

THE
EVANGELICAL GUARDIAN
AND REVIEW.

VOL. I.

AUGUST, 1817.

NO. 4.

PRAYER.

(Continued from p. 60.)

HAVING, in a former Number, discussed some of the laws by which the important duty of prayer is to be regulated, we enter on the second point proposed, viz. "*The different methods by which God is pleased to answer.*" This, on a superficial view, seems to open a small field for investigation. If God hath promised (as he most assuredly hath done) to listen to his people's requests, and graciously answer them from the habitation of his holiness; all that is required on their part, is to know *what* they have requested, in order to ascertain *how* they will be answered. Such is the reflection which naturally rises in our minds. It is far, however, from being correct. Though the great God hath revealed himself as the hearer of prayer, he hath not, in doing so, sacrificed the glory of that awful prerogative by which "he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Even in his faithfulness, he frequently exercises an adorable sovereignty, and though he answers, he answers according to his own good pleasure, in a time, and by a way of his own devising. So mysterious are his dispensations in this respect, that the very fulfilment of his promise is frequently construed by his people into a breach, and his very *answer* to their prayers is considered an irrefragable argument, that "He hath forgotten to be gracious."

mothers" to the Church distant, ages heaped on ages, every Christian would be equally obliged to give it a high rank among the subjects of petition. Meanwhile, let us be assured, that, whether distant or near, the fulfilment of the promise shall certainly take place. "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." And though we dare not hope that even its beginnings will be seen in our day and generation, let us indulge the well-grounded expectation, that when it *does* come, our prayers will be found to have influenced the glorious harvest; and, looking yet farther through the veil, let us anticipate that still more illustrious period, when we who sow, and they who are ordained to reap, shall rejoice together, and unite in one eternal song of gratitude and praise to the "*Hearer and Answerer of prayer.*"

We had intended to sum up our remarks with a few considerations, calculated to urge the faithful performance of the important duty which has been the subject of discussion. Finding, however, that we have already trespassed on our limits, we shall leave this point to some future occasion.

FOR THE EVANGELICAL GUARDIAN AND REVIEW.

The Divinity of the Saviour proved from the Nature of the Mediatorial Office.

A MEDIATOR is one that intervenes between two parties at variance, in order to bring them into a state of reconciliation.

That the Lord Jesus Christ sustains this character, is acknowledged by all who profess to believe in the Bible as an inspired book; but this harmony of opinion ceases, when we speak of *his person* as mediator, and the *particular nature* of his office. Some maintain that he was God as well as man; and came to obey and suffer in our room and stead, in order to satisfy the claims of divine justice against us.

Others say, that he was only a man, and of course deny the efficacy of his obedience and death in rendering God propitious to us. They assume, that God can remit, and is disposed to remit, sin, without any sacrifice; and they declare, that Christ was sent into the world merely to reveal the will of God to men, and by his sufferings to set them a pattern of magnanimity and patience.

Now, it is an indubitable principle, that reason and Scripture cannot contradict each other;—both speak the same language, when properly consulted. Granting, then, for a moment, the latter opinion to be true, let us examine it, and see whether it can stand the test of rational inquiry, or does not involve an absurdity.

Self-preservation is not only an instinctive principle, but a commanded duty. God, in his word, threatens with eternal punishment, all such as wilfully violate this most sacred obligation: and, therefore, consistently with his truth and justice, he cannot require or compel a creature, upon any reason whatever, designedly to endanger his life, or court death. Did Christ, then, *freely consent* to prosecute his commission? The inference, upon the supposition that he was an innocent and holy man, is undeniable, that he consented to become guilty of suicide; there being, according to the above opinion, no necessity of his death,—and, of course, to forfeit for ever the happiness which he enjoyed by virtue of his holiness, in diametrical repugnance to the law of his nature, and the injunction of his Creator. And what can be pleaded in justification of his conduct? *The bare benevolence of his motives*;—a palliative as frivolous as sophistical. For if, as we are told, God is disposed to forgive sin without any sacrifice, there is no indispensableness attached to an example of meekness and patience, in order to salvation, and consequently *the gain* of Christ must be infinitely less than *his loss*.

