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APOSTOLICAL PREACHING

CONSIDERED,

IN

AN EXAMINATION

OF

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

BY

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Would I describe a Preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. COWPER.

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will, like meteors in a troubled sky, each have its turn to blaze and pass away. But the Bible is eternal like the sun, the never-failing source of light and life.”*

I am well aware that I have been led to treat of some questions, upon which it becomes us to inquire humbly, rather than to decide positively: neither is it probable that I should have ventured to enter upon them at all, had not my attention been forcibly directed, by accidental circumstances, towards that high tone of Calvinistic preaching, which has recently ended in a partial secession from our Established Church, with whose tenets it was justly felt to be incompatible. I was thus induced to re-examine, with as much diligence and sincerity as I was able, the authorities and example on which alone such a practice ought to be grounded:

* Warburton, Div. Leg.

and, in the result, to lay before my brethren in the ministry an important subject of consideration in the light in which it forcibly appeared to my own mind. This I have attempted with a complete freedom from all party designs. Practical utility was the object on which I set out, and which I have studied to keep in constant view ; and I shall think myself amply repaid if I shall become the instrument of bringing any reader to consider more closely the example of the Apostles, the doctrines they insist upon, and their mode of enforcing them, so as to tend eventually to the greater edification of a single congregation.

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APOSTOLICAL PREACHING

CONSIDERED.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREACHER'S OFFICE.

IN awakening the hardened sinner, or reclaiming the careless Christian, the Holy Spirit is by no means confined to any single mode of operation, even where we are able to trace its influence. But it is experimentally certain, that from the Apostles' age down to the present, its assistance has principally attended the labours of the **CHRISTIAN PREACHER**. It is thus that the heart has been most successfully assailed, and most effectually renewed.

I shall not here advert to the case of those who profess no allegiance to the Gospel. It is evident, however, that even among those who own its authority, very different views are entertained of the importance of the doctrines it reveals, as well as of the nature and extent of its obligations. This difference may be variously accounted for; but most commonly, is to be traced to the preacher, under whose ministry their lot has fallen: whether he has aroused them with a warning voice to vigilance in working out their salvation, or flattered that indolent calm in which the soul is too willing to repose.

Ecclesiastical historians have observed, that the external prosperity of the church has been often unfavourable to the growth of vital religion. There is something similar to this in the case of individuals: security sinks into indifference; and regular, inoffensive, or, as the phrase is, correct lives are very apt to lead to a fancied security and dependence upon baptismal privileges, while no

active principle of religion is alive at the heart. But it is only when religion is an active, energetic, and informing principle, that it is real, vital, or evangelical. It is only when it ceases to be reckoned as a separate concern, occupying one place among many duties, and becomes the main business of life, the root and source of every duty, that it at all resembles the models described, or the precepts inculcated, in the Gospel.

The general proneness to religious indolence must be counteracted by the preacher's watchfulness. It is for him to be ever on his guard, lest his congregation should rest in a reliance on vague notions of the divine mercy, on the supposed efficacy of baptism, or on their exemption from gross vices, by leading them to inquire into the real demands which the Gospel lays upon them, into the facts respecting the human heart which it reveals, and the mode of salvation which it points out: and to compare these with their own experience, to examine and prove them-

selves, and to require of their own conscience "a reasonable answer of the hope that is in them." Thus the habits of devotion cease to be passive and inanimate; the soul exercises itself on the subject of its safety; fervent piety gradually insinuates itself into the mind; and the true nature of the Gospel is seen during the earnest examination of its truth and doctrines. Such is the influence of the preacher. The regular service of the church may be performed, perhaps as well performed; the same prayers used, the same Scripture read; but these means will not prove generally efficacious, unless the preacher bring the doctrines to which the liturgy refers, and which the Scriptures inculcate, to the hearts of the congregation.

At the same time, I am as far as possible from intending to imply a superiority in the importance of one part of the service of the church above the other. There would need no other proof of a congregation having been

ill taught, than their being disinclined to pray. But our liturgy supposes and requires an experimental acquaintance with the leading doctrines of Scripture; and where these are not understood, which they will not be unless they are explained and enforced from the pulpit, prayer, confession, and thanksgiving become empty ceremonies, and the form of godliness remains without the power. It is by an harmonious correspondence between the the two parts of the service, by the unison of the sermon with the liturgy, that true Christians, under the divine blessing, are formed.

If this is a just statement, it is, indeed, an awful consideration for a minister, that so much depends upon his faithful performance of the commission with which he is charged, as a steward of the mysteries of God. Indeed, to those who may have witnessed the change which it is possible to effect, within the compass of a few years, by a pious and honest discharge of the ministerial duties, it

will appear that the different degrees of advantage possessed by different districts in this respect are scarcely less disproportionate, than those of the inhabitants of a Protestant and a Roman Catholic country, or of different states of civilization. All will be finally judged according to their opportunities. But what minister can have imbibed so little of the spirit of that Gospel which he professes to teach, or of that Master whom he has vowed to serve, or even of that ceremonial by which he has been dedicated to the ministry, as to think the spiritual advancement of his flock a matter in which he has but a trifling concern; or to be content with leaving them in the vestibule of their religion, instead of bringing them onward to its inmost recesses, and displaying to them the riches of its mercy and the fulness of its glory?*

* Baxter's account of his success at Kidderminster is very encouraging, and without doubt has many counterparts in the present day. "The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither. Our private meetings also were full. On the Lord's days there was no disorder to be seen in the

I. I am aware it may be objected, that the effect I attribute to preaching, supposes both a degree and an equality of talent which it would be unreasonable to expect, universally, in the members of any profession. This objection, however, in part proceeds from a

streets, but you might hear an hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came thither first, *there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called upon his name*; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was *not past one family in the side of a street that did not so*, and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And those families which were the worst, being inns and alehouses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious. When I set upon personal conference with each family, and catechizing them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come; and those few were beggars at the town's end, who were so ignorant that they were ashamed it should be manifest. And few families went from me without some tears, or seemingly serious promises for a godly life. Yet many ignorant and ungodly persons there were still among us, but most of them were in the parish and not in the town, and in those parts of the parish which were furthest from the town. Some of the poor men did competently understand the Body of Divinity, and were able to judge in difficult controversies; some of them were so able in prayer, that very

misapprehension of what is really required. Certainly the power of eloquence, whether in style or manner, in writing or in speaking, must vary; or, rather, can belong to very few. But then it is by no means generally needed. Piety, earnestness, and diligence, we have a right to expect in all, who have taken upon themselves the office of ministering in holy things. Let zeal and industry be directed by piety, and a ministry will not fail to command attention, though he may not be eloquent; and will be useful though he may be plain. Were his subject indeed one of common interest or importance, the graces of oratory, or the splendours of composition, might be requisite. But death and

few ministers did match them in order and fulness, and apt expressions, and holy oratory and fervency: abundance of them were able to pray very laudibly with their families or with others. The temper of their minds and the innocency of their lives was much more laudible than their parts. The professors of serious godliness were generally of very humble minds and carriage; of meek and quiet behaviour unto others; and of blamelessness and innocency in their conversations." *Life and Times, Part I. p. 86.*

judgment, heaven and hell, are topics in which all have so intimate a concern, that the subject supplies what is wanting in the manner. Let a congregation be once persuaded that they have a personal interest in the discourse, and they will listen to it with the earnestness which personal interest never fails to inspire, and which, in this case, nothing else can command. Critical power to judge of the composition they have not: but reason they have, which will tell them whether the voice of the preacher is re-echoed by the words of Scripture; and conscience they have, which will apply his appeal to their hearts more powerfully than the best turned period. It is only where they hear little of the Bible and the means of salvation, that the people have fastidious ears.

In fact, elaborate composition is so far from being necessary to the success of public discourses, that in many situations a person of delicate and refined taste will be obliged to maintain a severe conflict between his duty

and his habits, before he can become useful to others from the pulpit.* He must descend from the high and lofty tone of language to which he is accustomed, to walk in the humble terms of Scripture; he must limit his rounded periods to the extent of vulgar com-

* “The concern of a parish minister is to make the lowest of his congregation apprehend the doctrine of salvation by repentance, faith, and obedience; and to labour, that, when they know the way of life, they walk in it. If he doth not these things for them, he doth nothing; and it requires much consideration to find out the proper methods of doing them, and much pains and patience to try one after another. *Smooth discourses, composed partly in flowing sentences which they cannot follow to the end, containing little that awakens their drowsy attention, little that enforces on them plainly and home what they must do to be saved,* leave them as ignorant and uninformed as ever, and only lull them into a fatal security. Therefore bring yourselves down to their level.” Archbishop Secker’s Second Charge, An. 1762; which is very useful throughout.

