul of Arminianism and Popery; or, in other words, of that scheme of justification by the works of the law, against which the Apostle employs so much reasoning in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Hence the manifest importance of that part of our subject to which we now proceed, which is, to shew,

That, in the direct act of saving faith, a person appropriates Christ crucified to himself, saying with the heart; I am verily persuaded that Christ is mine, upon no other ground or warrant than that of the free grant, which God is now making of him to me in his word of grace and promise.

Before we come to the argument, it seems necessary to offer a few previous observations, to obviate some common prejudices on this subject.

I. We

I. We are far from saying, that every one who professes to hold this doctrine, with respect to faith's appropriation of Christ crucified, is a true believer. Persons may hold this, as well as other truths, in unrighteousness. They may have evangelical heads with legal hearts. Such is the amazing deceitfulness of the human heart, that many imagine that they have a persuasion that Christ is theirs, upon a gospel-foundation, whilst that which they take for such a persuasion is but a selfish notion, grounded upon their own personal righteousness, their knowledge, their outward church-privileges, their long standing, reputation, and usefulness in the visible church; the frames they have been wrought up to, and the resolutions they have taken; their deep convictions, followed by comfortable feelings and enlargements. Nothing can be farther from what is here meant, than to reproach or disparage these things. Would to God, that, being of the right kind, and kept in their proper place, they were more common in the visible church. But what we condemn, is the vain and impious attempt to invert the order of the gospel, by building the faith or hope of salvation upon such things. This is the case with those, whatever their opinions or professions may be, who have no self-abasing sense of the blindness of their minds, and the natural enmity of their hearts against the way of salvation revealed in the gospel, and who do not feel their pressing need of the enlightening and renewed work of the Holy Spirit to make them discern and take up with the revealed warrant, which they have, in common with others, to say with the whole heart and with-

entire confidence, Christ is mine, His whole salvation is mine; *In the Lord have I, a poor sinner of Adam's family, righteousness and strength.* Faith is not a notion, nor a profession of a notion; but a real seeing of the Son, and believing on him.

2. The appropriation of which I speak, is the appropriation of a whole Christ and of his whole salvation to ourselves. A persuasion that Christ is mine for present pardon, and not mine for present sanctification, is not faith, but a mere delusion: Because Christ can be no otherwise received by faith, than as he is given to us in the gospel. Christ and his benefits are inseparable both in the gospel report and in the appropriation of faith: which correspond with one another, as the impression on wax with the imprinting seal.

There are several misrepresentations with respect to the ground of this appropriation. The first we take notice of, is that which makes particular election or particular redemption the ground of it. It is evident, that the ground of our faith must be something that may be known before or in order to the act of faith: It must be among the things that are revealed, which belong to us and to our children. But it is utterly unwarrantable to seek the knowledge of our election, or of our actual interest in Christ's intention to lay down his life for his sheep, before or in order to our believing in his name; because, before the exercise and fruits of faith, our election and interest in Christ's intention when he laid down his life, are among the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God: a preposterous prying into which, is to be regarded as an abominable temptation of Satan.

Faith

Faith looks directly or immediately, not at all to what was in God's secret decree from eternity, but to what is now revealed and presented to us in the gospel. Again, this faith is grossly misrepresented, when it is said to proceed upon any scheme of universal redemption; which supposes, that Christ made reconciliation by his death for many that are never to be reconciled; or that he laid down his life for others than his sheep, for many to whom he will not give eternal life. The faith of which we speak, makes an application of the death of Christ as that which, in itself, fully and infallibly secures to us deliverance from wrath, and eternal glory. But this is a faith for which the scheme of universal redemption affords no ground; since it is supposed that Christ died for many that shall never be saved, and that something more than his death is necessary to secure any from the wrath which is to come. The salvation, which universal redemption gives ground for the faith of, is but a conditional and uncertain salvation: whereas that, which saving faith apprehends in the free promise of the gospel, is unconditional and absolutely sure. Nor can the ground of this appropriating faith be our experience of any saving operation of the Holy Spirit in our souls, or our consciousness of any divine communication of supernatural light, or power to believe: for there can be no real experience, or consciousness of any such communication but in or after believing. Thus, when our Lord commanded the man who had the withered hand, to stretch it out, he could have no experience of the strength imparted to him for that purpose,

purpose, but in or after his act of stretching it out. In believing, we proceed upon the same ground upon which that man proceeded, namely, the call of the Lord Jesus. In short, the ground of this appropriation is utterly misrepresented, when it is said to be any good or commendable qualifications in our souls, or, indeed, any thing peculiar or not to be found in other sinners; for we are to come to Christ, or, in other words, to make a believing application of him and all his benefits to ourselves, as miserable sinners, having nothing in ourselves to distinguish or give us a better claim to him and his salvation than other sinners of the human race.

4. The appropriating persuasion or assurance, which we hold to be in the nature of saving faith, is carefully to be distinguished from the knowledge of our being believers, and already in a state of grace. For, though the mind must ever be conscious of its own act; yet whether that act be such as has the particular nature and properties of saving faith, cannot be known but by reflection. That knowledge is to be ascribed to the shining of the Holy Spirit upon his own blessed work in the soul, whereby he causeth us to see that it bears the marks given in the word of that which is saving. This knowledge is usually attained in the diligent use of means, particularly of self-examination. They seem to speak with the greatest accuracy, who call it, the assurance of sense. The assurance of faith arises from the single view of what is contained in the word of God; the assurance of sense from the joint view of his word without us, and of his work within us. The language of faith is,
Thus

Thus he hath spoken ; the language of sense, Thus he hath done.

Having premised these things, we proceed to state the scriptural evidence of this truth, That there is an appropriation of Christ crucified to ourselves in the nature of saving or justifying faith.

What we propose in this discourse is to shew, that, as saving faith is that which corresponds with God's record concerning his Son ; so the only faith which corresponds with that record, is that which includes in it a person's appropriation of Christ, and his whole salvation, to himself in particular.

The former part of this proposition, we hope, will not be disputed. At least it must be sufficient to refer to that definition of a believer which we have in John iii. 33. *He that receiveth his testimony, bath set to his seal that God is true.*

As to the latter part of the proposition, we shall now proceed to shew, that the faith which corresponds with the gospel-record in each of the views in which we considered it in the former discourse, must be such an appropriating persuasion as saving faith has been asserted to be.

1. This record is a declaration that there is no salvation in any other than Christ crucified : Now, the faith that corresponds with this declaration must carry in it, that the person has no hope or confidence of salvation but what he has in Christ crucified ; and therefore if he may have this faith, without any persuasion of his own salvation by Christ crucified, he may have it without any hope or confidence of salvation at all ; he may have it,

and yet sink in despair; which is absurd. When the people of God renounce their idols, such as chariots and horses, riches, beauty, strength, self-righteousness, they transfer whatever confidence they placed in these vanities to a God in Christ. Now, it is evident, that their confidence in these vanities included in it an appropriating persuasion, however ill-grounded, of their safety and happiness as thereby secured, Job xxxi. 24, 25. *If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence: if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much.* Hosea xiv.

3. *Assur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.* Luke xviii. 9. *He spake this parable to certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.* Now, what must be the language of this regard that had been blasphemously given to idols, when transferred from them to the Lord Christ, to whom alone it belongs? It must be to this purpose, A God in Christ is my God, my confidence, in whom alone I will rejoice. I trust in Christ, that I am righteous through his righteousness imputed to me. Hence we find the people of God in Scripture, still accompanying their renunciation of creature confidences with professions of their confidence in the Lord as their God, 2 Chron. xx. 12. *O our God, wilt thou not judge them? We have no might against this great company that cometh against us: neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.* Jer. iii. 23. *Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the bills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.* Dan. ix.

18. *We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.* Phil. iii. 9. *Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

2. The gospel-record is an exhibition of Christ crucified to every sinner of mankind, as an all-sufficient Saviour. If a traveller, ready to faint with hunger, comes into a house, and the head of the family, being acquainted with his condition, causes proper food to be set before him ; if the traveller, knowing the head of the family to be an honest man, and of a generous hospitable disposition ; has also heard him declare, that the food set on the table was for the use of hungry travellers, who might have nothing wherewith to purchase a meal ; surely the traveller, having a due esteem for that person's character and word, and of the provision set before him, will be fully persuaded that he has a right to the immediate use of the food for his present refreshment. In like manner, while the sinner sees himself to be an outcast, ready to perish, he may say, I am persuaded Christ Jesus is set forth to me, as having assumed the human nature into personal union with his divine person, and as having, therefore, become the elder brother and kinsman-redeemer of mankind sinners ; I am persuaded, that the satisfaction or surety-righteousness of Christ is set forth, as, in its intrinsic nature, full payment of my debt to the law and justice of God : I am persuaded, that the offices of Christ, as set forth in the gospel, afford all that deliverance from ignorance, guilt, and spiritual bondage, which I

infinitely

infinitely need : I am persuaded, that the persons whose Saviour Christ is, for whom he suffered and died, are described in terms that are as applicable to me as to any other of mankind ; he being called the Saviour of the world ; he having suffered the just for the unjust ; having died for the ungodly, for enemies : I am convinced that the Lord hath put the Bible into my hands, and that his ministers are called and sent according to the rule of his word, on purpose to set before me this all-sufficient and suitable Saviour : I remember, too, that he who makes such an exhibition of Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, to me a poor sinner, is a God who delighteth in mercy ; this exhibition of Christ, being particularly for the praise of the glory of his grace, which provides all that is here exhibited, freely. Upon these grounds I am persuaded, That Christ is my Saviour ; nor can I, without casting reproach upon the wisdom, faithfulness, and mercy of God in setting him forth, entertain any doubts about my justification and salvation through his name. We have many examples in Scripture of such an appropriating faith being grounded upon the all-sufficiency of the name, of the power, of the mercy, of the loving-kindness of God in Christ, Psal. ix. 10. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.* Dan. iii. 17. *Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hands, O king.* Rom. iv, 20, 21. *Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.* Psal. xxxvi. 7. *How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God ! therefore do the children of*
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men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. It is a sweet name that was revealed to Abraham, *I am God Almighty*; or, as it might be read, *All-sufficient*. His all-sufficiency for the salvation of sinners, could not be seen in all the law, nor in all the works of the old creation: It could no where be seen but in Christ; in Him whose name is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Whoever gets a spiritual discernment of this all-sufficiency in Christ, will see ground to say unto God, in the language of an appropriating faith, *Thou art my shield and exceeding great reward.*

3. In this record of God concerning his Son, there is a free gift and grant of Christ crucified, and of eternal life in him, to sinners of mankind. We may endeavour to represent the manner of the grant in a simile. Suppose that a great and generous Prince had made a grant to a certain class of persons, therein described, of large estates, including all things suitable to their condition; and had publicly declared, that whosoever of the persons so described would believe such an estate, in virtue of the grant now mentioned, to be his own, should not be disappointed, but should immediately enter upon the possession of the granted estate, according to the order specified in the grant: Suppose, too, that the royal donor had given the grant in writing, and had added his seal, and his oath, and his gracious invitation, and his most earnest entreaty, and his authoritative command, to induce the persons, described in the grant, to accept of it:—It is evident, that any one of these persons, having had access to read or hear the grant, must either be verily persuaded that the granted

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estate is his own, or be chargeable with an attempt to bring dishonour upon the goodness, the veracity, the power, and authority, of the donor; on account of which attempt he is liable not only to be debarred for ever from the granted estate, but to suffer a most exemplary and tremendous punishment.

We have shewn already, that God hath made a free and unconditional grant of Christ and his whole salvation. Indeed, what is the preaching of Christ as crucified, dead, risen, ascended, and interceding within the veil, but a proclamation of this grant? For the preaching of Christ is by no means (what some have supposed) one's giving a recital of certain facts *, but rather his endeavouring to shew how all the great and precious promises are in Christ Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us. The birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, do not constitute the gospel, or glad tidings of great joy to sinners of Adam's family, as naked historical facts, but as connected with the promise of pardon and everlasting salvation: according to the example of the Apostle's preaching: Acts xiii. 34. *As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David: v. 37, 38. He whom God raised from the dead, saw no corruption: Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Ch. v. 31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour,*

* See Mr Wilson's Palemon's Creed, Reviewed and Examined, Vol. I.

Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins. Thus, to preach the three offices of Christ, is to shew how, in these offices, the promises are all yea and amen to us: how we have the procuring of all the promised blessings in his priestly office; the saving knowledge of these blessings in his prophetic; and the actual communication of them in his kingly.