Consent implies a proposition being made; but the very idea of a righteous God proposing to an innocent creature, to endure what Christ did, for no other purpose than the intro-

duction of a little more religion upon earth, is replete with impiety an horror.

Again : If we suppose he was fallen, like the rest of his species, though sanctified in an extraordinary manner as a prophet of God, he is free, in a measure, of the imputation of suicide ; sorrow and death being the unavoidable consequences of Adam's first sin upon all his posterity. But then, he cannot assert any right, save upon the grounds of guilt and demerit, to a reward which it is acknowledged he does claim, and has received, as an equivalent for his work. Can he plead his miracles ? No ; for these were not of himself, but by the power of God. Can he plead his excellent and perfect life ? No ; except upon the principle, that he had a native power of hating sin and loving holiness, which, if true in one instance, must be true in every other ; and therefore, *all mankind* may, with him, become entitled to the *same dignities and honours, the same power and authority*. Are the unparalleled firmness and magnanimity which he exhibited under the various circumstances of his death, affirmed to be pre-eminently worthy of such exalted privileges ? The affirmation is not true, if he bore up under human infirmities alone, for it is not difficult to produce from the historic page examples of those virtues, in circumstances less provoked, and equally ignominious.

Whether, therefore, upon the principle that he was an innocent or fallen creature, we suppose he consented freely or necessarily, it is evident he was not a suitable person to supply the mediatorial office between God and man. Upon either ground, we are involved in the most egregious absurdity.

FREE AND UNNECESSARY CONSENT in such an undertaking, *reason* teaches was fit and proper ; and the Scriptures affirm, that Christ yielded it in the eternal counsels of peace. "Lo, I come ; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God : yea, thy law is within my heart."

What is the just inference from hence ? It is this ;—that our Redeemer had a power which no finite being possesses, of *disposing of his own life* ; and this well agrees with his own

language, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again." Christ, therefore, was a divine person.

This will further appear, by considering the objects proposed to be accomplished in his mission.

We believe that he came to atone for the sins of his people—in other words, to satisfy the demands of divine justice, and bring in an everlasting righteousness to the glory of God the Father.

What is sin? Sin is the transgression of the law of God. But what is the law of God? Not a few positive precepts, which may, as Socinians suppose, be repealed without a violation of the principles of justice; but it is a transcript of God's moral perfections, founded in his very nature, and as unalterable as God himself;—a law, involving infinite obligations, sanctioned by infinite penalties, which a God of truth cannot but execute upon every sinner that dies under its curse. SIN, therefore, is, *objectively*, an infinite evil, which is altogether irremissible without adequate satisfaction to divine justice. Now, Christ is invariably designated in the sacred volume, as a great propitiatory and atoning victim. All the rites and sacrifices under the Mosaic economy, were intended to prefigure and set forth the efficacy of his obedience and death, in rendering God free to pardon and willing to receive returning sinners. He is, moreover, styled a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Sacrifice, which needed to be but once offered. He is also said to have borne our sins in his own body upon the cross—to have finished transgression, and to have made reconciliation for iniquity. Whence it follows, that the nature of his mediatorial office required that he should not be obligated, either by law or justice, to *yield any obedience for himself*. If it were otherwise, much being required where much is given, no part of it, however excellent and perfect it might be, could be transferred from him, and laid to the account of any other creature. Sin being an infinite evil, made it necessary too, that his righteousness *be infinitely precious*. But if he had been only a man, a limited, finite creature, he could not, in the nature of things, have possibly rendered a *satisfaction* proportionable to the evil of sin. Since,

therefore, none but a divine Being, can be free of all obligations to render obedience for himself, or can pay an infinite debt, Christ being thus free, and having thus satisfied, is a divine person.

Further, Christ, as Mediator, governs his Church; bestows his Spirit, converts sinners, conducts his saints to the end of their vocation, and conquers all his and their enemies.