See on the whole of this subject some excellent remarks in Milner’s Church History, vol. ii. cent. v. ch. iii. It is pleasing to reflect that matters have undergone a great change since those remarks were written. Bishop Wilson’s Parochialia also contains some useful hints as to the mode of treating every description of persons in a Christian country.

prehension ; he must abound in interrogations and addresses which the rules of composition condemn, in writing, though the rules of nature sanction them in speaking ; in short, he must put off all sense of personal importance, and assume the character of his office ; he must forget *himself*, and remember only his situation as the messenger of Christ, and his business of converting sinners from the error of their way. He must not even suffer the odium which attends the suspicion of preaching for popular applause to damp his zeal. No doubt, odium may deservedly fall upon a person who can pervert the explanation of God's holy word into an occasion of private ambition, or allow any personal object to enter into a business so sacred, or a function so important. Bishop Taylor gives excellent advice : " Let no man preach for the praise of men ; but if you meet it, instantly watch and stand upon you guard, and pray against your own vanity ; and by an express act of acknowledgement and adoration

return the praise to God.”* But he who would scorn to seek popular applause, should likewise learn to rise above the imputation of such a motive: a device of the enemy, which a good man must make up his mind to despise in every situation of life, or he will soon be deterred from the adequate discharge of any duty. We do not hear a lawyer blamed for pleading earnestly in his client’s cause, or a physician for watching diligently over the recovery of his patient: all then surely who allow the superiority of things eternal to things temporal, must admit that it is becoming in a minister to be sincerely anxious for the salvation of the flock committed to his charge. And the anxiety which it is laudable to feel, it is no disgrace to show. It is no new rule, that whoever would persuade others, must prove by his manner that he is himself persuaded. Interest excites interest, and is communicated from the

* Advice to his Clergy.

minister to the congregation; who cannot be expected to set a very high value on that truth which seems to betray the slight importance in which it is held, by the cold and careless manner with which it is delivered. The spiritual improvement of his flock is certainly the only praise which the preacher should allow himself to hear; but to be careless of that praise, bespeaks a heart very slightly impressed with the spirit of the Gospel.

But although conspicuous talents, deep learning, or shining eloquence, are not essential to the utility of the parochial preacher, one thing is essential—such a degree of diligence, and such an acquaintance with the rules of composition, as shall enable him to compose, or at least to compile his own discourses. The observation has been made with more fastidiousness than good sense, that when there are so many excellent sermons in print, a man is inexcusable who delivers a bad one. That, however, is a bad

sermon, on whatever authority it stands, or by whatever great name it is recommended, which has no effect on the congregation. Without entering at all into the general character of our printed sermons, among which it would be an easy task, no doubt, to find examples of all that is fervent in piety, splendid in eloquence, or sound in doctrine; I will venture to assert that no sermon, certainly no set of sermons, will be so useful to a congregation, as those which have been originally composed for it by a preacher residing amongst them, acquainted with their spiritual state, and adorned with the qualifications already premised. It no more follows that the same sermon should be useful or suitable to all congregations, because all Christians have the same doctrines to believe and the same duties to learn; than that the same character is applicable to every individual, because all mankind is endowed with the same nature, qualities, and passions. Two congregations can scarcely be found in precisely the same state of religious knowledge

and advancement, or with the same capabilities of comprehending a method of treating a subject, and the language in which it is clothed. What is too elementary in one place, will be too profound in another; what might be safely taught to those who are accustomed to “compare spiritual things with “spiritual,” might lead others into dangerous errors, who had little previous acquaintance with the Gospel. The general rules of medicine are uniform, as well as the general principles of the human constitution; but that would be a dangerous practice, which did not modify itself according to each particular case. On the same grounds, it is of supreme importance that the preacher should have a style of his own; a style of doctrine founded upon his individual views and conviction, and a style of language accommodated to the understanding and actual state of his flock. He will thus secure two points of the utmost consequence in all instruction, consistency and earnestness. He will not address his congregation as Calvinists to-day,

and Pelagians to-morrow, according to the humour of the writer on whom his choice may have fallen: he will not treat them, sometimes as heretics, who must be untaught errors of which they never heard, and sometimes as far advanced in spirituality, to which, perhaps, they have not made the first approaches. He will not dwell at length upon what is called Christian liberty, to a congregation which is seeking a cloak for sin; nor abound in strong and unguarded statements upon those points which are liable to be wrested to the destruction of the hearer, till he is assured his flock are able "to bear them."*

* Some useful advice occurs in a Charge of Paley's (Sermons and Tracts, p. 103) as a comment on Archbishop Secker's recommendation to make sermons *local*: which he interprets to mean the adapting them to the "particular state of thought and opinion which we perceive to prevail in the congregation;" and exemplifies it from our Saviour's own habit of instruction; who did not entertain the Pharisees or Sadducees with invectives against the opposite party, but preached against hypocrisy to the one, and expounded the doctrine of the resurrection to the other. So to the Jews he inculcated a more comprehensive benevolence,

He who composes the groundwork of his own sermons cannot possibly fall into errors of this nature. What he sees in the Bible to-day, he will see in it to-morrow: and what he has found in it himself, he will set forth and explain to his congregation with an earnestness which none but an actor can assume, when delivering the thoughts of others. It is not, indeed, necessary that every sentence should be original. A person who is in the habit of studying the Scriptures, and devotional books, and religious subjects, with a view to its utility in the pulpit, will be at no loss for illustrations and comments, which will both enrich his style and abridge his labour. These the judicious writer, like the judicious reader, will make his own by his mode of applying them; and will feel that interest in the whole which only an author can know, and will receive that best gratification in the discharge of his duty which

to the Samaritans the orthodoxy of the Jewish creed. The whole Charge is worthy of its author, and calculated to supply very useful hints to the conscientious preacher.

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arises from a conviction of success. For success will, without doubt, reward his labours, as long as he takes simplicity of heart for his guide, and the rule of the Gospel for his standard; as long as he intimately feels what he earnestly inculcates, and acts himself, and leads his congregation to hear, under a practical sense of the necessity of the divine blessing. The power of the Gospel is never more strongly displayed, than in the success which attends the faithful declaration of its doctrines, and the plain enforcement of its precepts, even by the most limited powers and ordinary attainments; whereas great ability, and extensive stores of information, being applied to other subjects, and exhausted on other studies, are of no sort of avail as to spiritual instruction. *

* “Cùm alii faciant obtusè, deformitèr, frigidè, alii acutè, ornatè, vehementèr; illum ad hoc opus jam oportet accedere, qui potest disputare vel dicere *sapientèr*; etiamsi non eloquentèr; sapientèr autem dicit homo tanto magis vel minùs, quanto à Scripturis sanctis magis minùsve profuit.” Augustin de Doctr. Christ. l. iv. c. 5.

Under a strong impression of the importance of this branch of the Christian ministry, and of the heavy responsibility attaching to the minister on whose faithfulness so much depends, the following Treatise has been written.

A principal cause of the want of effect of some sermons, and the wrong effect of others, is a deficiency of clearness in the author's own views, or an erroneous apprehension of the doctrines which it is most important to inculcate, and of the tone and view according to which they may be inculcated most usefully. My object, therefore, is, to lead preachers to study the Apostolical Epistles as models left for their imitation in these points. Not, as has been recommended in other cases, to stimulate their own powers, by considering in what manner the Apostles might have treated this or that subject, if called upon to discuss it, but simply to inquire, how they have actually written.

II. In the proposal of an apostolical pattern to a modern preacher, one thing is certainly implied, viz. that a modern and an apostolical congregation stand, on the whole, in the same situation. It may be requisite, in the first instance, to inquire how far this resemblance holds true. For if there is any radical difference between the case of the churches to whom the Epistles were addressed, and that of the congregation committed to a minister of the present day, it is evident that St. Paul's language, in many essential points, can be no rule for ours. As this objection would, in a great measure, leave a modern preacher without any apostolical example, it deserves a specific consideration.