Now, what is the direct act of faith which corresponds with the free unconditional grant of Christ and his salvation, which is made to sinners of mankind in great and precious promises? Surely the language of such a faith must be to this purpose: Faithful is he who hath promised; he will do as he hath said; God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. We are not to wait for any recommending or predisposing qualifications, but are immediately to apply to ourselves the benefit of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, made over in the absolutely free promise to such as belong to the world of mankind sinners, who are described as unjust, lost, rebellious, stout-hearted, and far from righteousness*. For thus it is written in

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* This is agreeable to the definition of faith, given in the first part of the Marrow of Modern Divinity, Ch. II. Sect. iii. § 2. "As Paul and Silas said to the jailor, so say I unto you, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; that is, Be verily persuaded in your heart, that Jesus Christ is yours; that you shall have life and salvation by him; and that whatsoever he did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you." This treatise, when men come to relish the genuine gospel of Christ, the storms of Neonomian and Baxterian rage being over, will be found to be a concise but judicious declaration, of those articles of Bible-doctrine, which Luther, Calvin, and others of our first reformers, used chiefly to insist on; and the preaching of which they found most effectual for promoting that blessed work of reformation they were engaged in.

the sacred record : *We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son in the character of the Saviour of the world. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. He suffered for sins, the just One for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious. Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness ; I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry.* Each of us should be setting to our seal that God is true ; saying, These are faithful words, worthy of all acceptance, and of my acceptance in particular. Here I see, that they, to whom the promises are directed, are sinners, unjust, rebellious, stout-hearted, and far from righteousness : and therefore I, being such in myself, am hereby fully warranted to consider them as directed to me : therefore it shall henceforth, through grace, be my concern to doubt no longer, but to rest on these promises as in Christ Yea, that is, belonging to me, and Amen, that is, sure to be performed. I acknowledge, that the promise as in Christ, meets with no other reception from my depraved nature, than that of being disbelieved and rejected. But there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, in regard that faith itself, or security against the dominion of unbelief and doubting, is in the promise : *In his name shall the Gentiles trust. Thou shalt call me Ishi, that is, My husband. I will say, It is my people ; and they shall say, The Lord is my God,*

As the grant is peculiarly opposite to our corrupted nature, and particularly to the legal bias of the heart, and to what we are naturally prone to consider as the only rational way of attaining any good thing at the hand of God, that is, not by believing, but by doing; a great variety of means are employed to bring us to this appropriating persuasion, and to render our unbelief more inexcusable. The Lord urges us with much importunity, to accept of the free grant of eternal life in his Son Jesus Christ. He invites, entreats, commands us to receive it. He confirms it with his oath, and puts his seal to it in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's supper. He declares that nothing is more pleasing or glorifying to him, than our belief of this grant. On the other hand, when the disbelief of it prevails in his own people, it is peculiarly grieving to his Holy Spirit, as being directly opposite to his saving work; of which it is a principal part to convince them of this blessed grant. As to others, their rejection of it will not only exclude them from the blessings it conveys, but will make their damnation far more intolerable than that of the heathens, who never heard of it.

This grant was formally made to the children of Israel, and is now made to us, in the preface of the ten commandments: *I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* In order to the right understanding of this declaration, we observe, that it is the same revelation of the covenant of grace which God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is what the Apostle calls *the gospel, which was preached to Abraham,* and which is now preached to us

Gentiles. This declaration was made to the whole people of Israel, and is still made to all the members of the visible church, in such a manner, as to afford each of them, as full a revealed warrant to believe it, with application to himself, as the patriarch Abraham himself had. In this preface the Lord is saying unto us, Be it known unto you, members of my visible church, whose deliverance from Pagan, Mahometan, or Popish darkness, is no less wonderful than that of Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, that I am now making the same gift and grant of myself to each of you; to thee, man, to thee, woman; which I made to my servant Abraham: I said to him, and I say to thee, *I am thy God, I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward. Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed.*

This is not a conditional, but an absolutely free grant: It is as if he had said, I am not now making a proposal of becoming thy God, upon condition of some moral good to be found in thee or done by thee: But I, Jehovah, am pleased, in the sovereignty of my grace, to make a gift and grant of myself to be thy God; without the faith of this grant it is impossible to please me, or to yield acceptable obedience to any of my commands. According to the covenant of works, doing or perfect obedience was to go before, in order that man might have a covenant right or claim to God as his God or everlasting portion. But according to the covenant of grace, our covenant right or claim to God as our God or everlasting portion, apprehended by an appropriating faith, goes before all acceptable doing or obedience to his commands.

AN

An evangelical performance of duty, is not at all in order to, but necessarily pre-supposes, his being our God in Christ.

This preface, and the following commandments, being addressed to the same person or persons, (as is evident from the connection), affords every member of the visible church the same ground to make an application of both to himself. And, indeed, there is no genuine or single regard to the authority or glory of God in any of his commandments, without that appropriating persuasion which corresponds with this preface; without a real persuasion, that God is our God and Redeemer in Christ. Teaching men to attempt obedience to any of the commands, without directing them to know and believe what is contained in the preface, tends to the subversion of all true holiness.

It would remove a great prejudice against the appropriating persuasion of which we speak, if every gospel-hearer would consider that the Lord Christ speaks as particularly to him, as if he spoke to him alone; whether it be in the law for his conviction, as when it is said, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* or in the gospel for discovering the way of relief; saying, *In me is thy help: I am the Lord thy God: I am the Lord that healeth thee; I that speak unto thee, am he.*

If the whole word of the gospel consisted of general propositions, like this, *He that believeth shall be saved*, though even in that case there would not be a solid ground*, yet there might be some plausible

* Because "this general testimony was given out, just for every one's faith to make it particular to himself."

plausible pretence for the opinion, that saving faith is only a general persuasion of the mercy of God, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save those that come to him. But when the Lord speaks to us in the form of a free indefinite grant and promise addressed to each of us in particular, with the continual use of the personal pronouns, *Thou, Thee, Thine*, it seems strange that it can admit a doubt with any, that, in our belief of this grant, there is an appropriation, which is expressed by the corresponding pronouns, *I, Me, Mine*.*

4. The record of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ, considered as the ground of saving faith, is the gospel as contra-distinguished from the law. Saving faith, though it set to its seal that God is true in all that he speaks, can never rest till it come to the gospel strictly taken. Here is the beginning of our confidence. Here is firm footing for eternity. Here nothing is commanded. Here is no new law requiring of us, faith, repentance, or any other previous condition or qualification. There is nothing here but the infinite love and mercy of God abounding to sinners of mankind through the blood and righteousness of his beloved Son, and revealed to us in free and absolute promises.

* "The declarations and promises of the gospel are made to men with relative words, or terms suited for appropriation; such as, *you, your, thou, thee, thy*: and when these enter the ear of faith, they immediately point out or specify the person; as all holding true of him in particular.—Whenever the person is spiritually quickened, and thus brought to the hearing of faith; immediately the word of grace strikes the ear of faith, as spoken to him: and he credits it with terms of appropriation,—*me, my, mine*." This, and the preceding note, are taken from the *Present Truth*, Vol. II. Pages 179, 173.

nifes. Here all things are of God, who is in Christ reconciling us to himself, not imputing our trespasses to us. In the gospel, thus understood, every one who is enabled to believe to the saving of his soul, beholds a sufficient, a present, an immediate warrant, to make a fiducial application of his salvation to himself in particular.

It may tend to make the matter more plain, to give a specimen of the answers which the gospel, as contra-distinguished from the law, affords to the objections which a person under concern about his everlasting salvation is apt to offer against this fiducial application.—If he say, My sins are uncommonly heinous and aggravated, therefore I doubt whether God will pardon them: We answer, If thou meanest God absolutely considered, or as he reveals himself in the law, thou hast no ground to believe that he will pardon the least of thy sins. But if thou speakest of God, as he reveals himself in the gospel, a promising God in Christ, thou canst not doubt of the forgiveness of any of them, however great, without giving the lie to such words, directed to thee, as these: 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.* Isa. i. 18. *Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* xliii. 25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* According to the order of blessings in the gospel-promise, thou art to believe the pardon of thy sins, as fundamental to thy enjoyment of other saving blessings, such as, the writing of the law in thy heart, and the in-

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creasing knowledge of the Lord. Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, that is, the visible church, including all those to whom the word of God comes, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, 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 neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least even to the greatest. For, (the causal particle here is diligently to be observed), I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*—If the person say, I must find something promising-like in my case, some good desires and resolutions at least, before I may venture to apply so comfortable a promise to myself: We answer, That the gospel, strictly taken, requireth nothing as a condition, but is a free grant of Christ, and his whole salvation, to sinners of mankind. None of thy desires or resolutions will be truly good, while thou believest not the gospel. Beware of going to the law, for a condition to warrant thy application of the gospel; rather let thy immediate application of the gospel, be thy preparation for essaying obedience to the law as a rule of life. Thou canst not take a right step in the path of duty, till thy feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.—If the person say, I do not find that God speaks particularly to me in the gospel-promise: We answer, That this is to deny that the gospel is preached to thee; though the Lord commissions his ministers to preach it to every creature, to every

every man, to every woman, in every part of the world, to which Providence brings them. Thou art one of the members of the visible church to whom pertain the promises. The Lord speaks as particularly to thee as ever he did to any before their actual believing.—If he say, I may perish, notwithstanding this direction of the promises to me : We answer, If thou still obstinately persist in looking into thyself, into thy exercises or attainments, as necessary to give thee a right to Christ as thy Saviour, and in refusing to give credit to God's promise and record concerning his Son : then the law-covenant, which, in that case, retains its full dominion over thee, and the threatenings of which cannot fail to be executed at last, condemns thee to everlasting destruction. But the promise, believed with application to thyself in particular, cannot fail to be verified in thy experience ; for, whosoever believeth, shall not be ashamed.—If he say, I have not, as yet, that light which is necessary to the act of believing : We answer, Dost thou not know, that the gospel is preached to thee ? Dost thou not understand, that the gospel is an absolutely free grant of Christ and his whole salvation to sinners of mankind, and to thee in particular ? If thou dost, thou hast light for the immediate exercise of faith : If thou dost not, thou hast just cause to fear, that thou art shutting thine eyes upon the clear light shining unto thee in the word of the gospel ; and that thou art hating the Lord's instruction, and casting his words behind thy back. It is true, the people of God have all a humbling sense of their spiritual blindness ; but this they desire

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fire to improve as rather an incitement to the immediate exercise of faith in Christ Jesus, as given to be a light to the Gentiles and to open the blind eyes, than as any excuse for the delay of it.—If he say, I have no strength to believe: We answer, Dost thou mean that thou canst not help looking upon the gospel-record concerning Christ, and the promise of eternal life in him, as a cunningly devised fable, affording no real security for what it promises? Or is it not rather thy case, that, though thou art troubled with no doubts of the truth of the gospel, thou art entertaining a false notion of the gospel, agreeable to the legal bias of the heart, that it is a new law, requiring faith and repentance as terms or conditions, the performance of which is necessary to give thee a right to lay claim to the good of the promise: Thus, when thou complainest that thou canst not believe, thy meaning is, not that thou canst not believe the gospel-grant to be true, but that thou canst not do or acquire something which thou conceivest necessary to entitle thee to what is therein granted; not considering that this grant is free and unconditional, and that believing, as it is the mean of our possession of promised blessings, is always opposed to doing, and to every appearance of it: which is what the Apostle teacheth, when he opposes our seeking righteousness by faith, to our seeking it, as it were, by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 32. But a real humbling sense of our utter inability to believe, and of such a prevalence of darkness and enmity in the heart, as nothing less than Almighty Power can overcome, is so far from being inconsistent with true faith, that it is inseparable from it. As under

der a sense of extreme guikiness, faith is a persuasion that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have righteousness; so under a sense of absolute weakness, it is a persuasion that in him we have strength. The language of faith is, *O Lord, our strength,—we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, but our eyes are to thee.* Allow not thyself in thinking that thou hast any ability or any faith to bring to the promise; but rather look, that virtue may proceed from the promise itself, that is, from a promising God in Christ, effectually determining thee to believe it; and to this thou art the more encouraged, in regard that whatsoever is necessary to the exercise of faith is expressly contained in the promise: *When the poor and needy seek water, seek light or strength to believe, and find none, in themselves, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, and I the God of Jacob will not forsake them. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. The outcasts, and they that are ready to perish, shall come.* This shall come will be inexpressibly sweet to thee, who hast a suitable humbling sense of thy unbelief, and utter inability to withstand the power of those corruptions that oppose thy believing application of the promise, such as, spiritual blindness, enmity, legalism, carnality.—If he say, How can I believe, till I experience the saving work of the Holy Spirit? We answer, There would be much force in this objection, if the consciousness of some previous recommending qualifications were necessary to warrant the application of the promise in Christ to thyself: because all such qualifications must be included in the sa-

ving work of the Spirit. But the gospel, as contra-distinguished from the law, being an absolutely free grant of Christ and his salvation to finners of Adam's family, as such, it is plain, that thou art to believe the free promise with application to thyself, not as having already attained the experience of a saving work of the Spirit, but rather as wanting it: And this is the more evident, in regard that that saving work is amongst the things specified in the promise, and for which thou art to take it as good security; and in regard that the pretended experience which is supposed to be before believing, is but delusory; all genuine experience of a saving work being in or after believing.

But against what has been said concerning the foundation of this appropriating persuasion in the record of God concerning his Son, the following objection, in the words of a late publication, may be considered:

“ The Scriptures nowhere call upon the finner to believe that Christ died for him in particular, or that the blessings of salvation are his. As soon shall a person, whose understanding is deranged, and who, in the extravagance of his folly, imagines himself a king, be advanced, by virtue of this persuasion, to the throne, and to all the ensigns and prerogatives of royalty, as a person shall become an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, who founds his claim to these blessings upon this presumptuous confident persuasion. The constant uniform tenor of sacred writ, is, That Christ died for sinners, and that there is pardon, life, and sal-
vation

vation by the mercy of God through him, for all who will break off their sins by repentance, accept of him as their Saviour, and of the offered mercy through him *."

Answer. 1. It is true, the Scriptures nowhere call upon a sinner to believe that Christ died for him, in this sense, as if he were, in the first instance, to consider himself as among those for whom Christ intended to lay down his life. We have already seen, that neither election, nor the intention of Christ in laying down his life, could be the ground of saving faith. But surely the Scriptures call upon the sinner to believe, that the gospel is preached to him: that therein Christ crucified is now freely given to him in particular: that the blessings of salvation are his by virtue of the promise directed to him; even while he has no sensible or sufficient evidence, that they are his in respect of actual possession. The actual possession of them, however, is also sure to him that believeth: Christ saith to him, *According to thy faith so be it unto thee.* Hence these expressions, Christ crucified is mine, his whole salvation is mine, and the like, are always true in the mouth of faith, that is, to him who believeth upon the footing of the gospel-grant or promise alone: But they are most false in the mouth of unbelief, that is, to him that rejects the gospel-grant as judging it to be no sufficient ground of such confidence.