The enemies of Christ are sin, Satan, the world, and death. By his death, he secured salvation to his people; he delivered them from the condemnation of sin: but he did not then rescue them from its enslaving power, nor overcome the corruption and enmity of their hearts. This was a subsequent work, to be accomplished by the operations of his Holy Spirit, which he now carries on, and will complete at the termination of their present existence.

SATAN is an inveterate foe. Although he received a fatal wound when the Redeemer was suspended upon the cross, still he struggles to wrest from him the sceptre of righteousness, that he may eclipse his glory and control his sovereignty. With infernal stratagem and malice, he embattles against him the combined forces of earth and hell, and attempts the usurpation of absolute dominion. These hostile machinations our exalted Saviour overrules by his Providence, and will finally defeat, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The friendship of the world is enmity with God. The interests, customs, plans, and enjoyments thereof are sordid, grovelling, devilish, and diametrically opposed to the pacific and benign reign of the gospel. This enemy he will also destroy. He governs it in righteousness, restrains its malice, preserves his Church amid its conflicts and snares, and in the fulness of time, will make his name to be acknowledged and adored from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.

DEATH will be the last enemy that shall be destroyed. He will be permitted to detain the bodies of believers as prisoners of the grave till the second coming of our Lord; but then, the sound of the trumpet shall disarm him of his power, and the

sleeping dust shall arise, completely freed of his shackles, and delivered from his thralldom.

The conquest of these powerful enemies, it will doubtless be acknowledged, is a divine work; and hence we conclude, that he who brings it about is a divine person. The same conclusion will result from a consideration of his other mediatorial works.

It may, perhaps, be objected, that the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom, being finite objects, and possessing only a finite power, a finite being, such as Christ is supposed to be, being endued with a power superior to them, may overcome and conquer them; but this can never prove him to be a divine person.

To this objection we answer, that notwithstanding their power be finite, yet, the conquest of them involves a change of the laws of nature. Thus, by the conquest of death, man is changed from a corruptible to an incorruptible creature. But no finite power is adequate to work such a change. Gabriel, or any other creature, cannot alter the nature of man, any more than man that of a worm.

It may then be conceded, that the power is infinite, but the divinity of the person exerting such power is still denied, upon the principle, *that it is all communicated to him as an instrument in the hands of God.* Miserable sophistry! Suppose a giant to employ a straw in order to strike a blow, what would be the effect of the action? Would not the power exerted and communicated be entirely lost, and the object on which it was designed to have effect, remain unurt? In like manner, if the Deity should employ a creature in order to overturn the world, no visible change could be effected; the laws of nature would continue in regular and uninterrupted operation. But further, to suppose infinite power can be communicated to any finite being whatever, is to imagine a power in the Deity to undeify himself, which is absurd.

To these observations, it may be replied, that miracles, which are the effects of divine power, have been wrought by men as instruments in the hand of God.

Miracles are, indeed, said to have been wrought by men; but nothing more is meant by that mode of expression than that they either created in the people an expectation of seeing some extraordinary phenomena, or prayed to God to exercise his power in working them; which might be made evident, by an examination of their conduct on all such occasions. And hence it follows, that they were only *moral* instruments, who neither exerted nor possessed infinite power.

Christ, however, as mediator, is no moral instrument. He exercises his mediatorial power in heaven, which is his peculiar dwelling-place, and where no doctrine is contested, where no truth is disputed, where are no subjects who expect a divine interposition in attestation of the being of God, or the divinity of his religion. His dominion extends over heaven and earth. *All power, we are told, is given to him, in heaven and earth;* which expression, if it mean any thing, must mean that he possesses a power which is superior to that of any other being, or that his dominion is absolute over all things visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. There is no limitation. *All power is his.* Therefore, God, in conferring such upon Christ, if he be a mere creature, has deprived himself of omnipotence; and since deity consists in supreme perfection, he cannot be any longer God. God given his perfection to man! and for what? *A dispensable humiliation and unnecessary death!* or to constitute him a moral instrument among beings who stand in no need of such instrumentality. From such absurdities, reason revolts with horror and disgust.

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