In the first place, it is undeniable, that there does exist a difference between the nature of a church where Christianity is the religion of a sect, and where it is the religion of the nation. The former case was that of the first converts, who embraced the faith under

great temporal disadvantages, and in spite of powerful opposition from established prejudices and worldly motives. Wherever the Jews had sway and power, they embraced it with the certainty of persecution before their eyes. In all instances, the influence of deep-rooted opinions, and of habits totally opposite to the precepts of the Gospel, were to be overcome; in short, every thing on this side the grave conspired to render the "acknowledging the "truth" dangerous and difficult; so much so, that, under every human view of their situation, "if in this life only they had hope, they "were of all men most miserable." Those, therefore, who, in spite of "principalities and "powers," of family connexions, and national prejudices, and personal interests, in fact, of all "things present," still "heard the word "gladly," and were "added to the church," openly professing their faith by baptism; must, in the nature of things, have been generally sincere, and have received the faith with an "honest and good heart:" such a profession would be accompanied, and such a disposition

rewarded, with an extraordinary degree of grace, and render the probability of their "drawing back," or "falling away," much less presumable, than a profession in the reign of Constantine. If their heart had not been converted, they would not have come to baptism. The very same feeling of self-interest which brought Simon Magus to the Apostles unconverted, would have kept others away.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the different consequences which, according to any view of the nature of the human heart, must be expected to result from the different practice of these early times and our own. The inhabitant of a country where Christianity is the religion of the nation, becomes a nominal professor of the Gospel, as he becomes amenable to the laws of the land, before he well knows to what religion or country he belongs; common courtesy styles him Christian, without inquiring what "manner of spirit he is of;" the benevolence of the Redeemer, who prayed for his murderers, and died for his enemies, is

extended also to those who by disobedience to the Christian law, or contempt of its doctrines, "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Even of those who come more within the preacher's view, as attending the public worship, and obeying the forms of religion; many, no doubt, are brought thither by custom, or hypocrisy, or curiosity, who would never have been found in the chamber, where the primitive converts "assembled secretly for fear of the Jews."

It must be considered therefore as a fact which admits of no dispute, that in a modern congregation there is much more chance of insincere profession of the faith, and of eventual departure from it. This, however, is an accidental, not an essential difference; the resemblance, on the other hand, is essential, that all alike profess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The measure of grace actually enjoyed, and, consequently, the character of the persons, may vary in every imaginable degree; but the fundamental resemblance re-

mains, that all have been called to justification through Jesus Christ, and made partakers of the covenant of grace.

Ever since the promulgation of the Gospel, all nations, professing Christianity, have stood in the same relation towards God, as was before held by the Jewish nation alone. Whether the profession is confined to a few churches, bearing the fruit of the Gospel in the midst of a desert of idolatry, as in the first century; or is extended, as now, to all the inhabitants of a nation; whether the professors are a few individuals, or a whole people, or, in the fulness of time, should comprehend the whole world; they form alike the visible church of God: they possess the general, or national, advantages which the Jews enjoyed, while the visible church consisted of them alone. This the Apostle affirms was a benefit, "great every way," to which all had that common calling, which is enjoyed by Christians now; all belonged to the Lord as his people, even at the time when only seven

thousand remained who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Still "the vineyard of the Lord" of Hosts was the house of Israel: for the promises had been made to them and to their children. This vineyard now consists of all nations of professing Christians: and though among them, as among the Jews of old, the trees are lamentably numerous on which the Lord of the vineyard, when he cometh seeking fruit, will find none; still all who are planted in that sacred spot, are under the care and protection of "the dresser of the vineyard," who interposes his mercy to withhold their final sentence, till they prove irredeemably barren.*

Indeed St. Paul himself had full opportunity of seeing, that under the Christian, as well as the Jewish revelation, "all would not be Israel that were of Israel." He was sufficiently aware that it is the invisible, not the visible church, which Christ will "present unto himself a glorious church, not having

* See Luke, ch. xiii.

“ spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.” * After pointing out to Timothy the error of unprofitable teachers, who had “ overthrown the faith of some,” he adds, “ But in a great house” (as the church was now become), “ there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth ; and some to honour and some to dishonour.” Even earlier, at the date of his Epistle to the Philippians, he had witnessed grievous declensions. “ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping ; that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction ; whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame ; who mind earthly things.”

Such was the effect of human corruption even in the infancy of the church. The Apostles who survived St. Paul, saw the stream

* Compare the parable of the “ net cast into the sea which gathered of every kind,” Matth. xiii. 47 ; and of the marriage feast, Matth. xxii.

becoming gradually more and more impure, as it proceeded farther from the fountain-head, and was diffused over a wider extent of ground. St. Jude, who wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, directs his attention entirely to the deviation from primitive truth and primitive practice, which he had lived to witness. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." So St. Peter, II. xi. 1. The date of St. John's Epistle is doubtful; but is placed by some commentators as late as the very close of the first century, or apostolical age. The false doctrines of the Nicolaitans had, at this time grievously infested the church, by poisoning the source of Christian holiness, and corrupting the true notion of justification. That Apostle, therefore, had seen too much false profession and allowed wickedness, not to be sensible that there would always be many in the visible church, to whom the grace of the

Gospel would be offered in vain; and even proceeds so far, as to give instructions under the supposition of a case of such final apostacy. “ If any man see his brother sin a sin, which “ is not unto death, he shall ask, and he (God) “ shall give him life for them that *sin not unto* “ *death. There is a sin unto death: I do not* “ say that he shall pray for it. All unrighte- “ ousness is sin; and there is a sin not unto “ death.” I. v. 16. The evident tendency of these words is, that St. John foresaw that in all ages many of the nominal servants of Christ would forfeit the privileges to which their high profession called them: and the distinction he makes between sins of infirmity and final impenitence, is an unanswerable proof, that both may be expected to exist among brethren who had been received into the church by baptism.

It is clear, therefore, that the circumstance of there being many among a congregation who have not ratified their baptismal vow, or given the requisite diligence to “ make their calling and election sure,” does not place that congre-

gation in a situation never contemplated by the Apostle, so as to render his language unappropriate to the present condition of Christianity as the national religion. For, even if it should be argued on the other side, that the brethren who were "walking disorderly," or had "turned aside after Satan," at the date of the Epistle, were either sure of final recovery, as Peter, or had really never been elected by God, as Simon Magus: this would make no practical difference. The worst of those whom a minister addresses, may become subjects of grace, and finally recover; the best may swerve from the faith. "After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given; and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives."*

These are the grounds on which I consider a modern congregation and an apostolical church sufficiently similar in circumstances, to render not only the doctrines, which must be the same to the end of the world, but the tone,

* Art. XVI.

language, and arguments, by which the Apostles enforce them, suited to the instruction and imitation of every minister in every age: and that the preacher has a warrant, nay, is even bound by an obligation, to address his flock as persons who have been called to an inestimable benefit, which it lies with themselves to make their own; as persons who have taken upon themselves a covenant, and received a promise of the grace necessary to enable them to perform its conditions.

Cases indeed may occur, in which it may rather be a minister's business to convert, than to enlighten and improve: where he is called upon to take the part of a missionary, to declare a revelation, instead of that of a guide, to lead in the right way of truth those who are already in the road. To those, for instance, who, with the name of Christians, have hitherto passed their lives without any religion whatever, the doctrine of conversion must be preached plainly and directly. "They are no more Christians, as to any actual benefit of Christianity to their

souls, than the most hardened Jew or the most profligate Gentile was in the age of the Gospel.* The preacher must himself judge of the proportion which these may bear to the rest of the congregation; and of the necessity of either dwelling most frequently on entire repentance and conversion, or on "improvement, proficiency, and continued endeavours after holiness."† The Scriptures furnish examples suited to every condition. The main fact, however, with which I am at present concerned, must in all cases remain the same, that a modern congregation and an ancient church are alike among "those whom the Lord our God hath called." For this reason, what was said to the early converts in their separate congregations at Rome, or Corinth, or Thessalonica, or Ephesus, is, in fact, said to all Christians: and whatever changes may have taken place in external and temporal circumstances, the spiritual condition in which Christians are placed is still essentially the same. Even the

* Paley's Sermons. Sermon VII.