2. It is, undoubtedly, an essential part of the character of a believer, that he is a person who breaks off his sins by repentance. Yet his doing so, is neither faith, nor the previous condition of

faith, or of a sinner's believing-application of the promise to himself. For the promise which the person applies to himself by faith, is a promise of repentance: and how absurd is it to make repentance the condition of our application of the promise of repentance: Hereby the great Promiser is represented as saying, *I will give thee the new, the penitent, heart*; but thou mayest not make any application of this promise to thyself, till thou hast got that new and penitent heart; or, thou mayest give no credit to the promise till thou art in actual possession of what is promised; that is, thou mayest give no credit to it at all.

3. The phrase taking or accepting of Christ is ambiguous. There is an accepting of Christ by way of trusting or believing in him for all the good of the promise; and there is an accepting of him by way of resolution or engagement to submit to his authority and government*. Both are essential to the Christian. But the former is only faith, and is in the order of nature before the latter. In the former sense, the following proposition is entirely agreeable to the doctrine we have stated concerning the appropriation which is in the nature of saving faith: That there is pardon, life, and salvation, by the mercy of God through Christ, for all who accept of Christ as their Saviour; or rather all such are partakers of these blessings.

4. The madman alluded to in the exception never uttered any thing more extravagant or farther

* Justifying faith, (as the author of *Lutherus Redivivus*, page 129. intimates), is not our taking Christ in all his offices, by way of promise or covenant of obedience, or subjection to him, but our taking him, that is, our believing or trusting him, for the benefits of every office.

ther from common sense, than a representation of the old Protestant doctrine as founding its claim to spiritual blessings upon some presumptuous, confident persuasion; since according to that, which is, indeed, the doctrine of the Bible, faith's claim and its persuasion are one and the same thing; since that claim has no other foundation than the gospel-promise; and since this faith, as such, regards nothing but the object of it, our Lord Jesus, and the ground of it, the record of God concerning him, exclusive of reflexion upon, or consciousness of, its own act.

Upon the whole, saving faith is not a speculative notion of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension; nor an abstract philosophic view of the moral excellence therein displayed: but it is a spiritual discernment of such an exhibition of these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in the gospel-grant and promise, as affords a solid ground for an application of Christ, and his whole salvation, to ourselves in particular. We do not rightly believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, unless we believe that we shall have life through his name. There is no right or warrantable meditation on the death, resurrection, or ascension of Christ, but that which includes in it this believing application; or which is to this effect: *He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. God the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The forerunner is for us entered within the veil.*

DISCOURSE IV.

1 JOHN iii. 23.

And this is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST.

HAVING endeavoured to shew that there is an appropriation in the nature of saving faith, from its correspondance with the record of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ; we now proceed to state the evidence of this truth arising from other considerations.

1. To understand faith or believing in Christ as including appropriation, is most agreeable to the sense in which the word is used in Scripture. To believe is to give credit to a testimony. The different acceptations of the word arise from the different lights in which the testimony is considered. Thus, when the matter of the testimony is, or at least is accounted to be, something wherein the person believing is nothing concerned, the word must be understood of what has been called Historical Faith, or an assent to some general truth. But when the matter of the testimony is some good thing to be done or given by the Testifier to the person believing,—faith or believing, in that case, always includes trust or confidence; and, in Scripture, is commonly expressed by Believing in the Testifier. So when Abraham believed the promise that God had given him a son, he

he is said to have *believed in the Lord*. Hence it is manifest, that to believe in Christ is to trust in him, or to be verily persuaded, that he will give us the promised salvation; and is parallel to the expression used in Ephes. i. 12. *Who trusted in Christ*. Since the matter, therefore, of the gospel-testimony, is everlasting salvation, to be bestowed on us by the Testifier, surely when we consider the faith of that testimony, as including confidence or a real persuasion that salvation will be bestowed on us in particular, we adhere to the usual acceptance of the word in Scripture: Whereas it will be hard to produce a single passage wherein it is necessary to understand the term faith, or believing, of complying with proposals, terms or conditions, of coming under engagements, or of submitting to rule or government.

2. There are several express descriptions and representations of saving faith in Scripture, which are necessary to be attended to. Remarkable is that in Heb. xi. 1. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. In the first place, it appears from this text, that, in believing, the sinner apprehends the good presented to him in the gospel as his own good, his own salvation; for we do not hope for salvation otherwise than as our own. *Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for*. In the next place, we learn from these words, that there is, in the nature of faith, a confidence or assurance of salvation, quite different indeed from the assurance of sense. The original word here translated *substance*, is the same which, in chap. iii. 14. of this book, is translated *confidence*. This confidence necessarily arises

arises from a spiritual and satisfying view of good things to come, as already present in the promise; of things not seen, that are not yet matter of sense or experience, as the greatest realities. So that the soul can reckon upon them, as if they were already in its possession, saying with the Psalmist, *God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.*

There are several passages in which saving faith, or believing, having been first mentioned, is exemplified by expressions of this appropriating persuasion; such as the following: Psa. xxxi. 14. *I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God.* Rom. iv. 23, 24, 25. *Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* In these words the Apostle teacheth us what it is to believe in a true and saving manner. It is to believe in God, as having delivered his own Son for our offences, and as having raised him again for our justification, and as having thus declared himself fully reconciled to us in Christ. 1 John v. 10, 11. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* It is evident, that, in the 11th verse, we have the language of faith in opposition to that unbelief which makes God a liar: and therefore all true and saving faith, whether weak or strong, as be-

ing opposite to unbelief, must have this persuasion in it, That God hath given to us eternal life. In which words, the Apostle speaks the language which is common to himself, with all believers : Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* In the last clause of this verse, the Apostle represents what sort of faith it was by which he lived in the flesh, by which he was crucified with Christ, by which Christ lived in him, and by which, being dead to the law, he lived unto God. The assurance of sense is, indeed, a most blessed attainment : there is a great deal of the comfortable enjoyment of the spiritual life, a great deal of heaven begun, in it ; but still it is a different thing from the faith by which a Christian lives. The great appointed mean of Christ living in us, is that faith which appropriates him as having loved us and given himself for us : a faith which proceeds upon no other ground than the free grant and offer of him in the gospel.

We may further observe, that when the Lord promises faith, he continually represents it as an appropriating persuasion : Jer. iii. 19. *But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the best of nations ? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.* Isa. xlv. 24. *Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Hosea ii. 16. *And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me *Ishi*, that is, my husband : and ver. 23. I will say to them who were not my people, Thou art my people ; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

3. This

3. This appropriating persuasion makes faith differ specifically, or in kind, from whatever else bears that name*. In the times of the Apostles, some, who were destitute of saving grace, had the faith of miracles. There was, indeed, in this faith, an application of a promise, or rather prediction of some extraordinary work of God, in which the person was to be instrumental. So Jehu appears to have believed the threatening against Ahab's family with application to himself. So Cyrus and Alexander, though ignorant of the true religion, might have a belief of the Scripture-prophecies concerning their respective conquests. But this was only a carnal view of some temporal event, which was quite different from that spiritual and appropriating view which a believer has, in the promise of a present and everlasting salvation. In other cases, wherein unregenerate persons are said to believe, there is manifestly either no application of the gospel-salvation, or, if there seem to be any, it is upon some other ground than the divine grant in the gospel. Thus, persons may be said to believe, when they only allow the truth of certain doctrines,

* "The distinction between justifying faith and special application is absurd, wholly subverting the nature of true faith. A general faith is not justifying, unless we would say, that devils and hypocrites who tremble, are justified before God, because they are endued with such a faith. When God enjoins faith in the gospel, he does not only require that we believe in general that remission of sins is given to all the faithful, but that every one should believe that it is given to him in particular, in order that he may receive it to his salvation. Rom. iv. 24, 25. Chap. viii. 35. 38. and Chap. xv. 4. Gal. ii. 16. 20. 1 Tim. i. 15."

Henricus Altingius on the Heidelberg Catechism.

doctrines, or facts recorded in Scripture. In this sense, we may understand the Apostle, when he says, in Acts xxvi. 27. *King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest.* Again, they may be said to believe, who apply the promise of life to themselves on account of some good frames, dispositions, or affections which they find to be or to have been in themselves, or on account of, what they reckon, their unblameable practice, or on account of the favourable outward aspect of providence. In this sense the stony ground hearers are said to have received the word with joy. But they had no root in themselves; they were destitute of regenerating grace, from which springs another sort of faith, even that which rests upon the gospel-grant of Christ and his salvation to sinners of mankind, as the single and sufficient ground of its claim to Christ and his salvation. Thus, if it be asked, How saving faith, in its own act, is distinguished from that belief of the truth concerning Christ, which may be found in wicked men or even in devils? it may justly be answered, By appropriation, or the application of Christ to ourselves in particular. Again, if it be asked, How saving faith is distinguished from that presumptuous confidence which is often found in those who endure but for a while? it may still be answered, By the appropriation of Christ crucified to ourselves, upon no other ground than the gospel-grant. Saving faith is distinguished from whatever else is called faith, by the effectual relief which it affords the soul from the reigning fear of law-condemnation and wrath. But, in order to this relief, it is necessary that the application of the
gospel

gospel in believing, be as particular as the application of the law in conviction. When the law says, Pay me what thou owest; the soul is relieved when it can say, Christ is my Surety, Substitute and Saviour, and his righteousness is a full answer to all the demands that law and justice have upon me. When the law says, Thou art a child of wrath: True, says faith, I am such by nature; but Christ is my peace. Thy case is hopeless, says the law: It would be so, says faith, if I had no hope but what creatures afford; but Christ is my hope. Faith is further distinguished from whatever else bears that name, by its hearty approbation of, and acquiescence in, the whole device of Salvation through Christ crucified, as well-ordered in all things and sure. But there is so much of the manifold wisdom and grace of God manifested in that part of this device, which makes a public and free grant of Christ and his salvation to sinners of mankind, as such, that, in rejecting or approving that grant, we reject or approve the whole. And indeed that part of this device by which Christ crucified is exhibited as a free gift to sinners of mankind, who have nothing to distinguish them from other sinners, is peculiarly a stumbling-stone to natural men; as it is so directly opposite to the legal pride which possesses their heart, and which the almighty power of divine grace is necessary to subdue. No person has a just or spiritual view of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, exhibited in the gospel, who does not see it extending even to him in particular, though amongst the chief of sinners; a covering not too narrow, but abundantly large for him

him to wrap himself in; a covering not at a distance, but brought to his hand. Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. *The righteousness of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach.* Faith's view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is an applicatory view of it; a view of Christ Jesus as made of God unto us (to me in particular, says faith), wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; a view of God in Christ as our God, and of all his infinite perfections, as exercised and glorified in our salvation. It is another distinguishing property of true faith, that it is effectual to animate us to the cheerful performance of duty. But it is the lively appropriating persuasion of the love of Christ, as manifested in his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and not the abstract philosophical contemplation of moral beauty and excellence, that will constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. We are to consider ourselves as not our own, but bought with a price, that we may glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his: We never walk right, unless we walk in Christ, that is, under a persuasion, grounded singly upon the gospel-grant, that he gives himself to us to be our quickening head, and his Holy Spirit to be our ever assisting guide. They only have heart or hand for setting about the blessed exercise of mortifying their corruptions, who know and believe, that *their old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin*

may be destroyed, that henceforth they may not serve sin; and who reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They who have a real persuasion that Christ is such a merciful and faithful High-Priest, that he will not fail to confess them before his Father who is in heaven, and that they have unsearchable riches in him, are the only persons who will, honestly and with singleness of heart, confess him before men, and forego all they have in a world, even their natural life, for his sake. The preface of the Lord's prayer, and the preface of the ten commandments, are both expressed in such terms, that we can neither heartily say the one, nor fully assent to the other, without this appropriating persuasion, to teach us that, without it, there is no such thing as acceptable prayer, or suitable respect to any of the commandments. Were we to enter into a particular consideration of the various exercises of the Christian life, we would see this appropriating persuasion running through and animating them all.