† Paley's Sermons. Sermon VII.

obvious fact, that some Epistles were written for specific purposes and to refute particular errors; only renders them the more fit for the general imitation of preachers, as well as for the edification of Christian assemblies. Every minister will, no doubt, find certain points on which his own congregation may require peculiar correction; every age of Christianity has its "besetting sins," which must be recurred to as frequently as the Judaizing propensity is assailed by St. Paul, or the Antinomian heresy by St. James. But whatever doctrinal subject a preacher may find occasion to insist upon, St. Paul furnishes him with a pattern of the method in which it may be inculcated most effectually, and most suitably to the general character of the religion which he teaches: so that each Epistle may be considered in the light of a set of discourses, containing the groundwork of all ministerial instruction.*

* Πόθεν οὐ παρ' ἡμῖν μόνον, ἀλλὰ και πάρα Ιουδαιοις, και Ἑλλησι, μάλιστα πάντων θαυμαζεται ὁ μακάριος οὗτος; (ὁ Παῦλος) Ὅκ ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὑρετῆς; Δί ἧς οὐ τούς τότε μόνον πιστούς, ἀλλὰ και τούς ἐξ ἐκείνου μέχρι τῆς σήμερον γινομένους, και τούς μέλλοντας δὲ ἔσεσθαι μέχρι τῆς ἐσχάτης

In this point of view I shall proceed to examine the mode in which St. Paul enforces and discusses the principal articles of the Gospel dispensation.

If the Christian minister boasts of deriving his commission to preach the Gospel by an uninterrupted succession from the hands of the Apostles; consistency requires that he should apply to the same Apostles for the doctrine which he is to deliver. The Apostles were, in fact, themselves preachers: and the writings which they have left to us, are examples of the manner in which they executed their commission. It is true, the germ of all the doctrines which they teach is to be found in the history of our Saviour as recorded by the four Evangelists. The atonement is explicitly declared in the address by which Christ's first appearance was hailed by his prophetic messenger, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσίας, ὠφέλησέ τε καὶ ὠφελήσει καὶ οὐ παύσεται τοῦτο ποιῶν, ἕως ἄν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαμένη γένος.
Chrysost. de Sacerdotio, lib. iv.

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the sins of the world." The universal offer of that redemption is contained in the assurance that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The corruption of the nature we derive from Adam is sufficiently expressed in that pregnant passage which instances the deadly and *defiling* sins, and traces their origin to the *heart*.* The dependence of all holy practice upon divine grace is, if possible, declared still more unequivocally in a multitude of passages, which are not exceeded in clearness and force by any thing in the Epistles.

Those, therefore, who endeavour, as they think, to take refuge from the mystery of St. Paul in the simplicity of the Gospels, will find that the truth pursues them still. The outline of the whole is there, in all its perfect lineaments and complete proportions: but the entire plan of our redemption, from the "first disobedience" which rendered it necessary, to the last accomplishment of all the promises, and

* Matth. xv. 19.

types, and predictions, in the crucifixion, is evidently brought out in stronger light and fuller force by the Apostles. This does not diminish one jot of the value of the Gospels, but results inevitably from the circumstances. The doctrine of redemption by vicarious sacrifice, could not but be more clearly explained, and therefore more easily understood, after the sacrifice had actually taken place, than while it was matter of prophecy.

Thus the writings of the Evangelists and of the Apostles, though indispensably necessary to each other, are different in their nature and design. The one contain the facts, the other the consequences. The Gospels "record the life of the Son of God; who came from heaven, not to *make* the Gospel revelation, but to *be the subject of it*, by doing and suffering all that was necessary to procure the salvation of mankind. Their professed design is to give, not a complete delineation of our religion, but the history of its Founder, and of that illustrious display which he made of his glory as the Son of God,

and Saviour of the world. To the Epistles we must look as the grand repository in which the whole of the Gospel doctrine is lodged, and from which the knowledge of it can be drawn with the greatest advantage." * And although there is no doubt that the other canonical Epistles, being inspired by the same Spirit which guided St. Paul, are of equal authority with his; yet I have confined my inquiry to those which he has left us; first, because my concern is chiefly with the *doctrines* of the Gospel, and it is generally acknowledged that St. Paul has gone more deeply into the whole Gospel economy than his brethren: and secondly, in order to give the argument a compactness and conciseness which it would have been difficult to preserve, if all the Epistles had been brought under consideration. The writings of St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, I shall therefore introduce, from time to time, only in the way of corroboration.

* Macknight's Prelim. Essay I.

CHAPTER II.

ON PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION.

PART I. *On Predestination.*

IN making predestination the first subject of my inquiry, I am not influenced by the authority of the powerful reasoner who built up from this foundation the system of theology known by his name. The example of our own Church has a higher claim to imitation; who, in her Articles, considers this doctrine separately, as a speculation distinct from the essential points of the Christian faith. In this, too, she has only followed the superior authority of St. Paul; who in the most systematic and doctrinal of all his Epistles, does not enter upon predestination as a fundamental article, nor introduce it till he has discussed the subjects of natural corruption, grace, and justification. From this example the conduct of Calvin and the divines at Dort makes a remarkable varia-

tion. But in the present case, it seems proper to set out from this point, because, if predestination is preached by St. Paul, and ought to be preached by those who profess to follow him, this will at once decide most of the other disputable questions. If the Almighty had no other purpose in creating mankind than the display of his own glory ; if the eternal condition of every individual was decreed immutably before the foundation of the world ; or even if the sacrifice of Christ extended to the elect alone, and the rest of mankind remain under the imputation of Adam's sin ; there need be no farther dispute concerning the degree of human corruption, or the power and efficacy of grace ; and the only interest which the Scriptures retain, will be to furnish matter of inquiry into the mode which God has employed in accomplishing the purpose of his sovereign will.

It is necessary to premise, that I shall not attempt to fathom the depths of a subject, which seems likely always to exercise, and

always to elude, the efforts of human reason. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge, that “known unto God are all his works from the “beginning,” that he not only foresaw the future actions of mankind through all the series of ages, but foresaw them so infallibly, as to render them the instruments of his plans in the government of the world. The sacred writers make very familiar use of this prescience, in order, as it would seem, to keep up an habitual conviction that nothing is done, or can be done, without the divine permission: and they sometimes express this sentiment in terms which, taken singly, convey the idea of *appointment*. The Old Testament abounds with phrases to this effect; and many such are found in the New: as where it is declared, that it *was not “given”* to all the Jews to understand the words of eternal life: that “the *Lord added* daily to the church such as should “be saved:” that “as many were *ordained* to “eternal life, believed:” that “certain men “had crept into the church unawares, who “were before of old *ordained* unto this con-

“demnation.” Since the existence and activity of evil spirits is revealed in the Scriptures, it became the more necessary to give frequent assurance that God not only inspires the virtue but restrains the wickedness of mankind, and renders their evil passions subservient to his eternal counsels.*

With these facts before our eyes, there must always be a tendency in some minds, to associate the notion of absolute decrees with such infallible foreknowledge: and every candid reasoner will confess a difficulty which is not likely to be cleared up on this side the grave, in reconciling the divine prescience with the free agency of man. But what is impossible with men, is possible with God. And those who deny this possibility, by limiting the power of the Creator to the bounds of their own un-

* In some cases this object is kept out of sight; in others, it is evident: as Acts ii. 22, “Jesus of Nazareth, *being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified “and slain.” Also 1 Peter ii. 8: “whereunto also *they were appointed.*”

derstanding, are the real adversaries of his glory.

With this impression of the nature and difficulty of the subject, I turn towards the consideration of St. Paul's doctrine upon it. And although the passages which must be brought under discussion, will necessarily lead to a declaration of my own idea of the right interpretation of them, still I would wish it to be remembered, that I do not desire to argue against predestination as believed in the closet, but as taught from the pulpit: in short, that the only inquiry I have in view, is, whether a Christian minister is countenanced by St. Paul in inculcating the doctrine of irrespective decrees.

That doctrine has been always thought to derive its main support from the Epistle to the Romans. The Apostle there declares, that those whom God "*foreknew he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also*

“called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” viii. 29, 30.

Those who deem it reasonable to deduce a doctrine which involves in its consequences the dealings of the Almighty towards the whole human race from a single passage, find it an easy process to acquiesce in the tremendous *simplicity* of the Calvinistic scheme on the support of these expressions. It is not surprising, however, that others should think it more respectful, more conformable to the magnitude of the subject, to pause and inquire, whether some part of that idea which the Apostle's words excite, has not adhered to them in the course of their passage through schools of theology; and whether his appeal to *predestination* and the *divine foreknowledge* in this passage cannot be fairly accounted for by a consideration of the circumstances, character, and actual situation of the persons to whom the Epistle was addressed.

Of these persons, an unusually large proportion consisted of *Jewish* converts. The Jews were very numerous at Rome : and from the circumstance of the majority of the earliest converts belonging to that nation by birth, it probably arose that the Christians were chiefly known and spoken of there as a denomination of Jews ; and that the rival sects became companions in the same misfortune, and were involved in the same persecution under Nero.*

Now, it is notorious, that nothing in the new dispensation was a greater stumbling-block to the Jews, than its grand and leading feature, the termination of their own exclusive privilege by the adoption of the Gentiles. A people who for ages had alone enjoyed a knowledge of the Creator ; who, in order to preserve the revelation which gave them that knowledge, had been separated from all the rest of the world by the peculiarity of their civil and religious institutions ; had naturally imbibed with the very nourishment of their infancy an association of prejudice against the

* See Suetonius in Claud. 25.

children of idolatry, which the first generation of converts could never wholly unlearn.

This accounts for the extraordinary importance which is attached to the *universality* of the Gospel dispensation throughout the historical books of the New Testament. This accounts for the Baptist's prophetic threat: "Think not to say within yourselves, *We have Abraham to our father*; for I say unto you, "that God is able *of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*"* To this the hymn of Zacharias alludes: "The dayspring from "on high has visited us, *to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.*"† and that of Simeon still more emphatically: "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which "thou hast prepared before the face of all "people; *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles,* "and the glory of thy people Israel."‡ This again affords the moral of three striking parables of our Saviour: in which he assures his unbelieving hearers, that "the lord of the

* Matt. iii. 9. † Luke i. 78. ‡ Luke ii. 32.

“ vineyard will come and destroy the wicked husbandmen, *and will give the vineyard unto others:*” that the labourers who had been latest hired should have an equal recompense with the first; and that, since “ they which were *bidden to the wedding were not worthy,*” guests should be supplied from “ *the highways and hedges.*” Lastly, notwithstanding these and numberless other intimations, it required the solemnity of a very remarkable vision to draw from Peter the acknowledgment which reason and natural religion spontaneously avow: “ Of a truth I perceive *that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*”*

It is a natural consequence from these considerations, that, “ in an Epistle to the Roman believers, the point to be endeavoured after by St. Paul, was to reconcile the Jewish converts to the opinion that the Gentiles were admitted by God to a parity of religious situation with

* Acts x. 34.

themselves.”* In order to effect this, it was necessary for him to enter upon the grounds of *national election*: that is, of its being allowed by the constitution of the world, that certain nations should have great advantages over others, both in their natural and moral circumstances; some of which had been hitherto very exclusively dispensed in favour of the Jews. Accordingly he refers this privilege entirely to the will of God, independent of any claim or merit on the part of the nations themselves.

Secondly, this church was destined to undergo, and indeed was undergoing at the date of St. Paul's Epistle, severe persecution. Now it is certain that both the Jewish and the Gentile convert would be inclined, from their habitual opinions, to consider this as a strong proof that they did not really enjoy the protection of God, and were not elected to his favour. The Jews had been accustomed throughout their whole history to expect the

* Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*.

divine interference in behalf of his chosen people; and though this visible interposition had been long withheld, the idea it left still subsisted, as appears from many passages of the New Testament, and as a case in point, from the reproach cast upon our Saviour himself: "He trusted in God: let him deliver him, if he will have him." Among the heathens, too, success was very familiarly considered indicative of the protection of superior powers: and this belief was cherished by the various legendary stories of supernatural aid and miraculous appearances which were incorporated with the Roman annals, and in all probability received implicit credit among the vulgar.

The Gentiles, no doubt, would very readily believe that they were admitted to privileges hitherto bestowed upon the Jew alone. But the Jews, we know, could with great difficulty be persuaded, even after conversion, to resign their title to the hereditary favour of God: and the attempts they made in many of the

churches to bring over the Gentiles to the obligations of the Mosaic law, were likely to be urged more vigorously and more successfully at Rome, in proportion to the weight their numbers gave them. Then would come in the auxiliary inference, drawn from impending danger and persecution: a season which was calculated to add unusual plausibility to the arguments of the Jews, in the minds of their Gentile brethren, by furnishing a sort of practical evidence that the divine protection was not extended towards them. An argument which was, in fact, repeatedly employed throughout the subsequent persecutions of the Christians; who were taunted with senseless stupidity for suffering so much as the servants of a God, who evidently, it was thought, showed that he beheld them with no favourable regard, since he refused to exert his power in their behalf.*

With these circumstances in his view, the

* See the account of the martyrs at Lyons, Eus. Hist. l. v. c. 1.

Apostle, after a full explanation of the main points of the Christian doctrine, provides against the effect which persecution was likely to have on the minds of the Gentile converts, by appealing to the divine determination, or predestination, in their favour. He first consoles them by the assurance, that although the gloomy prospect around them might justly appear discouraging, yet persecution had been the fate of Christ, and must be expected as the fate of those who professed to follow him; that it was looked for as a proof of their faithfulness, and must not be deemed any argument of the absence of divine regard; since it had been part of God's eternal purpose and counsel to make them partakers of his gracious dispensation, and call them to the covenant of the Gospel.

“ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our
“ spirit, that we are the children of God; and
“ if children, then heirs of God, and joint
“ heirs with Christ: *if so be that we suffer with*
“ *him*, that we may also be glorified together.

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“ For I reckon that the sufferings of this pre-
 “ sent time are not worthy to be compared
 “ with the glory which shall be revealed
 “ in us.” viii. 16. Then, after a digres-
 sion containing farther encouragement to
 patience, he proceeds, “ We know that all
 “ things work together for good to them that
 “ love God, to them who are the* called ac-
 “ cording to his purpose. For whom he did
 “ foreknow, he also did predestinate to be
 “ conformed to the image of his Son, that he
 “ might be the first-born among many bre-
 “ thren. Moreover, whom he did predesti-
 “ nate, them he also called ; and whom he
 “ called, them he also justified ; and whom he
 “ justified, them he also glorified. What shall
 “ we then say to these things ? If God be
 “ for us, who can be against us ?” 28 & seqq.
 In conclusion, “ who shall separate us from
 “ the love of Christ ? *Shall tribulation, or dis-*
 “ *tress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,*

* The idiom of the original does not justify the insertion
 of the article “ the,” which makes considerable difference
 in the import of the English sentence.

“ *or peril, or the sword?* I am persuaded that
“ neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor
“ powers, nor things present, nor things to
“ come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other
“ creature, shall be able to separate us from
“ the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus
“ our Lord.” 35, 38, 39.

Now, if the 28th, 29th, and 30th of these verses are read separately, they may, no doubt, prove that only those are called, whom God had predestinated finally to justify and glorify; but taken with the context as the Apostle wrote them, they belong to the general argument, and declare what it was his object to convince the disciples of, as an encouragement in the endurance of persecution; viz. that God had predetermined to call the Roman converts to the faith of Christ, and unite them to that visible church, which had hitherto been composed of the Jews alone.

This declaration was to console the Gentile disciple: the next object was to satisfy the

Jew that he is no longer to arrogate to himself the peculiar favour of God. Here it is impossible not to remark the patriotic feelings of the man, intermixing themselves with the truth, which, as an Apostle, he was bound to deliver ; and “ the natural tears ” which he drops over the rejection of his countrymen, are sufficient evidence, if there were no other, of the ideas which were uppermost in his mind. For, if St. Paul had the case of individuals in view, to what purpose the passionate assurance of his own sympathy with the rejected Jews, with which he prefaces the fact of the calling of the Gentiles? “ I say the truth in Christ, I lie
“ not, my conscience also beareth me witness
“ in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heavi-
“ ness and continual sorrow in my heart. For
“ I could wish that myself were accursed
“ from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen
“ according to the flesh.” ix. 1, 2 to 5.

Having thus tenderly soothed his countrymen, he proceeds to the purpose of his argument, in justifying their future rejection as the

peculiar people of God. It is true, he says, The Gentiles are now called to the adoption which you enjoyed : but the rejection of Ishmael and of Esau, though descended from Abraham, proves that neither your fathers originally, nor yourselves now, have any claim upon the favour of God, except his voluntary promise founded upon his good pleasure alone.