4. This appropriating persuasion is implied in the metaphorical representations which we have, in Scripture, of saving faith. Faith is called a *receiving*. John i. 12. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.* Faith being called a receiving, implies that there is a giving on God's part, in the external dispensation of his word, previous to our believing: for *no man can receive any thing, except it be given him from heaven*: We receive Christ when we believe, as in 1 John v. 11. *that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this*
life

Life is in his Son. Faith is called a receiving from the nature of the testimony believed, or because it is a testimony discovering Christ as a free gift, of which, in the act of believing, we become real partakers. Faith is called a receiving, because its proper and specific act lies, not at all in the persons offering or bringing any thing to God, but in his taking home to himself, as a poor sinner of Adam's family, a whole Christ and his whole salvation, upon no other footing than the gospel-grant *.—We have another metaphorical representation of saving faith, in Isa. lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. He that hath no money,* that is, no good qualifications, no performance of conditions; he in whom nothing is to be found but sin and misery, is called to *buy wine and milk;* that is, to take home to himself, Christ and his benefits, unto actual possession and enjoyment; just as a person takes home to himself, for his own use, what he hath lawfully bought in the market. But here it is repeated, as a thing chiefly to be attended to, that no price is to be brought, no condition to be complied with, in order to our appropriation of Christ and his salvation: for these are presented to us as a free gift, in such a manner as to warrant our immediate appropriation of them to our own use and enjoy-

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* Faith, which properly signifies an assent or persuasion, is called a *receiving* of Christ, because it is, in its own nature, an appropriating persuasion; as unbelief, which properly signifies the disbelieving of a testimony, is a rejecting of Christ.—Paley's Creed reviewed and examined.

ment,—without money and without price: for though it is a buying on our part in respect of appropriation, yet there is no selling on God's part; no requiring of money, no prescribing of previous terms or conditions. Faith is often represented as *resting, leaning, or relying, on the Lord Jesus Christ*. These metaphors import a persuasion, that, in his name, in the grant and promise of him in the gospel, we have sufficient, we have infallible, security for pardon, peace with God, deliverance from every evil work, and preservation unto his heavenly kingdom; and this persuasion, so far as it takes place, excludes all doubting, uncertainty, and perturbation of mind. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem saw the invading army of the Assyrians at the walls of their city, it is said, *They rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah*. They had such a persuasion of the truth of his words, as was effectual to set their minds, which had before been greatly disquieted with fear, at ease and rest with respect to the issue of their present distress. So establishing to the heart is a real persuasion, founded on the gospel promise, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.—Faith is represented as our *trusting* in the Lord. You know, that when we trust an honest man, it implies that he hath given us a promise, and that we are persuaded he will not fail to make it good. Surely there cannot be less than this in a real trusting in the Lord. The language of it is, that, on account of the faithfulness of his word, and the liberality of his heart, I reckon upon what he hath promised as my own. Again, faith is represented as *a coming, or fleeing to Christ*, for refuge; which implies,

implies, that a person, as soon as he believes the gospel-report, has no more confidence in outward worldly advantages, in his own wisdom, righteousness, or strength, or any lying vanity whatever, but immediately, or without any delay, places his whole confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ as his righteousness and salvation. Faith is represented as *putting on Christ, as eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*, to signify, that as, in putting on our clothes, we take them to ourselves for covering or for ornament; as, in eating or drinking what is set before us, we take it to ourselves for our bodily nourishment; so, in believing, we make an application of Christ Jesus to ourselves in particular, for wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Saving faith, in each, even the very first of its actings, is (according to our Lord's discourse in the sixth of John) our eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God; and therefore, in its very nature, it must include an appropriation of Christ to ourselves in particular. We can have no saving benefit by Christ without this application of him to ourselves, as we cannot be nourished by our food without eating it. Faith is likewise represented as a *looking to Christ*. As the stung Israelites could not look to the brazen serpent, in compliance with the divine command, without a persuasion that they would be healed by it; so we cannot look to Christ; that is, believe on him, without a similar persuasion; that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of his death, we shall be healed. So uniformly is this appropriating persuasion held forth by the metaphorical representations of faith in Scripture.

5. That this appropriating persuasion is of the nature of saving faith, is manifest from those things which are represented as opposite to it. For, that staggering at the promise, or doubting, which is opposed to faith, Rom. iv. 20, Matth. xxi. 21. James i. 6. is not a staggering at, or doubting of, a general speculative truth, such as, That the promise of eternal life will be accomplished to the elect, or to them that truly believe; but it is a person's staggering at, or doubting of, his warrant to apply the promise to himself, or to believe the accomplishment of it in his own case; Thus, when it is said, that Abraham did not stagger at the promise, the meaning is, that he did not doubt that it was God's faithful word to him, and that it would be performed: This is the more evident, in regard that this doubting is sometimes expressed by the fear and perplexity that accompany it, as in Mark v. 36. and John xiv. 1. Now, if the opposite of faith be a staggering at the warrant which the gospel affords us to apply the promise to ourselves or to believe the accomplishment of it in our own case, then faith itself must be an application of the promise to ourselves upon the footing of that warrant, and a persuasion of the accomplishment of it in due time, such a persuasion, namely, as, according to the measure of it, frees the mind from fear or trouble with respect to our attainment of what is contained in the promise. To the same purpose is the Scripture-account of unbelief, as a putting away the word of the gospel, which is the free promise of eternal life, from ourselves, Acts xiii. 46. Now, if unbelief be the putting away of the promise from ourselves,

selves, then faith must be the application of it to ourselves. Men are condemned as unbelievers, not merely because they disbelieve this general proposition, that God will give eternal life to them that believe; for that is a truth of which the most desperate unbelievers, and even devils themselves, may be convinced: but the proper ground of their condemnation is, that they do not believe the record of God concerning his Son, with application to themselves; they do not truly believe that the righteousness, salvation, and kingdom of God are brought to them in particular in the gospel-grant: This account of unbelief we have in 1 John v. 10, 11. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* Therefore, we are always unbelievers, till we be brought to a real persuasion, that God hath given to us eternal life; that he hath given it to us in his Son.

6. This doctrine concerning the appropriation of faith is most consonant to other articles of Scripture-truth. It accords with the doctrine of man's natural inability for any act or exercise that is spiritually good; for, in setting about the performance of any duty, we must either see strength for the performance of it in ourselves or in the promise. But to see it in ourselves is contrary to the Scripture-doctrine of our spiritual impotence. On the other hand, to see it in the promise as our furniture for the practice of duty, is to have the appropriating persuasion of which we speak. Such an appropriating faith accords with the doctrine

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of justification by free grace through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; for, that righteousness, according to this doctrine, is imputed to men as having no inherent righteousness, and therefore as sinners, as ungodly. Hence when men believe in a God in Christ, they *believe in Him who justifieth the ungodly*; they make an application of the righteousness of Christ to themselves under the same character under which they are considered in God's imputation of it. Surely the hearers of the word may, without presumption or delusion, apply the justice-satisfying and law-magnifying righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ to themselves as poor sinners, or as persons who have no righteousness of their own; since that is the character under which God is pleased to grant it to them in the gospel, and under which he imputes it to them, for their complete justification, in the moment of believing? Again, this view of saving faith, as including in its nature an application of Christ to ourselves in particular, is most agreeable to the light in which faith ought to be considered in the matter of justification, that is, not at all as a work or instance of obedience to the law, but purely as a mean or instrument whereby we receive the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ into actual possession. Thus, the alms that are offered to a beggar, come into his possession by his act of stretching out his hand to receive them. Now, there may be something commendable, something agreeable to the giver, and becoming the condition of the beggar, in his act of stretching out his hand to receive; but it is not the commendableness of the act, nor its agreeableness to the giver,

giver, nor its suitability to the condition of the beggar, that puts him in possession of the alms. There might be many other acts equal or superior to it in all these respects; but the only thing in this act, that puts the beggar in possession, is this, that it is a receiving of the alms. In like manner, faith is itself an eminent instance of obedience, and disposes a person to every other instance of it. But, in these respects, it is of as little effect in the affair of our justification, as any other work of the law; under these considerations, it is entirely excluded from that affair; for it does not justify, or put us in possession of the justifying righteousness, as it is an instance of obedience, or as disposing to it, but, merely, as it is our *receiving the gift of that righteousness*, or our application of it to ourselves. Further, this appropriation is implied in another Scripture doctrine, namely, that we never can set about the practice of duty in an acceptable manner, unless we do so in the persuasion of the Lord's acceptance of our persons. This is evident from all those scriptures that teach us to yield obedience, not as slaves, but as children, as bought with a price. Indeed, for persons to attempt any duty in order to the acceptance of their persons, or, which is in effect the same thing, without essaying to believe in Christ for the acceptance of them, is to go about to establish their own righteousness, refusing to submit to the righteousness of God; it is an attempt to act in their own strength, and even while they must consider themselves as under the burden of God's everlasting wrath and curse; for, there is no middle state between being accepted with God, and being under the curse. Now, there

there is no persuasion of the acceptance of our persons, but what is either in the way of appropriating Christ as the Lord our righteousness, upon the footing of the gospel, or in the way of the assurance of sense. But it is absurd, and contrary both to Scripture and to the experience of the Lord's people, to suppose, that they are not accepted in their essays to discharge what is present duty, even while they walk in darkness, and have not the light of sensible assurance. But the acceptable way of setting about present duty, which is always competent to believers, whatever case or situation they may be in, is that of a present application of Christ to themselves as **THE LORD THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, in whom their persons and services are ever accepted. This appropriating persuasion, is implied in the Scripture doctrine of gospel-holiness. This holiness is represented as our living, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. We are to study it as knowing that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we may not serve sin. This appropriating persuasion of the crucifixion of our old man with Christ, is represented as essential to the very beginning of the study of holiness; and, consequently, it is different from that assurance of sense, which is founded on marks and evidences, and which supposes some actual progress in holiness: it is indeed that application of Christ crucified to ourselves, which is, either more or less explicitly, in the first and in every following act of true faith. That there is such an appropriating persuasion as we speak of in the nature of

of faith, is most agreeable to the Scripture doctrine of the covenant of grace: for the condition of that covenant having been perfectly fulfilled by our Lord's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, it is to us a covenant of absolutely free promise: and therefore our taking hold of this covenant must be in the way of the application of the promise to ourselves in particular. When we read, that God will make this everlasting covenant with us, the meaning is, (as Isaiah lv. 3. is explained in Acts xiii. 34.), that he is well pleased for Christ's sake, to give us poor sinners the mercies promised in that covenant: and faith is our taking to ourselves freely what is freely given. The last words of David may well be considered as the language of faith in taking hold of this covenant: *He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire.* This appropriating persuasion is agreeable to the nature and design of the sacramental seals of that everlasting covenant. In these ordinances the Lord deals with the receiver, as a person would do if he should take a quantity of earth and stone, and say to another, This is such a valuable estate, which I give or convey to thee; take it, and doubt not of the validity of the conveyance. Thus, in baptism, the Lord says to the soul, This washing with water signifies and seals my promise of washing thee from the guilt and pollution of sin: a promise which is as sure to faith as this washing or sprinkling with water is to the outward senses. In like manner, in the Lord's supper, he says to the soul, This bread is *my body,*
broken

broken for thee: This cup is *the new testament in my blood, shed for thee, for the remission of thy sins*. Now, it must be remembered, that baptism and the Lord's supper are designed for the weakest as well as for the strongest believer; and also, that the least measure of true faith is answerable to what our Lord says to it in these ordinances, as well as the strongest. As the appropriation of which we speak is according to the analogy of faith, so it is opposite to manifold and pernicious errors: particularly to Legalism; as this appropriation is just the soul's going out of itself; its going away from all its own qualifications, exercises, and attainments, to take up its only rest upon the free grant and promise of Christ, and of eternal life in him, as set forth in the gospel to sinners of mankind indiscriminately:—to Antinomianism, as it is an appropriation of Christ for sanctification as well as justification; and as it holds our reception of the privileges and comforts of the gospel to be both necessary, and, according to the measure of it, always effectual to the production of a holy practice:—to Enthusiasm, in regard that the whole matter and ground of this faith are contained in the written word; and the revealed warrant for this appropriation is the same to the believer and the unbeliever, in opposition to the extravagance of enthusiasts, who found their high pretensions upon the peculiar clearness of their imaginary ideas of Christ's human nature, and of its appearance in suffering or in glory; upon their dreams, visions, and new revelations; upon the peculiar liveliness of their frames and feelings; upon extraordinary impressions of the divine wrath

or of the divine love; upon some sudden change of mind, which they call their conversion; while they are strangers to any suitable concern about the only saving conversion, which is a turning from that unbelief *which makes God a liar*, to a cordial receiving of and resting upon his record or testimony concerning his beloved Son.

7. We might shew that there is an appropriation in the nature of saving faith, from examples of the exercises of it. Several of these examples have been already taken notice of. To this purpose we might transcribe almost all the professions of faith made by the saints recorded in Scripture. Here it may suffice to produce the two following: Psal. xci. 2. *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust.* Hence it appears, that when a person, in a scriptural sense, trusteth in the Lord, he has a real persuasion that JEHOVAH, a promising and promise-performing God, is his God. John xx. 28, 29. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.* Though Thomas was now favoured with a very clear and sensible manifestation, we cannot allow that these words were merely the language of sense, and not of saving faith: because a sensible manifestation may, and always ought to be improved as an occasion of, and an encouragement to, the lively exercise of faith; and because our Lord's answer undoubtedly refers to these words, and calls what is expressed by them, believing.

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But it has been said, that such instances represent rather a high degree of the exercise of faith, than what belongs to the essence of it,

We answer, by observing, That the appropriation, of which we speak, arises, as was shewn in the former discourse, from the matter believed, or from the nature of the record that God hath given us concerning his Son; and not from the degree of strength or distinctness in the act of believing: Whether faith be weak or strong, in a higher or lower degree, the matter believed is still the same, namely, *the record of God concerning his Son*, 1 John v. 11. If we had Scriptural views of a strong faith, we would find it to be that in which what belongs to the nature or essence of faith most distinctly appears: Whereas what we call weak faith, is that which is obscured and almost buried out of sight under a multitude of opposite corruptions. The weakest faith, were it disentangled, would be what we allow a strong faith to be. Strong faith, according to Scripture, is that which proceeds most singly upon the ground of God's word of promise, whilst every thing, in experience and sensible appearances, are against it, Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20. *Abraham against hope believed in hope, —and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.—He staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.* The truth is, the language of faith in all the Lord's people, whether weak or strong, is the same; only it is spoken more distinctly and explicitly, and with less faltering, by some of them than by others.

Here

Here it may be observed, that we need not wonder to find Christians backward to express themselves in the proper language of this appropriating persuasion: Because their doing so implies a distinct and comfortable sense of their having believed, which is a different thing from believing itself. This appropriating persuasion is a very deep-laid and frequently hidden act of the soul. The comfortable sense of it arises partly from the strength and distinctness of it, and partly from the peculiar fruits and effects of it.

When we are speaking of the example of the Lord's people, it deserves particular notice, that we find expressions of this appropriating persuasion mingling with their complaints of desertion and prevailing corruption. *Isai. xlix. 14. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. Psal. lxxv. 3. Iniquities prevail against me: but as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* Heman begins his mournful song with these words, *O Lord God of my salvation.* Faith still holds the same language in its hardest conflicts with prevailing unbelief. *Psal. xliii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

How often has a poor distressed soul, that could find no satisfaction as to his gracious state in the way of reflecting upon past exercises or present attainments, found sweet peace, composure, and satisfaction in essaying the direct act of this appropriating faith, and resting upon the free promise of a God in Christ as addressed to sinners of man-

kind, even the chief! In which case that word has been verified in *Iſai. xxx. 15. Thus ſaith the Lord God, the Holy One of Iſrael, In returning and reſt ſhall ye be ſaved: in quietneſs and in confidence ſhall be your ſtrength.*

We may add, that miniſters dwelling upon the nature and grounds of this appropriating faith in their public adminiſtrations have been a bleſſed mean in the Lord's hand, of reviving a work of reformation, of converting ſinners, and of building them up in holineſs and comfort. On the other hand, when this is neglected, and even oppoſed, by many who are called Proteſtants and Miniſters of the goſpel, it is a ſign of grievous departure from the faith which had been ſo fully declared in moſt of the confeſſions and other forms of found words publicly authoriſed in the reformed churches. It is alſo a diſmal ſign that whatever goſpel truth on other heads is taught among us, we reap little ſpiritual profit from it, by reaſon of ignorance or corrupt notions of that faith which is the organ whereby the word is received into the heart.

Upon the whole, this propoſition, That ſaving faith is a fiducial appropriating perſuaſion of our ſalvation through the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, founded on the free grant and promiſe of the goſpel, manifeſtly accords with the ordinary acceptation of the word; with the various repreſentations in the Scripture of the nature and exerciſe of faith; with other articles of goſpel-doctrine; and, finally, with the uniform experience of the Lord's people.

Here

Here it may be proper to take notice of some things which have been urged against this doctrine.

Objection 1st. According to this notion, the thing to be believed is, That Christ died for me, that I am justified and shall be saved through him; and yet the persuasion is supposed to be the very thing which gives me an interest in the Saviour, and in the blessings of salvation through him; for, let this be what it will, nothing is more certain from Scripture, than that he who believeth shall be saved, but he who doth not, shall be damned. Must I not then be interested in the Saviour, before I can know or believe that I am so?—How then can this persuasion be the mean of giving me this interest? Is not this to make the effect to exist before the cause? Is it not to give existence to that which had no existence before, by confidently believing that it doth already exist*.

Answer. If by a belief that Christ died for me, that I am justified, and shall be saved through him, the objector means a persuasion that I am one of those for whom Christ intended to lay down his life, or, which is the same thing, one of the elect,

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or

* Mr M'Knight's Six Sermons on Faith, page 92, 93. Similar to this is the reasoning of Bellarmine. "Fides specialis misericordie, says he, sequitur justificationem. Igitur fides specialis misericordie non est fides justificans. Fiducia qua quis confidet remissa esse peccata pendet a bona conscientia, ac proinde præexigit justificationem, non illam efficit." i. e. The faith of special mercy follows justification. Therefore the faith of special mercy is not justifying faith. The confidence with which a person trusts that his sins are forgiven, depends on a good conscience, and therefore presupposes justification, does not bring it about.

or that I am already in actual possession of justification and salvation; then, as was shewn in the preliminary observations, what is objected is nothing to the purpose. We utterly deny that such a persuasion can be saving faith; because it cannot be founded in the word of God alone, and because it is a persuasion of what God hath decreed from eternity, or of some good which the person supposes himself to be already possessed of; whereas the faith, of which we speak, is a persuasion, neither of what was God's decree from eternity, nor yet of any good which we are already possessed of, but merely of this truth, that God is, now in the gospel dispensation, giving us Christ crucified and his whole salvation.

The inconsistency supposed in the objection vanishes, when we consider that the death of Christ, justification, and salvation, may, at the same time, be ours in one respect, and not ours in another. They are ours in the grant and promise of the gospel; but they are not ours in actual possession, till we believe that grant and promise. In believing, we become actual partakers of them; because this believing is our receiving of them: and therefore faith is represented as receiving Christ, receiving the gift of righteousness, receiving the atonement.

Agreeably to what is now observed, we do hold, that, in saving faith, there is a real persuasion that Christ and his salvation are presently and infallibly ours, as existing in the promise; ours, so that we cannot fall short of them; before and in order to our consciousness and experience of their being ours, as existing in our actual possession.

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This is what all we have said goes to prove; and so we understand our Lord, when he says, *Whatever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them*, that they are presently and infallibly yours, as existing in the promise, and ye shall have them, ye shall have the consciousness and experience of their being yours, as existing in your actual possession. Again, he says, *According to thy faith, so shall it be unto thee*. When a person believes that Christ and his whole salvation are his, as existing in the promise; his, so as he cannot fall short of them; he believes what none but a true believer, or one who hath heard and learned of the Father, does or can believe.

Here a continual outcry of obscurity or absurdity is raised. But the ground of it is no more than this, that the way of coming to the possession of a benefit, by believing merely, is without any exact parallel in human affairs; or, in other words, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are discerned spiritually*, and not by reducing them to the measure and standard of carnal things.

Objection 2d. It is unreasonable to call reprobates to believe what neither is nor ever will be true in their case.

Answer. Though it appears from Scripture that the greater part of the human race are included in the decree of reprobation; yet no man can warrantably think or say of himself, or any other person, who is in the present life, and hath not sinned the sin unto death, (which is the sin against the Holy Ghost), that he is a reprobate; this being

ing one of the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God. But the gospel offers and promises are things that are revealed to us; things that we have to do with; and they are directed to mankind sinners indefinitely, in such a manner as warrants every person to whom the word of God comes, to make application of them to himself. The elect are brought, through the supernatural illumination and effectual persuasion of the Holy Spirit, to make this application: each of them, in his time, is brought to say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. As to those, who, in the issue, will prove reprobates, they have the same warrant in the word of grace and promise to believe in Christ as their own Saviour, that any ever had before they believed. But they refuse to be persuaded. The proper cause of this unper-suadableness is not predestination, but their spiritual blindness and enmity against the Lord Christ, their obstinate attachment to self-righteousness and other idols. The promise of eternal life is indeed left to them, but since, instead of embracing it by faith, they put it away from them, despise and reject it, making God a liar, who but must see and acknowledge, that they justly come short of the promised blessing?

Objection 3d. This appropriating persuasion is presumptuous.

Answer. It is indeed an awful truth that security and presumption are the ruin of multitudes in the visible church: we never can be too much cautioned against it. But presumption, in every view, is far from the appropriating persuasion of which we speak. Presumption is always grounded upon:

upon some supposed privilege or qualification by which the person supposes himself to be distinguished from others. *I am not as other men are, or even as this publican. We have Abraham to our father.* Whereas the appropriating persuasion of which we speak, is grounded upon the free grant which is made of the Saviour to all people, even to the vilest of the vile. The presumptuous conclude, upon imaginary or insufficient grounds, that they are already believers and in a state of grace. But in the persuasion of which we speak, a man regards himself no otherwise than as a poor sinner of mankind to whom that word comes, in which God is making to him in particular a gift and grant of his Son Jesus Christ unto eternal life. The ground upon which the presumptuous apply the promises, is always something that they see in themselves, in their experiences or attainments. But this persuasion appropriates the good of the promise as ours, for Christ's sake alone, and because the promise is directed to all sinners of mankind to whom the word of God comes. Presumption is a groundless expectation of deliverance from wrath, without holiness or deliverance from sin. But this is a persuasion of salvation from sin as well as from wrath; a persuasion that we have sanctification as well as justification in our Lord Jesus Christ. Presumption puffeth up, and renders men secure in sin. But the more distinct and prevalent this persuasion is in any person, he will be the more humble, self-denied, watchful, and diligent in the study of universal obedience.

Objection 4th. If faith consisted in this confident persuasion, then all a person would have to do,
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would be, by every possible means, to work himself up to, and confirm himself in it, whatever evidence he might have of the contrary. This is a faith which may do well enough for fools and madmen, but which no wise man can be satisfied with*.

Answer. What we speak of is a persuasion of this, that in the gospel offer and promise, God is now giving us Jesus Christ, the true bread from heaven; and we have the same evidence of this, that we have of the gospel being preached to us: And surely what is opposite to this is the most abominable of all falsehoods, as it contradicts the best news that were ever heard in heaven or on earth. Persons may, no doubt, come to some sort of persuasion of all being well with them, by attempting a compliance with terms and conditions, and by a conceit of their own qualifications as undoubted evidences of their state of grace and favour with God. But the appropriating persuasion is of a quite different kind; we are so far from working ourselves up to it, that we naturally hate it, and do all we can to fortify ourselves against it †: this continues to be the case in reality, whatever

* Mr McKnight's Sermons on Faith, p. 88. To the same purpose. "Omnino temere," says Bellarmine, "tanquam ex verbo, possunt homines credere, sibi remissa esse peccata;" i. e. "Men cannot believe, as if warranted by the word, that their sins are forgiven them, without the utmost rashness." The reason is, That, in the word of God, salvation is nowhere promised to this or the other individual, this being peculiar to a few who are expressly named.

† "As for hoping to be saved by faith only, as an humble relying upon the promise in Christ, it is against the natural inclination

ever outward professions we make to the contrary, till the Lord the Spirit, work this persuasion in us, by enlightening the eyes of our understandings to apprehend the free grant of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation, as what God is presently making over to us poor sinners of mankind, to each of us in particular. The opinion of many, that they can easily work themselves up to this appropriating persuasion, betrays their gross ignorance, not only of the nature of that persuasion; but also of the spiritual blindness, enmity, and legal bias, of the heart *.

When the objector says, All a person would have to do would be to work himself up to this confident persuasion: if he speaks of what unites us to Christ, we own, that we are united to him,
not

nation of man, till sanctified and subdued to Christ, his mind being ignorant of the righteousness of faith, and his heart too proud to submit to it, and his guilty conscience fearful to trust to it, without some works of his own. As for the high flown pretences of the Antinomians and the Familists, to faith without works subsequent, and works being prejudicial, they are the irrational transport of an opinion, not the natural inclination of the heart, or that which the conscience doth naturally acquiesce in." *Lutherus Redivivus*, p. 161.

* "There is nothing about Christ Jesus, or about the whole mystery of the gospel, but is incredible to a natural man, and to a natural reason.—Do not run away easily with an imagination, that it is a common and ordinary thing to believe the truth of gospel-doctrine. People will say, it is very easy to believe:—it is a hard matter to believe, they may say, their own salvation; and that one is a great deal easier than the other. If there be a firm assent begotten by the Spirit of God upon the heart, as to the foundation-truth of the gospel, the particular application of that to thy soul for thy salvation, will be found an easy thing." *Traill's Third Sermon on the Steadfast Adherence to the Profession of our Faith.*

not by doing, but by believing : but if he speaks of all that belongs to the Christian life, and to the evidence of our union to Christ, then there is a great deal more indispensably necessary : love, repentance, the diligent study of universal obedience, are fully as much so, as faith. If they be accounted fools, who rest upon the gospel-grant of Christ, and of eternal life in him, and are persuaded, that, in doing so, they shall not be disappointed, we desire to be such fools more and more.

Objection 5th. There are various marks and characters laid down in the word of God for us to examine and prove ourselves by. But to what purpose are those marks and characters, if our satisfaction or assurance respecting our gracious state were a mere confident persuasion, and not the result of a rational and Scriptural inquiry *.

Answer. There is an assurance, a full assurance, in the direct act of faith ; but this is different from what is properly called our satisfaction or assurance respecting our gracious state, or an assurance that we have believed in a right manner ; or that we are already in actual possession of Christ and his salvation : for the assurance of faith is neither an assurance of what we have done, nor of what we already possess, but only of what God is presently giving us in his word of grace and promise.

The Lord hath enjoined us to endeavour after satisfaction as to our gracious state, or the assurance of sense, 2 Pet. i. 10. *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.* Self-examination is a principal mean of obtaining this satisfaction. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.* In order

* Mr M'Knight's Six Sermons, page 92.

order to a true knowledge of our state, it is necessary to examine, not only whether we have done what is materially right, but whether it has flowed from a pure heart; whether our purity of heart has flowed from a good conscience; whether our good conscience has flowed from faith unfeigned, or that faith which makes an application of Christ to ourselves in particular, upon no other footing than that of the word of grace and promise. This order is pointed out by the Apostle, in 1 Tim. i. 5. *Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

Supposing our spiritual condition to be peculiarly dangerous, self-examination is the appointed mean of our coming to such a true knowledge of it, as will put us upon an immediate believing application of Christ for our spiritual healing: that our experience may be like that of the woman who had the bloody issue, when she touched the hem of his garment.

On the other hand, supposing that, in the exercise of self-examination, the Lord has been pleased to grant us some distinct view of his own work in our souls as corresponding with the marks and characters of it in his word; in that case, instead of doating on our attainment, which is peculiarly dangerous, we should improve it as an encouragement to the immediate renewed acting of this appropriating faith; that our faith, like that of the Thessalonians, may *grow exceedingly*.

Objection 6th. Such a representation of faith is discouraging to the weak and doubting, who may be a true Christian.

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Answer.