“ For the Children being not yet born, neither
“ having done any good or evil, that the *purpose*
“ *of God according to election* might stand, not
“ of works, but of him that calleth; it was
“ said unto Rebecca, The elder shall serve the
“ younger. As it is written, Jacob have I
“ loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall
“ we say then? is there unrighteousness with
“ God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses,
“ I will have mercy on whom I will have
“ mercy, and I will have compassion on whom
“ I will have compassion. So then it is not
“ of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth
“ (Isaac, nor Esau,) but of God that showeth
“ mercy.” Ver. 6 to 10.

Then, with a quickness of transition peculiar to this Apostle, he brings a familiar instance to convince the Jews that there are cases with respect to nations where God, as governor of the world, only consults his supreme will. As he showed this to the Jews themselves, in bestowing his favour upon them in preference to any other people, so did he take counsel of his own sovereign pleasure alone in delaying for a time to punish the wickedness of Egypt, that his justice might appear at last more exemplary. “ For (i. e. besides,) the Scripture “ saith unto Pharoah, Even for this purpose “ have I raised thee up, * that I might show “ my power in thee, and that my name might “ be declared throughout all the earth. There- “ fore *hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, “ and whom he will, he hardeneth.*” Ver. 18.

* The Greek reader will not need to be reminded, that that there is nothing in the original word *ἐξήγειρα*, which can convey the idea of Pharoah's having been *brought into the world* for the purpose of showing God's power; nothing to controvert the idea of his being addressed as a king, in whose fate that of his people was involved.

In the same way the Jews must likewise contribute to the good pleasure of God, his long endurance of them, ripe as they had been for destruction from their obduracy and rebellion. “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he *yet* find fault; for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the *vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles?* As he saith also in Hosea, I will call them *my people which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.*” In the opening of the argument St. Paul had declared the

reason why God had raised up Pharraoh, and had renewed his offers of grace to an unusual extent of patience and mercy, to be no other than this, “ that he might show his power in
“ him, and that his name might be declared
“ throughout all the earth :” so now, in reply to the objection of the Jew, it is declared that his nation had been thus long endured, notwithstanding the rebellious spirit which had
“ fitted them for destruction,” that God might make the Jews his instruments in introducing the Gospel dispensation ; in showing “ the
“ riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy,
“ which he had afore prepared unto glory, not
“ of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles.”

If it is a right interpretation of this passage, taken as it ought in all fairness to be taken, entire, and as a continual argument, to consider it as an explanation of God’s conduct towards the Jews, then it is impossible to justify the general doctrine of decrees by St. Paul’s language on this occasion. The case is altogether peculiar, the reasoning applicable

to the situation of nations only, being primarily intended to vindicate the dealings of God with the Jews, in his original election, in his long endurance, and in his final rejection of them as the objects of his protection and sole depositaries of his revelation. In the whole history of the human race, there has been no case analogous to that of the Jews. But constituted as the world is, there must in the nature of things, exist great disparity between the situation of nations at large, both in their temporal and moral advantages: nay, it may be added, great disparity between the individuals of the same nation. This can only be referred to the will of the Supreme Governor of the world; he determined, who alone could determine, which of the sons of Noah should remain in Asia, which should proceed to Egypt, and which should people Europe; and no doubt foresaw the different degrees of advantage which would be possessed by their various descendants in all ages. He appoints what countries shall have the benefit of his revelation, and in what order. And in this dispensation there is no-

thing inconsistent with his justice ; since he has declared that he will judge all men according to their opportunities, and will require much of them to whom much is given. In every situation, mankind have more or less power of improvement ; there is no climate so unkindly, in which the human character cannot expand and exhibit itself, though with very different degrees of vigour and of fruitfulness : and in the consideration of that difference we are consoled by reflecting, that the “ Lord of the “ harvest” determined also the soil, and dispensed the season : that the moral Governor, and the supreme Disposer of events, are the same.

But the hypothesis of absolute decrees, as ordaining the destiny, present and final, of individuals, cannot rest upon this analogy of *national* predestination. If mankind are appointed to sin and punishment, to holiness and salvation irrespectively, then they will be judged in exact opposition to our Saviour’s declaration, and much will be required of him to whom little is given. This consideration

makes it of no small importance whether we interpret St. Paul's argument to relate to national or individual election: and if I mistake not, the Apostle himself has taken especial care, that his meaning on this important subject should not be misunderstood.

First, it is a notorious fact, though often overlooked in argument, that the very passage, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," which is almost the only support claimed from St. Paul to the system of absolute decrees, is quoted from Exodus, and forms the assurance revealed by God himself to Moses, that he had *separated the Hebrew nation* "from all the people on the face of the earth.—" Moses said unto the Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here, that *I and thy people* have found grace in thy sight? is it not, in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are

“ upon the face of the earth. And the Lord
“ said unto Moses, I will do this thing also
“ that thou hast spoken ; for thou hast found
“ grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.
“ And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy
“ glory. And he said, I will make all my
“ goodness pass before thee, and I will pro-
“ claim the name of the Lord before thee,
“ *and will be gracious to whom I will be gra-
“ cious, and I will show mercy to whom I will
“ show mercy.*” Exod. xxxiii. 14 & seqq. To
the declaration contained in this passage from
Exodus, the Apostle naturally refers the Jews,
to whom he is arguing ; and to whom he is
expressly denying all other title to the favour
of God, than what was originally derived from
the exercise of his sovereign will in separating
them from other nations as his peculiar people.
The benefits they had exclusively enjoyed,
were to be ascribed, on the authority of Moses,
to the “ mercy and compassion” of God only ;
how could it be disputed but the same Su-
preme will which had elected them, might
now elect others even to their rejection ? And

if Pharaoh, after having long obstinately opposed himself to the offers made and the mercy showed towards him, who had been for ages a rebellious and stiff-necked people, expect to have such bountiful grace bestowed upon them, as should incline and enable them, as a nation, to receive the Gospel? Nay, rather, why should not God, in the same way as he had “shown his “power and declared his name throughout all “the earth” by the punishment of Pharaoh, now make the same use of the Jews, and render the destruction of their nation at once a striking evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and the punishment of their guilt in adding the rejection of this last offer, to the blindness they had shown towards the former instances of his mercy? Ver. 22—24.

Thus far, then, all tends to the same purpose of vindicating the exercise of God’s absolute sovereignty in selecting a nation to the favour of such peculiar advantages as had hitherto been confined to the Jews. Next, to illustrate this power farther, and the discre-

tionary employment of it, whether as to bestowing privileges, or withdrawing them, St. Paul borrows from the prophet Jeremiah the similitude of the potter's "power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour."—
O house of Israel, cannot I do with thee as the potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, *O house of Israel*. At what instant I shall speak concerning *a nation*, and concerning *a kingdom*, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that *nation*, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning *a nation*, and concerning *a kingdom*, to build and plant it: if it do evil in my sight that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, where with I said I would benefit them." Jerm. xviii. 6. The introduction of this illustration from the Prophet, leads St. Paul to continue the simile, in speaking of the people who

receive and those who reject the Gospel, as “*vessels of wrath and mercy.*” For, as a potter, when he finds that a vessel which he has made, does not answer the purpose he intended it for, casts it from him and breaks it; God in like manner was about to cast the Jewish nation away, and destroy it in his displeasure.*

Now, what I argue for, is this: that if St. Paul had borne the predestination of *individuals* in view, throughout the argument under consideration, he would not have proved it by recurring to passages familiarly known to the Jews he was addressing, and indisputably and solely applying to the conduct of God with respect to *nations*. If, however, on the other hand, he had really in view the rejection of the Jews from that exclusive favour on which they laid so much stress, it was not only strictly natural, but the most convincing argument he could employ, to select such passages as that from Exodus, declaring the original source of their privileges to be founded in the

* Macknight.

mercy of God alone ; and that from Jeremiah, exemplifying the punishment he inflicts upon nations which do not perform his will. The Jewish nation was, at the moment, in the exact case supposed by the Prophet in his simile. They had done evil in the sight of God, and had not obeyed his voice: “ they had rejected his Gospel, and crucified the Lord of glory :” therefore they were become “ vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction :”— “ the vessel was to be marred in the hand of the potter, and he would make again another vessel as seemed good to him.” Jerem. xviii. 4. To quote the passage at length was unnecessary to the persons with whom the Apostle was arguing, and unsuited to his usual conciseness: in consequence of which the original object of the illustration has been often kept out of sight, and the words of the Apostle have been adapted to a purpose foreign to his train of argument. For, since the simile of the clay in the potter’s hands is no less applicable to *individuals* than to *nations*, as far as concerns the impotency of either to resist the divine will;

the illustration has been eagerly seized as affording apostolic authority to the doctrine of *individual* predestination, which it evidently cannot furnish, unless the Prophet and Apostle were arguing upon the case of individuals.