Answer. This doctrine must discourage the vain confidence that men have in themselves, that they are righteous, and that they have good qualifications; it must discourage their attempts to work out or find something in themselves which may give them a right to lay claim to Christ and his salvation as their own. But to those who know the plague of their own heart, and who can see nothing in themselves but sinfulness and misery, these good news from a far country, must be as cold water to a thirsty soul; namely, that they, not as believers, not as persons so and so qualified, but as poor sinners of mankind, are called to look to Christ as the Lord their righteousness, and to look to the promises as *in him Yea*, that is, directed to them, and *in him Amen*, that is, sure to be performed, *to the glory of God by them.*

The doubts that professing Christians labour under, are either such as respect their own attainments; as, whether they have truly believed: or such as respect their warrant in the gospel to make a present, an immediate, application of Christ to themselves in particular. There may be too much ground for doubts of the former sort; for men are naturally prone to think themselves to be something, while they are nothing, and so to deceive themselves. But with respect to doubts of the latter sort, they are the workings of that unbelief which makes God a liar: and therefore the principle of true faith, even in the weakest believer, will maintain a conflict with them as belonging to the flesh or depraved nature: *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* Now of two schemes of doctrine, which
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is the more favourable and helpful to the Christian in this warfare? whether is it that which palliates and excuses these doubts, which are some of his worst enemies; or that which sets the evil and malignity of them in the strongest light? Surely the latter; for he will make head against these doubts, only in proportion as he is enabled to see, in the glass of the Lord's word, the vanity and vileness of them. We have many examples to this purpose in Scripture, particularly in the Psalms: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him; he is the health of my countenance, and my God. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity.* Thus the Psalmist struggled against his doubts of salvation in the promise; as seeing them to be quite groundless, as seeing that they rose from the sinful haste and infirmity of his depraved nature.

Attempting to comfort persons under perplexing doubts of their salvation, by insisting upon some favourable things in their character and exercise as proofs of their being already true believers, is frequently very dangerous, and, in some cases, proves a healing of the wound of the soul slightly; a crying, *peace, peace, while there is no peace*: But it never can be improper or unseasonable to set before the person the free grant of an all-sufficient Saviour, in the gospel offer and promise: for, supposing the worst as to the person's real case, this gospel declaration is consistent with

the most plain, particular, and faithful dealing with him concerning the heinousness and aggravations of his sins; nay, it is absolutely necessary to any dealing with him at all about, that which is chiefly the ruin of souls in the visible church, the sin of unbelief. This was still the method of the Apostles. *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which was spoken by the Prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* It was the method of the Master himself: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.—My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.* On the other hand, supposing the best in the doubting person's case, nothing can be more proper than such a gospel declaration; for, if he have grace in the root or habit, this is the appointed mean of calling it forth to lively and vigorous exercise, if he have the marks and characters of one who is not almost, but altogether a Christian, a present believing application of this word of life is the way to have them brightened and corroborated.

DIS-

DISCOURSE V.

I JOHN iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST.

WE may sum up what has been delivered in the preceding discourses concerning the *object* and the *act* of saving faith.

With respect to the OBJECT of faith, we observe, that Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God is the immediate object of it. By faith we behold him as *the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world*, as our sacrificing and interceding High Priest, who deals with God on our behalf; and as our Prophet and King, who deals with us on God's behalf.

God is the ultimate object of faith. In believing on Christ, we believe on God, 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.* Hence when the Philippian jailor believed in Christ, he is said to have *believed in God*. Christ is our way to God: John xiv. 6. *No man cometh to the Father but by me. He is the door of our access to God.*

The word of God, particularly the gospel-promise, is the matter believed. It is, no doubt, the property of faith to believe whatever God reveals; but it could not be saving faith, if it were not a

belief of the free promise of salvation by Jesus Christ. *This is the rest and the refreshing.*

With respect to the ACT of saving faith, it is a real and unfeigned persuasion. Many say, they have faith, who have it not. The Apostle James deals with such in the second chapter of his epistle.

It is a sure persuasion. The most probable notion or opinion about the infinitely important affair of our everlasting salvation, would afford nothing but perplexity and heart-wavering. Faith could not establish the heart, if there were no assurance in its nature.

It is a supernatural persuasion, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He enlightens the eyes of our understanding to know Christ as the only Saviour, and our Saviour.

It is an appropriating persuasion: It is a persuasion that Christ crucified is ours, upon no other ground than the free grant and promise, which God is now making in the gospel to sinners of mankind indefinitely. In this respect faith is just an echo to the joyful sound of the gospel.—The gospel says of Christ, He is the Saviour of sinners; the Saviour of the world. He is my Saviour, says faith, for I belong to the world of sinners of whom he bears the character of the Saviour.—The gospel says, *This is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* He is the Lord my righteousness, says faith.—His voice in the gospel is, *I am the Lord thy God.* Faith returns, *Thou art my Lord and my God.*

We

We come now to inquire into the import of faith being God's commandment.

Here two points are to be considered: namely, That believing on the name of Jesus Christ is one of God's commandments; and, That it is his commandment by way of eminence.

Since believing on the name of Jesus Christ is one of God's commandments, it must be our duty. This, however, is perfectly consistent with its being God's work of grace. A great part of that which, in the covenant of grace, he promises to work in us, is our duty. Thus he promises to *put his fear into our hearts, and to circumcise our hearts to love him; to put his laws into our minds, and to write them in our hearts.* Again, Faith is that whereby we are made actual partakers of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation. In this respect, faith is not considered as our work or duty, but merely as a mean or instrument of God's appointing and giving, whereby we receive Christ and his benefits into actual possession. In this sense the Apostle says, *It is of faith that it might be of grace.* This, however, does not hinder faith from being justly considered as our duty in another respect, namely, as it is required in the first commandment of the moral law.

We may here point out some things evidently included in the DUTY of believing.

1. Endeavouring to attain the knowledge of what is taught in the word concerning Christ. They who are neglecting to seek the true knowledge of what the Scriptures testify of Christ, are neglecting to believe in him. Knowledge is so necessary to faith, that the former is often put for the

the latter. Isaiah liii. 11. *By his knowledge, that is, by the faith of him, shall my righteous Servant justify many.* Let such as would believe in the name of Christ, use diligence to know what the Scripture teaches concerning their unspeakable need of him, concerning his person and offices, concerning the making, the proper condition, the promises, and the administration of the covenant of grace, concerning their sinful and miserable condition under the broken covenant of works, and the way and manner of their happy instatement in the covenant of grace. Let not the precious moments, in which they have an opportunity of attaining a competent knowledge of the things which belong to their eternal peace, be criminally squandered away in the vain pursuits and amusements of this world. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for persons in the visible church that live and die without the saving knowledge of Christ: God says concerning such, *They are a people of no understanding; and therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.*

2. Endeavouring to have a deep impression of, and subjection of heart unto, the authority of God speaking in his word. We do not truly receive the testimony of God concerning his Son, unless we receive it on account of the authority of the Testifier. People may seem to have an esteem of many articles of gospel truth, because they can somehow contrive to reconcile them to their natural understanding, or because they appear agreeable to their natural desire of happiness. But surely true faith is a different

ent thing: it is a receiving what God says, for the best of all reasons, namely, because it is God that says it. Such was the reception which the gospel met with among the Theſſalonians. *For this cause,* says the Apostle to them, *thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.* Hence faith is not so much our saying any thing, as our silent acquiescence in what God says.

3. Another thing, included in this duty of believing, is, that we should be exercised in applying and taking home the word of the gospel to ourselves, as a word directed to us in particular. As the word of the law can be of no use for reproof or conviction, without application to ourselves: neither can the word of the gospel afford us any relief without as particular an application. When the Lord says, *The word of salvation is sent to you, The promise is to you,* each of us ought to be saying, *To me, to me.* Wherefore is Christ lifted up, *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness?* Each of us should be saying, *That I, a poor sinner of Adam's family, may look to him as my Saviour.* Whom is he calling and inviting so tenderly, so importunately, to *take the water of life freely?* Each of us should still be saying, *Me.* Whom does he command to trust in him for everlasting salvation? *Me, hell-deserving me.**

4. Another

* Considering our natural aversion to the believing application of Christ to ourselves as sinners, upon no other footing than the free grant of him in the gospel, there is great propriety in the following exhortation of Luther, in his commentary on these words, in Gal. ii. 20. He loved me, and gave himself for me: "Who is
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4. Another thing that belongs to the duty of believing, is, that we should essay to avow or profess to God, to our own souls, and also, as there is occasion, to men, that we do believe, and that we desire to be delivered from our unbelief. Though this avowal may not be necessary to the existence, it is so to the distinctness, of the exercise of faith. We should especially make this avowal or profession unto God; as the Psalmist frequently does: Psal. xxxi. 14. *But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God.* cxlii. 5. *I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living:* and as the father of the child, in Mark ix. 24. did; who *cried out, and said with tears, Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* Indeed our Lord enjoins us to make this avowal in our prayers, when he directs us to say to God, *Our Father*; and that we shall be brought to this avowal, is matter of promise, *Thou shalt call me, My Father: Thou shalt call me Isbi, my husband.* We should also make the same profession of faith to our own souls, as a mean of stirring them up to the more lively exercise of faith: We have examples of this in the Psalms: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.* Again, *My soul wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock,*

this me?" says he, "Even I, a wretched and damnable sinner, was so dearly beloved of the Son of God, that he gave himself for me. O print this word ME in your heart, and apply it to your ownself, not doubting but that you are one of those to whom this ME belongeth."

rock, and my salvation. We are also, as there is occasion, to make this profession before men ; for, we are not to be ashamed of Christ, *who is our hope,* before men ; lest he be ashamed of us, *when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.*

5. Another thing included in this duty of believing in the name of Jesus Christ, is, that we should be careful to continue in this faith. For this end it is necessary that we learn to distinguish between truth and error in doctrine ; that we may be established in the former, and that we may give no sort of countenance to the latter ; for the Holy Spirit saith, *Cease from the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge.* And again, *Beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.* To abide in the faith, is to abide in the truth which faith receives, and on which it relies. We are also to struggle against the remaining unbelief of the heart, which is always working to make us give up our confidence in the promise ; sometimes representing other seeming supports, such as, worldly riches, wisdom, strength, or self-righteousness, as better than it ; sometimes taking occasion, from a distressing sense of the guilt and power of sin, or from the discouraging aspect of providence, to suggest that the promise does not belong to us, and that we shall never see it verified. In this case, we are called to hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end. Our Lord is saying to us, as he said to Jairus, Fear not, only believe. The more that Satan, the world, and unbelief, vilify this way of making the Lord's promise

mise in Christ the single and sufficient ground of our confidence, we should study to commend and magnify it the more; and to be the more resolute in saying with the church, He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and he will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Such is the conflict by which faith is tried and proved to be genuine.

6. Another thing included in our obedience to this commandment, is, that we should study to grow in faith. True believers are far from resting in what faith they have already attained; but are still pressing towards a greater measure of it; they are keeping up the cry of the disciples, *Lord, increase our faith.* They see that they cannot have more steadfastness in the way of duty, more success in work or warfare, more spiritual strength or comfort, but in the way of their having more faith.

7. The diligent use of means is also included in the duty of believing in the name of Jesus Christ. They that hear the voice of Wisdom, or believe the word of Christ, are *watching daily at his gates, waiting at the posts of his doors.* The commandment of God to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, bindeth us to acquaint ourselves with those things contained in the Scriptures; because they were written for this very end, *that we may believe that, Jesus is the Son of God, and that, believing, we may have life through his name.* The word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; is both what we are to believe, and the means of bringing us to believe: for,
faith

faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Let them, therefore, that would have saving faith, be diligently engaged in reading and hearing the word of faith, in laying it up in their memories, and in meditating upon it. Let them never suffer it to depart from their minds, but let them have it dwelling in them in all wisdom. Another mean, the use of which is especially required by this commandment, is prayer. Natural men are utterly averse from, and incapacitated for, prayer, as it is a real offering up of their desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ. They have no desire of what is truly and spiritually good; no faith by which to make use of Christ's name. Yet, while they have been attempting this duty, from no better principle than self-love, the Lord, who will countenance and honour his own ordinance, has given them faith, and enabled them to pray in deed and in truth. In this case, that word is verified, *Before they call, I will answer*. While they remained in unbelief, whatever name themselves or others might give to their exercise, there was no *calling*, not a syllable of prayer, in God's account; yet, in a way of sovereignty, he gives them faith. Thus, he *answers* the cry of their need; he *answers* the design of his own ordinance; he *answers* the petition, which, upon obtaining the grace of faith, they immediately offer up; for faith, as soon as it is bestowed, discovers itself, by an ardent and unextinguishable desire of faith. In prayer, we are to make much use of such promises as this, *In his name shall the Gentiles trust*, saying, *Do as thou hast said*. We should think highly of the season

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of our attendance on gospel-ordinances, as a blessed opportunity of hearing Christ's voice ; as the day of his power, wherein he *makes his people willing-nesses*, or free will-offerings ; as the happy *hour which cometh and now is, in which the dead shall bear the voice of the Son of God, and they that bear shall live*. Thus, we are diligently to use the word, sacraments, and prayer, as means of our establishment and growth in faith.

8. It is included in obedience to this commandment, that we should ascribe the work of faith, in the beginning, the continuance, the increase, and the finishing of it, to the almighty agency of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not of ourselves. Nay, we are naturally full of aversion to it. What Christ said to the Jews, he says to all men in their natural state, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*. The habit or disposition to believe is created in us by the power of the Holy Spirit enlightening us to discern spiritually what God is giving us in the gospel, and determining us to make application thereof to ourselves. With respect to Christ and his salvation brought nigh to us in the word, we are naturally in the same case that Hagar was in with respect to the well of water : She could not see it, till the Lord opened her eyes. Whatever believing views we get or desire to get of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation, or of the great and precious promises in him, they are wholly to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Hence he is called the Spirit of faith. It is no less necessary to regard the Holy Spirit as the worker of faith in us, than it is to regard Christ as the purchaser of it for us. Hence the promise of the Holy

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ly Spirit should be unspeakably precious to us: his indwelling, and all his saving and effectual operations, should be unspeakably precious. We should be habitually longing and looking for more and more experience of these operations, saying with the spouse, *Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.*

Here, however, it is necessary to remember, that our experience of the work of the Holy Spirit is in no respect, in no degree, the rule of duty, or our warrant for setting about the performance of it. The whole saving work of the Holy Spirit lies in conforming us to the word; in making us know what is revealed in the word; in making us yield a ready compliance with the calls and commands of the word. The perfection of the Holy Spirit's work within us lies in its exact correspondence with the absolutely perfect plan of it in his own word without us. The gospel that came to the Thessalonians in the Holy Ghost, was no other than that which came to them in word. The wonders which the Psalmist desired to see by the Lord's opening his eyes, were no other than what are declared in his law. The conduct of the Spirit which the Psalmist desired, was the ordering of his steps in his own word. Thus, we say, the word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule of duty, and our only warrant for setting about the performance of it. Hence, while we depend wholly upon the Holy Spirit for his enabling us to believe in Christ, we are to look to his word alone, and not at all to our own experience of the Spi-

rit's work, as our warrant to believe : we are now to essay the exercise of faith, because the word is now calling us to it. Surely it is one of the vilest suggestions of the corrupt heart to allege the want of experience of the Spirit's work, as an excuse for refusing the present call which he himself is giving us in his word.

We shall only add, that the great aim of our obedience to this commandment is, to give God the praise of the glory of his grace. The mouth of faith is filled with the praises of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life : faith ascribes the whole of our salvation to free and sovereign grace : That which ascribes any part, be it ever so small, of our salvation to the free will, sufficiency, or exertions of the creature, is not the faith in Jesus Christ of which we speak, but is directly contrary to it.

We now proceed to the consideration of the other point which is here to be considered ; namely, That this commandment, that we should believe in the name of Jesus Christ, is the commandment of God by way of eminence ; it is his great commandment.

1. It is so, because our obedience to this commandment lays the foundation of our obedience to all the other commandments. Believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God is the first and immediate duty of every gospel-hearer. In believing, the person puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, and so is furnished and prepared unto every good word and work. By faith we abide in Christ. But, faith Christ, He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for, without me, that

that is, while you are not abiding in me, ye can do nothing. In a word, faith in Christ is the first instance of genuine obedience to God's commandments, that is ever found in any of fallen mankind; and the diligent study of acceptable obedience to all his commandments necessarily follows; as the effect follows its cause.

2. It is so, because our obedience to it, in so peculiar and signal a manner, gives glory to God. The glory that faith gives to God, is that of the highest manifestation of his name and perfections that was ever made to his creatures; namely, the manifestation thereof in the obedience and death of his eternal Son. Saving faith is the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God*, not in the works of the old creation, but *in the face of Jesus Christ*. Again, faith, in a peculiar manner, gives glory to God, by its steadfast adherence to his revealed truths, that are foolishness to natural men; and by its firm persuasion and hearty embracing of those promises, which to the eye of sense appear most unlikely or even impossible to be fulfilled: *Abraham, not considering his body now dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb, staggered not at the promise, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.* Faith is remarkable as it is of all the graces of the Spirit the most self-emptying: Its constant and invariable language is, That it has nothing in itself, or in the creature; but all in Him whom it looks to and apprehends. Some would have it to be a term or condition, giving us a claim or title to Christ and his salvation. But faith itself abhors the arrogant pretension. Like the natural eye, it regards not itself; it regards nothing but its

glorious object. Talk they, says faith, of the performance of terms or conditions; God forbid that I should glory, save in the fulfilment of the condition of the covenant of grace by Him who said, when he was dying on the cross, **IT IS FINISHED.** This is that finished work, by which God was so eminently glorified on earth, and from which I alone expect pardon and peace with God, grace and glory, and every good thing. Thus faith falls in with the great design of the gospel, which is, *That the loftiness of men may be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men made low; and that the Lord alone may be exalted.*

We may now add some short improvement of the subject.

1. From what has been said, we may learn, how precious and necessary faith is, as it is our obedience to God's great commandment: by it, we are made partakers of precious Christ, and of the precious promises. Hence the Apostle calls it precious faith, 2 Pet. i. 1. *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have, obtained, or, to them who receive by inheritance, like precious faith, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.* You need not wonder, then, that the ministers of the gospel insist so much upon the duty of believing on the Son of God; upon the absolute necessity of it; upon the nature, the grounds, and warrants of it; We only desire you to judge by the following text in what degree this subject ought to engage your attention. John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not*

not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.

2. Hence we see what is our great business under a gospel-dispensation. It is to believe on the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is to accept of the free grant of eternal life in him. You are this moment either believing, or despising and rejecting it. If you now believe, you will be studious of those things which we have considered as included in the duty of believing. Ye will be endeavouring to know what is taught in the word concerning Christ and his salvation; to have your hearts subjected to the authority of God speaking in his word; to make a believing application of Christ to yourselves in particular; to make a profession of your faith to God, to your own souls, and before the world; to have your faith established and increased; to be diligent in the use of means; and yet to ascribe the beginning, the continuance, and the increase, of your faith, entirely to the almighty operation of the Holy Spirit: acknowledging that the praise of all belongs to rich, free, and sovereign grace. To you that believe, Christ is precious: ye are like the merchant, *seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.* Ye are counting all things but *loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*—But we have too much cause to apprehend that, to the bulk of persons under the outward dispensation of the word, Christ is a
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stone of stumbling and rock of offence. This has been the case in former ages; and surely we have reason to fear that it is very much so at present, when there is such a manifest declension from the word of Christ, both in profession and practice. Wherefore there is too much ground to address ourselves to unbelievers, as being the greater part of our hearers. Well, Sirs, since you persist in despising and rejecting the Son of God, we must deal faithfully and plainly with you: we must tell you that we have heavy tidings to you: you are *condemned already: the wrath of God abideth on you.* Because ye set at nought all his counsel, and will have none of his reproof, he is threatening that he will *laugh at your calamity,* and mock when your fear cometh. But you will say, *Wherein have we deserved Christ?* Some of you are not ashamed to proclaim that you do so, by your open profanity, by your horrid oaths, your Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, and the like. But say you, We have none of these things to reproach ourselves with. We are sober honest people. But if ye can habitually behold such transgressors, without feeling either compassion for their souls, or concern for the flagrant dishonour they do to God; alas! what are ye better than they? Are not many of you in your hearts mere worldlings, who, provided you can get such worldly things as your hearts are set upon, care nothing for the word and ordinances of Christ? You are called honest: but you are not truly so, unless you are studying to give God his due as well as your neighbour. *If I be a father, says God, where is mine honour? and if I be master,*

ster, where is my fear? Do not many of you neglect secret prayer, that is, retiring to a secret place, and employing some time in prayer every evening and every morning? Do not many of you, who are heads of families, neglect family-worship? But say you, We perform these duties; and are regular church-members. Outward church-membership is no certain evidence of true faith: and many go the round of duties outwardly, whose hearts are otherwise engaged. *Isai. xxix. 13. This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* But say you, We have had great convictions and concern about our guilt and danger: So had Cain, Judas, and many others who are now in hell. But you add, that your heart is wonderfully changed: You may get another heart, like Saul, and yet never get the new heart. The stony-ground hearers, no doubt, thought they had undergone a wonderful change, when they received the word with joy and endured for a while: But they were strangers to a saving change. But you insist, that you cannot help thinking, that since you have so many good things about you, it is hard that you should not be allowed to be true believers. Take heed lest what you call your good things be not, like the young man's great possessions, the fatal occasion of an eternal parting between Christ and you. You have been brought not only to civility and sobriety, but to the practice of religious duties, to conviction, and to some delight in hearing the word: all this is well in itself. Yet you lack one thing. You have
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not been brought to quit and forsake all in point of trust or dependence, and to come away stript of all your duties, convictions, frames, and good qualifications, as poor sinners, to take up your rest in the name of Christ as the Lord your righteousness. You allow that you ought to renounce the sins you are conscious of, but you cannot think of renouncing your own righteousness as filthy rags. You have been troubled about several sins, but not about unbelief, or your not believing the record of God concerning his Son, whereby ye have made God a liar *. You are entertaining a conceit of your own abilities to believe at any time; and hence you delay the work of believing from day to day. Yet after all your obstinacy in rebellion, the voice of the Son of God is to you: the gospel-grant of himself and his whole salvation is to you. *To you is the word of this salvation sent.* Christ is saying to you, "*My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven, that each of you may eat*

* "Unbelief refuseth the only remedy, and therefore must needs cause destruction. He that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John v. 12. Besides, unbelief is a sin against the moral law, not believing the veracity, nor trusting in the promise, of God. He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. It is contrary to love and thankfulness, despising the riches of the grace of God. It is contrary to repentance; nay, implieth the greatest love of, and obstinacy in, sin. It carrieth the greatest contempt of God, his Son, and spiritual things; and sheweth, that men choose their lusts, and creatures, rather than God, though with the loss of their souls. It, therefore, greatly aggravates man's other sins, and hastens his condemnation. So that unbelief doth not condemn as being disobedience to a new command, but as it is a breach of the moral law, as it binds on all other sins, and as it refuseth pardon." See *Lutherus Redivivus*, P. 125.

eat thereof and not die. Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry. Behold me as the propitiation for your sins, behold me as **THE LORD YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** I am stretching forth my hand all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people: I am still saying to you, Behold me, behold me. I would gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. Come then to trust under my wings: Whether you have been more gross finners, such as those Corinthians had been, mentioned in 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10. or more specious, as Paul had been before his conversion; whatever you are or have been, being finners of Adam's family, that now hear this call, you are welcome to me: Believe that *I will not cast you out.* Believe that I am and will be that to you, which I am declared to be in the word of the gospel: That I am and will be to you a Priest to bear all your iniquity, that you may never have to bear it; that in me you may have peace: That I am and will be to you a Prophet, to make you wise unto salvation: That I am and will be to you a King, to slay the enmity of your hearts, to make you my willing people, to make you free indeed. Unless ye believe that I am and will be to you what I am declared to be in the word, ye shall die in your sins; ye shall perish eternally. Hear, and your souls shall live."

Thus, you see Christ is very hearty in making a free offer and grant of himself and all salvation to you as sinners. And it is the great commandment of his Father, which was proclaimed by a
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voice from the excellent glory, that ye should hear Him: a voice out of the cloud on the mount of transfiguration, said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit also saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* It is true, a day of supernatural almighty power is necessary to believe in a saving manner. But we are to distinguish between the real putting forth of that power in our case, and the distinct or comfortable sense or feeling of it. O sinner! if thou art at length verily persuaded, that God, in this word of faith which we preach, which is in thy mouth and in thy heart, is at this moment giving thee his well-beloved Son and all his salvation; and if thou art now taking up thy eternal rest upon this blessed gift and grant; know assuredly, that there is a real putting forth of that supernatural power towards thee; there is a cord cast forth from the heart of everlasting love for drawing thee to itself, whether it be sensibly felt or not. But hold on in essaying the exercise of this faith, looking up to Him who alone is the strength of thy life; and by the fruits thou shalt know, that it is the true grace of God wherein thou standest.

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 DISCOURSE VI.

I JOHN iii. 23.

This is his commandment, That we should BELIEVE on the name of his SON JESUS CHRIST.

THE doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, has often been objected to as relaxing our obligation to good works. Some have thought the most proper way of obviating this objection was, to represent faith itself as being, in its formal nature, a cordial subjection to the laws and government of Christ, and as a compound of holy tempers and qualifications. But this is only pretending to obviate an objection by a gross misrepresentation. For, if the Holy Spirit had meant such a subjection, or such a compound, he would have used some other word or phrase, such as, love, repentance, the fear of the Lord, any of which are much better adapted to such a meaning, than the word faith or believing. And then, according to such a representation, faith could never be opposed, as it is, to all our works of obedience. *By grace are ye saved, through faith,—not of works.* The Scripture takes a quite different way of answering the objection under consideration; which is, not by representing faith as, in its formal nature, a subjection or obedience to the laws of Christ, but by shewing that faith, while it is itself

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one instance of obedience, is sufficient, by virtue of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which it apprehends, to bring us to every other instance of obedience: and that the several branches of holiness are fruits of faith; fruits which, in their place, are no less necessary to our seeing the Lord, than faith itself. The apostle James, in the second chapter of his epistle, teacheth us the necessity of good works, not by representing them as constituting faith, or included in it, but by shewing, that they are inseparable fruits and evidences of it. *I will, says he, shew thee my faith by my works.* It is not more necessary that faith should be at all, than that it should be productive of the fruits of new obedience. You may as well suppose that, according to the established course of nature, the sun may rise upon our hemisphere, without diffusing light, as suppose that true faith can be in any soul, without being accompanied with such fruits or EFFECTS, as we are now going to enumerate.