After these considerations, is it not matter for serious and conscientious reflection, whether a minister can be justified in using the terms and language of this much-disputed passage, as explanatory of God's dealings towards the whole race of mankind; or in asserting, upon this ground, that "He has mercy upon whom he will have mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth;" without any respect to such fitness of things, and views of justice, as are open to our comprehension? The ground of proof is literally this: that St. Paul cites from Exodus an assurance that God had arbitrarily chosen the posterity of Jacob in preference to that of Esau, and the Hebrew people in preference to every other nation, as the depositaries of his "oracles:" and, se-

condly, a declaration that God had determined to make Pharaoh a striking example of his power and justice. So that the premises and conclusion stand together in this connexion: after a long course of trial on one side, and obduracy on the other, God in his sovereign will withdrew his grace from Pharaoh: *therefore*, the distribution of his grace is arbitrary and unconditional. Again, God preferred Jacob to Esau, without any respect to the merits of either, as the father of that people to whom he proposed to reveal his law: *therefore*, if we cannot assign a reason why Jacob should be thus preferred or Esau rejected, except God's pleasure; neither shall we find any other reason than his will, why one part of mankind is predestinated to eternal life, and the other to reprobation.*

* “ *Ergo si non possumus rationem assignare cur suos misericordiâ dignetur, nisi quoniam ita illi placet; neque etiam in aliis reprobandis aliud habebimus quam ejus voluntatem.*” Calv. Instit. lib. iii. This instance, and this alone, is uniformly adduced as supporting the whole system. See the Articles of the Synod of Dort, Art. x.

It is fair to require that the case of the rejection of Esau, and the preference given to Jacob, should be shown to resemble the cases supposed to be proved from such preference and rejection, before so extensive an analogy is drawn from this single instance. Let it be granted, that the choice was arbitrary; St. Paul declares it to have been so, and gives a satisfactory reason why it should be, lest the posterity of Jacob should claim a right to boast that their election was due to the merits of their patriarchs, and not a "free gift" from God. But what was the real object of that choice? To elect a father of that people; whom God had determined to make for a while the sole possessors of the knowledge and worship of the Creator. What, on the other hand, is the fact supposed to be proved by that choice? That God, by an eternal and immutable decree, has, once for all, determined what individuals he would choose for eternal salvation, and whom he should devote to destruction.*

* "Summa est, Deum gratuitâ adoptione creare quos

Those must see a more close connexion between the two cases, than I am able to discover, who think themselves authorized to preach, as Calvin especially enjoins us, from this induction, that God pardons whom he will, and exercises the severity of his judgment upon whom he will, without any consideration than that of his own good pleasure: * and even to insist upon the clause, “whom he will,” as if it were impious to proceed any farther on the subject of God’s dealings and judgments; and subject to the reproof of St. Paul, “Nay, but, O man! who art thou, that repliest “against God?” So far from this being required by the general tenor of Scripture, it is worthy of remark, that the Apostle; in the

vult habere filios; ejus verò intrinsecam esse in ipso causam; quia arcano suo beneplacito contentus est.” Calv. Inst. lib. iii.

* “Insistere enim debemus in istas particulas, *cujus vult, et quem vult*: ultra quas procedere nobis non permittit. Quod ergo Scriptura clarè docet, dicimus, æterno et immutabili consilio Deum semel constituisse quos olim semel assumere vellet in salutem, quos rursus exitio devovere.” Calv. Com. on Rom. ix.

very chapter we are reviewing, is, in fact, vindicating the conduct of God towards the Jews : and that, in the prophetical writings, God is frequently introduced as condescending to submit his counsels to the judgment of human reason. In the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, for instance, he is represented as graciously vouchsafing to prove his method of dealing with mankind to be agreeable to our natural ideas of justice. “ What mean ye, that ye use this proverb “ concerning the land of Israel, saying, The “ fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the chil- “ dren’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, “ saith the Lord God, *ye shall not have occasion “ any more to use this proverb in Israel. Be- “ hold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the “ father, so also the soul of the son is mine : “ the soul that sinneth, it shall die.* But if a “ man be just, and do that which is lawful “ and right, he shall surely live, saith the Lord “ God. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. “ Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not “ equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; is not “ my way equal? are not your ways unequal?”

Isaiah has a passage no less conclusive: “ Now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah; *judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard.* What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

Surely language like this directly contradicts the notion, that the divine justice is beyond our comprehension, and must not be inquired into according to our reason; or that God’s “ ways are not as our ways,” except as that passage originally asserts, in as far as he is holy and we are corrupt. So little does the general tone of Scripture warrant the argument which is used by some advocates of predestination, that this doctrine is the more likely to be true, because, if there is no mystery in the subject of man’s election to salvation, God ceases to be incomprehensible.*

* To this effect was the answer of Fulgentius to the objection against divine election, drawn from the words, “ God

It is indeed extraordinary, that, if we look farther into this very dispensation regarding the choice of the Hebrews, it will itself supply us with a proof, that the general dealings of God towards man are not irrespective, or absolute, or independent of human conduct. The case is, confessedly, peculiar; yet the only instance throughout it of arbitrary preference, is the preference of Jacob to Esau. The promise was first made to Abraham; and we are expressly told why it was made; "his faith was counted to him for righteousness," Gen. xii. 6; faith that was in fact subjected to a very severe trial: after which God declares, "*Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*" Gen. xxii. Accordingly, both St. Paul and St. James allude to this trial of Abraham's faith: "By
"would have all men to be saved;" that on the views of those who see no mystery in this subject, but resolve the distinction into the merits or demerits of man, Almighty God ceases to be incomprehensible, as described in Scripture.

“ faith Abraham, *when he was tried*, offered up
“ Isaac,” Heb. xi. 17; and St. James asks,
“ Was not Abraham our father *justified by*
“ *works*, when he had offered Isaac his son
“ upon the altar ?” ii. 21. So that it is evident
that the election of the Jews considered
throughout, can no more furnish proof of the
irrespective decrees of God than the ultimate
reprobation of the obdurate Pharaoh.

When all these circumstances are weighed
together, I think it must be acknowledged that
the preacher of absolute decrees gives too im-
plicit confidence to human interpretation, and
teaches the doctrine of Calvin for the doctrine
of St. Paul. If it be so, it is no light matter.
It is not a question of trifling importance,
whether we disseminate just and worthy no-
tions of the divine attributes. The general
impression which the Scripture leaves upon
our minds is this, that God desires his creatures
to entertain a reverential love of his goodness,
as well as a reverential awe of his justice, in
his administration of the moral government

of the world; and does not call upon us, in studying the terms of our acceptance with him, or in meditating upon his counsels, to abandon our notions of right and wrong, or the results of that gift of reason which he has permitted to survive the fall. Scripture, in short, throughout, aims at the heart. Christ, in the most unqualified terms, demands the love of mankind on the part of the Creator; a love which the doctrine of absolute decrees, in all minds of common mould, cannot fail to petrify.

In particular: with what feelings of confidence can a congregation have recourse to prayer, which has been accustomed to hear, that a decree has already, before the foundation of the world, gone out from God, by which the final destiny of every man is irrevocably doomed;* and indeed, that such is the neces-

* “ Inficiari nemo poterit quin præciverit Deus quem exitum esset habiturus homo antequam ipsum corderet; et ideò præciverit quia decreto suo sic ordinârat. . . . Ut enim ad ejus sapientiam pertinet omnium quæ futuri sunt esse

sary consequence of the undeniable foreknowledge of the Deity? What expectation can they have that "the prayer of a righteous man" shall avail against a decree already issued? How can they hope, that their "prayers shall go up before God?" how coldly must they "make prayer for all men?" I am aware of the reply, that prayer is one of the ordained means by which the decree is brought into execution; but can a metaphysical distinction of this kind give energy to supplication or fervency to devotion, against the habitual belief that it cannot avail to affect a predetermined event? Can prayer offered under such a conviction, be winged with those feelings which the Apostles recommend and inspire? Every prayer of a believer in decrees, if it is not a mere expression of thankfulness, must be either an hypocritical form, as it is with those Mahometans who are practical predestinarians; or it must be a virtual contradiction of his own belief; and, in truth, it is only because that

præscium, ac ad potentiam omnia manu suâ regere et moderari." Calv. Inst. i. 3.

contradiction is deeply implanted in the principles of our rational nature, that the belief itself is not more extensively mischievous.