I. Wherever this faith is, it produceth peace, hope, and joy. There is no genuine or lasting peace to the soul of man, but what is attained by the faith of Christ. Persons may seem, for a time, to have peace of mind, arising from some conceit or vain opinion of their own righteousness. But, since this pretended righteousness of theirs is, in reality, no righteousness, but a want of conformity to the law, particularly, in the principle from which it proceeds, and in the end to which it is directed; since their supposed peace is grounded on a false notion that God will account that righteousness, which his law does not account such, and that he will adjudge them to life, whom his holy
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and righteous law adjudges to death; since they think that God is altogether such a one as themselves; they will find, in a little, when conscience shall be awakened, and they will no longer be able to shut out the truth concerning the holiness and inflexible justice of God from their minds, that what they called their peace was but a delusive and fatal security; under which they flattered themselves in their iniquity, and *treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* But the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, affords true and everlasting peace with God, and peace of conscience: for well may that give us peace of conscience which gives full satisfaction to the demands of law and justice, which removes all the grounds of difference between God and us, and with which God has, by the most glorious demonstrations, declared himself well pleased. The righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, affords also the hope of *eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.* Faith says concerning Christ, *He is our peace; our hope.* While faith sees the promise, and is persuaded of it, and embraces it; hope waits and looks for its accomplishment. While faith regards eternal life as already ours in the promise; hope regards it as what will be ours in the accomplishment of the promise. Faith and hope, according to their measure, cause joy to spring up in the heart. Rom. xv. 13. *Now, the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing.* 1 Pet. i. 8. *In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeak-*

able and full of glory. There is a joy resulting immediately from faith's views of eternal life as ours in the promise, as well as from the sensible experience of the begun accomplishment of the promise. Faith, appropriating faith, being ever productive of peace and joy, is opposed to all trouble and perturbation of mind: Hence the disciples, under perplexity, are directed to this faith: John xiv. 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* By this faith the Psalmist struggled against all his disquieting thoughts: Psal. xlii. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him; he is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

2. Wherever this faith is, it produceth true holiness in heart and life. We are *sanctified by the faith that is in Christ.* Faith in the blood of Christ, by purging the conscience from dead works, and making it good, purifies the heart unto the unfeigned love of God and man; 1 Tim. i. 5. *Now, the end of the commandment is charity, or love, out of a pure heart; and of a good conscience; and of faith unfeigned.* Faith, by the view that it gives us of the law as in Christ reconciled to us, reconciles us to the law, and makes us take it for our companion, our guide, and our familiar friend. Again, faith unites us to Christ, and opens a communication between the inexhaustible fulness of grace in him and our emptiness, which is to be continued till our souls be entirely conformed to the image of Christ: Faith is the mean of continuing as well as of beginning this communication; for, Christ dwells in the hearts of his people by
faith;

faith; and by the exercise of faith, they attain more and more experience of this supernatural and heavenly communication, enabling them to say, according to their various measures, Out of His fulness have all we received, even grace for grace; that is, grace in us answerable in nature or kind, to that grace, of which there is an unmeasurable fulness in Him; as we have by nature corruptions in us, answerable to all that corruption which appeared in the first Adam's breach of the Covenant of Works.

But, to be more explicit, we may take a view of some parts of that disposition and practice, which necessarily belong to true holiness, and which never can be attained but by faith on the Son of God.

1. Love to Christ, is the immediate effect of this faith. Because faith is such an apprehension of the love of Christ to us poor sinners, as cannot fail, according to the measure of it, to make us love Him who first loved us: so the poor woman's believing apprehension of much being forgiven her, caused her to love much: and because the believer sees him in his beauty and loveliness; and has also got a new capacity, a new heart to relish that loveliness and beauty, 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen, otherwise than by faith, ye love.* This love is exercised in a superlative esteem of him, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *To you who believe he is precious;* and in our desire being towards him, towards more and more acquaintance with him, towards more and more manifestations of his love, towards more and more conformity to his image. Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. *The desire of our souls is to thy name, and to the*

remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. This love is exercised in spiritual-mindedness. Love to Christ, as an object apprehended by faith only, is quite a different thing from that love which persons may pretend to have for him, resulting from imaginary ideas or representations in the mind of his human nature, whether in a state of suffering or of exaltation; resulting from the agreeable sensations that are excited by music or pictures any way employed in devotional exercises; or resulting from the presumptuous and blasphemous notion, that through Christ it is become safe or without danger to continue in any sin; or resulting from a carnal prospect of worldly profit, ease, pleasure, or preferment, under the profession of his name. Pretended love to Christ under any of these notions is, in reality, nothing but the carnal mind's attachment to its own idol. But they that truly love Christ are spiritually minded; they love Christ according to the whole of his blessed name, according to the whole representation that he gives of himself in his own word; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened by his Spirit, to apprehend that representation in a spiritual manner; they love him as Immanuel, God in their nature; they love him as made of God to them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The soul that loves Him, is seeking his face; no worldly enjoyments, no duties, means, or outward privileges, will content that soul; nothing but Christ himself.

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2. Another inseparable attendant of true faith in Christ, is our love to one another. Hence they are joined together in the text: *This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* The person who has truly believed the truth of the gospel, has got such a view of it, in its nature, beauty and lustre, as has effectually captivated his heart; so that now he cleaves to the truth in love, and to the brethren *for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in them,* 2 John 4. This love is exercised in delighting in any conformity to Christ that we observe in others, on the believing consideration of their relation to Christ; in taking delight to shew them kindness on that account; and in our sympathy with them in their trials and temptations.

3. Another inseparable attendant of true faith is repentance, or the soul's turning from sin unto God. Christ is set forth in the gospel as a Saviour from sin as well as from wrath: and the promise, which is in him Yea, and in him Amen, is a promise of deliverance from sin; and therefore by the appropriating faith of Christ as our Saviour, and of the promise in him, the soul truly departs from sin; Faith's views of the reconciled face of God in Christ, fill the soul with shame, and self-abhorrence on account of sin; Ezek. xvi. 63. *That thou mayst remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God:* and xxxvi. 31. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own fight*

fight for your iniquities; and for your abominations: and also with godly sorrow for sin, Zech. xii. 10. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born.* According to our faith in the death of Christ for us, as meritoriously and virtually the crucifixion of our old man, and the death of sin in us, so will we be diligent and successful in the exercise of mortifying sin. The fight of the Lord's people against sin is *the good fight of faith*: their enemies are lusts that *war against the soul*, aided and stirred up by Satan and the world. Believers are, in themselves, without strength, and an easy prey to the least of these enemies; but by faith in Him who is the Captain of their salvation they *are made strong out of weakness, wax valiant in the fight, and turn to flight the armies of their spiritual enemies.* Thus faith makes the soul turn from sin, treat it as its worst enemy, and employ the grace and strength of Christ for putting it to death, or for its utter destruction.

4. Patience under the cross is also the fruit of this appropriating faith. By that faith which rests on the promise, and embraces the good things of it as the greatest realities; which makes distant things near; and future things present; the soul waits with composure and tranquillity under sensible discouragements and delays of the answer of prayer. *He that believeth shall not make haste.* Under affliction, it is by the faith of the promise in Christ, that the Lord gives his people more and more of that patience, wherein they possess their

their souls; wherein, with Moses, *they choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; wherein they choose rather to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud; rather to have their spirit brought down to their lot, than to have their lot brought up to their spirit.* There is no true patience but what is the fruit of this appropriating faith; and we can have no more of the former than we have of the latter: Hence we find them frequently joined together, Heb. vi. 12. *Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises,* Rev. xiii. 10. *Here is the patience and faith of the saints.*

5. Another fruit of true faith is a due esteem of the word as indeed the word of God, Job xxiii. 12. *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.* The word is more necessary to faith, than outward food is to the subsistence of our natural life or health. This esteem of it is evidenced by commending and magnifying the word above all other things in the world, because there is more of God to be seen in the word than in all other things; by seeking to have ourselves and others brought to a willing subjection to its authority; by desiring and endeavouring to attain more and more knowledge of it, and conformity to it; by our using it as the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy God, as affording the only medicine for the healing of our souls, the only armour for our defence against our spiritual enemies, and the only effectual comfort in our affliction.

6. Another

6. Another fruit of true faith is prayer. As soon as a person believes on the Son of God, it may be said of him, as it was said of Paul at his conversion, *Behold he prayeth*. Before he believed, his praying was but a lifeless form; but now he prays indeed. He now comes to God as his Father in Christ. Faith's view of the mercies of the new covenant as suitable to his case, as sure, and as his own mercies in Christ, makes him continue to wrestle with God for the actual enjoyment of them. Faith kindles a desire that will never be satisfied with any thing short of the King's immediate presence.

7. Another fruit of true faith is a single regard to God's declarative glory. While a man is an unbeliever, all he does proceeds from natural self as its principle; and, as the stream cannot rise higher than the fountain, it returns to self as its end. But, being united to Christ by faith, he begins to act from a supernatural principle, and to a supernatural end, even to the glory of God. So far as he is a believer, he is delivered into the mould of the exhortation in 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's*. They who live by Christ will live to him. 2 Cor. v. 14. *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 who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again*. And here we may observe, that an honest desire and endeavour to glorify Christ, by a suitable confession of his name, of his truths and ordinances,

dinances, especially of those that are peculiarly disregarded and trampled on by the generation among whom we live, are also the effect of this appropriating faith. As soon as a man believeth with the heart unto righteousness, he maketh confession with the mouth unto salvation. As soon as the thief on the cross became a believer, he became a confessor of Christ. David's faith made him one too: Psal. cxviii. 28. *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: my God, I will exalt thee.*

But who can recount the noble acts of this precious faith? We have an illustrious group of them in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, which you may peruse in this view at your leisure. There never was, nor is, nor shall be, in any of the fallen posterity of Adam, in all their generations, the least spark of genuine love to God, or to man for his sake, or any saving grace, or act of new obedience, but what is to be regarded as proceeding from this heavenly and supernatural principle.

Here we may add a word in answer to the question, When does faith bring forth these fruits?

1. It begins to bring forth fruit as soon as it exists in the soul. It is ever attended with all the other graces of the Spirit, such as, love, humility, the fear of the Lord, godly sorrow for sin, patience. Each of these is in the believing soul, if not in actual and sensible exercise, yet in the habit and disposition towards that exercise; and that habit or disposition, as soon as implanted, will, (except perhaps in the case of infants), be carried forth into some acts, more or less. Hence the
Apostle

Apottle says to the Colossians, *The gospel bringeth forth fruit in you, from the day that ye heard, and knew the grace of God in truth.* When a person is brought to a real faith in Jesus Christ, he no longer delays repentance, and the study of close walking with God: He makes haste, and delays not to keep God's commandments.

2. It perseveres in bearing these fruits unto the end. As the being of true faith, wherever it is, can never fail, by reason of our Lord's preservation of it, and intercession for it, John vi. 40. Luke xxii. 31. so it shall never altogether cease to bear fruit: Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8. *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* It brings forth fruit in prosperity, as it did in Jehoshaphat, when his heart was lifted up in the righteous ways of the Lord; in adversity, Habakkuk iii. 17, 18.; in desertion, Isai. viii. 17.; under a sense of the power and prevalency of indwelling sin, Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25; under the assaults of Satan's temptations, Ephes. vi. 16.; under the enjoyment of public ordinances, Ezek. xx. 40. Heb. x. 25.; under the want of them, Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3.; in living, Gal. ii. 20; and in dying, Heb. xi. 13.

From what has been said we may learn, that the only genuine faith is that which brings forth good fruit. O Christian! though you may not understand how to answer all the objections of an artful disputer of this world, yet you may certainly know

know that your faith is unfeigned, and of the right sort, if it be the case, that, according to the measure of your faith, you love Christ, and delight in his word, and in his people for his sake; you are resolute in striving against sin, and patient under affliction; you are eyeing self less, and God's declarative glory more. *He that abideth in me, says Christ, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*

We have also seen that true peace of conscience is attained by faith in the blood of Christ, and inseparably accompanied with the fruits of holiness. Let us remember that true peace of conscience is not attained by our duties, by resolutions, or endeavours to do better. This is only attempting to get the wound of our souls healed by the law. Whatever closing of the wound may seem to be attained in this way, we may be sure it will break out again in a more terrible and desperate manner than ever. All that is ever attained in this way, is but a healing of the wound slightly: a saying, Peace, peace, while there is no peace: nor can it be otherwise, since the pretended righteousness, on which it is attempted to be built, is no righteousness. *Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. Going about to establish our own righteousness is justly to be accounted the most heinous of all provocations; as it is a saying, That Christ is dead in vain: God's curse is upon all the peace, or rather presumptuous security, which men attain in this*

legal way. For, as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. But we say, true peace of conscience is attained by faith in the blood of Christ, or by resting in this gospel declaration, That Christ is our peace, who hath made peace by the blood of his cross. And this peace cannot take effect on the conscience, without bringing us to the study of universal obedience to God's commandments. For, the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purgeth our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. From dead works, that is, from the charge which the law brings against us of works deserving eternal death. Nothing is to be accounted the purgation of the conscience by the blood of Christ alone, which does not lead to the diligent and delightful service of the living God. Let us be on our guard against a false peace: it is the ruin of multitudes in the visible church; and never in any period of the church was it a more epidemical plague than in our day. The high-minded carriage of professors, and their contempt of the means of reformation, proclaim this to be the case. Their obstinacy in backsliding courses, declares that they hold fast deceit.

From what has been said we may learn, that we are to account *that* only to be true holiness which is a fruit of faith in Christ, and which is received by faith out of His fulness. A believer does not account himself to have already attained; he can see nothing in his attempts to perform duties, but deficiency and defilement: while legalists are ostentatiously displaying their seeming attainments;

ments ; their knowledge, their frames, their experiences, the rectitude of their conduct, and the benevolence of their hearts. When they hear a person bewailing the bitter experience he has of the deep-rooted and prevailing enmity against God and his ways, that is still in his heart ; they are ready to bless themselves, thinking that it is not so bad with them. But, believer, let not this tempt thee to return to them ; that is, to go back to the law of works. So far as you are seeking holiness in the way of believing in Jesus Christ for it, or trusting that he will give it you freely for his name's sake, you are in the only way in which God will ever bless any of the children of fallen Adam with true holiness. Stumble not at the proud boasting of legalists ; for, when they talk of holiness, they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Thy groans on account of indwelling corruption, thy eager looks to the promise in Christ as all thy hope, thy feeblest (being honest) endeavours to strive against sin, and to adhere to all the truths and ways of God without exception, are assuredly accepted in the Beloved, while the most splendid and celebrated virtues of the self-righteous are an abomination to the Lord.

From what has been said, we may learn the indispensable necessity of holiness or good works in church-members. God is looking for holiness, or a regard to all his ordinances and commandments, as the fruit of all that he does for them, and works in them. Gospel-hearers, take heed lest he have nothing to say of you at last, but that when he looked that you should have brought forth grapes, he

he found that you had brought forth wild grapes. Remember that the Husbandman is taking away such as, being in Christ by profession only, bear no fruit. Let the case of the barren branches, which are to be cast into the fire and burned, stir you up to seek union and fellowship with the Son of God, *that ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.*



F I N I S.