Finally, what difficulties must the preacher of decrees be led into, in order to reconcile his doctrine with our Saviour's description of the day of judgment, or with the universal declaration of the Gospel, that this life is a state of trial; or, what is still more to my purpose, with St. Paul's positive assertion, that "*God will render unto every man according to his deeds; for there is no respect of persons* with God.*" That this world bears no resemblance to a probationary state, not only follows as an undeniable consequence from the system of decrees, but is professedly avowed by many advocates of that system. But if it could be any way shown that such a consequence does

* If mankind are called to salvation at all, they must be called either with or without respect to their future character. That *character* has no concern whatever with their call, is the universal doctrine of Calvin; therefore they must be called *with respect to persons*; which St. Paul expressly denies.

follow from it, the manifest inconsistency of such a conclusion with the whole tenor of the Gospel might sufficiently prove that the premises were wrong: and at all events the contradiction it offers to the plain and unequivocal declaration of St. Paul in one part of his Epistle, is a strong argument that he does not inculcate the doctrine which leads to it, in another.

CHAPTER II. PART II. *On Election.**

THE doctrine of Personal Election at first sight appears less bold and assuming, and less openly adverse to the divine attributes, than the supralapsarian scheme. But it leads, in truth, to the same result, and is liable to the same objection, to teach from the pulpit that from the mass of mankind who were ruined by Adam's disobedience, a certain number were elected as "vessels of mercy," to be

* "Est electio immutabile Dei propositum, qui ante jacta mundi fundamenta ex universo genere humano, ex primævâ integritate in peccatum et exitium suâ culpâ prolapso, secundùm liberrimum voluntatis suæ beneplacitum, ex merâ gratiâ, certam quorundam hominum multitudinem, aliis nec meliorum, nec digniorum, sed in communi miseriâ cum aliis jacentium, ad salutem elegit in Christo." Synod of Dort, Art. vii.

The doctrine is thus practically taught: "God promises pardon and remission of sins to all that believe and repent; but he promises grace to believe and repent only to those whom *by his absolute covenant* he has engaged to bring through faith and repentance to salvation." Hopkins.

redeemed from punishment by the sacrifice of Christ, and to be the recipients of such grace as should lead them irresistibly to holiness, whilst the non-elect are left to undergo the penalty of their sin and unbelief. This I take to be the doctrine which is commonly received by modern Calvinists :* and as many passages in St. Paul are supposed to authorize it, which are silent concerning an absolute decree, it seemed convenient to consider the two schemes separately, notwithstanding that all the reasoning which may be furnished by the general tenor of Scripture against absolute predestination, is equally adverse to personal election.

The principal passage, except those already considered, which appears to favour this representation of the divine counsels, is found in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Here, after unequivocally declaring

* I am aware that many *profess* to hold universal redemption. But whoever teaches the doctrine of irresistible conversion, i. e. of special grace, teaches personal election to all practical purposes.

the rejection of the Jews, in the chapter which I examined at length, and asserting that all future grounds of favour rest in Christ alone, St. Paul breaks off abruptly, and exults that some at least of his countrymen are saved through the Gospel.

“ I say then, hath God cast away his people?
“ God forbid. God hath not cast away *his*
“ *people whom he foreknew*. As formerly he
“ said to Elijah, I have reserved to myself
“ seven thousand men who have not bowed
“ the knee to the image of Baal; even so at
“ this present time *there is a remnant according*
“ *to the election of grace*. And if by grace,
“ then is it no more of works; otherwise grace
“ is no more grace. But if it be of works,
“ then it is no more grace; otherwise work is
“ no more work. What then? Israel hath
“ not obtained that which he seeketh for, *but*
“ *the election has obtained it, and the rest were*
“ *blinded*. According as it is written, God
“ hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes
“ that they should not see, and ears that they

“ should not hear, unto this day.” Rom. xi. ver. 1 to 7.

The spirit of the passage is confessedly to this effect: The Jewish people are rejected, because they refused to receive salvation through Christ, and to lay aside their dependence on the Mosaic law; but those are not cast away, who (as the converts St. Paul was addressing) have embraced justification by faith, which is of grace and not of works. The question then that remains is this: who are the “*foreknown?*” what is the nature of their “*election?*” We shall soon find reason to conclude that the Apostle uses this word according to the association invariably united with it in his mind, and in the ideas of all the Jews, not in the technical sense which it has derived from theological disputes, but to signify those who enjoyed the favour of God, an honour which was formerly common to all the nation, as an “*elect* people,*” a “*holy nation;*” but

* Isaiah xlii. 1, “ I behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth:” xlv. 4, “ Israel, mine elect, I have

was now proper to those alone who received the faith of Christ, and, with them, was common to the converted Gentiles. For, if we proceed a few verses onward, we find him expressing his earnest desire to excite his countrymen to join themselves to this *election*. “ I speak to you, Gentiles : inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles. I magnify my office : *if by any means I may provoke unto emulation them that are my flesh, and might save some of them.*” xi. 14. Now, if the remnant, according to the election of grace, were already foreknown, and elected, and the rest “ blinded ” by the refusal of efficacious grace, St. Paul must have been aware that

“ called thee by thy name : ” lxxv. 5, “ I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains ; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. ” St. Peter applies to the whole Christian church the very appellation which had been formerly addressed to the Jews : “ *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.* ” I. ii. 11. The idea that his Epistles were written to the *Jewish* converts alone, is rejected by the best commentators, as inconsistent with the internal evidence.

there was no room left to excite others by the example of the Gentile converts, and no hope of any but those already chosen being saved : he would have known that there was no propriety in the passionate expression which begins the tenth chapter : “ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that “ *they might be saved.*” It is evident, therefore, that the thing which “ *Israel sought in vain,*” was the honour of remaining the peculiar church of God : and that by “ *the election,*” the whole body of Christians is intended, who had obtained that which the Israelites through their blindness had been deprived of.

That this sense of the word *election*, the sense in which it was familiar to the Jews, and to St. Paul as a Jew, is the sense which we ought to bear in mind for the purpose of rightly interpreting it, I must confidently maintain. How new, how unexpected a thing was it to St. Paul, that any country but his own should be admitted to privileges which had been confined to the Jews for fifteen hundred

years! What an unlooked-for change to the Gentiles to receive the knowledge and the law of God! How natural that this fact of the choosing and calling of the Gentiles, should form a prominent subject in his addresses to them! We have seen it already introduced to silence the Jew, and satisfy the Gentile converts, in the Epistle to the Romans: it is also largely used to excite the thankfulness of the Ephesians:

“ Blessed be the God and Father of our
“ Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with
“ all spiritual blessings in heavenly places
“ in Christ: according as he *hath chosen us*
“ *in him before the foundation of the world,*
“ that we should be holy and without blame
“ before him in love: *having predestinated us*
“ *unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*
“ *to himself,* according to the good pleasure
“ of his will, to the praise and glory of his
“ grace, wherein he hath made us accepted
“ in the beloved: having made known unto
“ us the mystery of his will, according to

“ his good pleasure, which he hath purposed
 “ in himself: *that in the dispensation of the*
 “ *fulness of times he might gather together in*
 “ *one all things in Christ, both which are in*
 “ *heaven, and which are on earth, even in him ;*
 “ *in whom also we* have obtained an inheri-*
 “ *tance, being predestinated according to the*
 “ *purpose of Him who worketh all things ac-*
 “ *ording to the counsel of his own will : that we*
 “ *should be to the praise of his glory, who first*
 “ *trusted in Christ.*” Eph. i. 1.

We shall better understand the true force and import of this passage, if we place before us the situation of the members of the Ephesian church. On one side was the Jew, who from his youth up had despised the Gentiles as idolaters, alike ignorant of the true God, and neglected by him ; who had always held their practices in abhorrence, and knew them to be diametrically opposite to his own. The strength of prejudices like

* We, the Jewish converts to the Gospel, and united in the same faith with you, Gentiles.

these is seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles ; and is shown in the first apostacy, the error of the Judaizing Christians, who would not admit that God had conferred upon Gentiles privileges equal to their own. On the other hand stood the Gentile convert ; who had hitherto known little of the Jews, whom he was now taught to call his brethren, except that they considered themselves under the protection of a God unrevealed to the heathens ; and who would now find that this belief was supported by the universal language of the Old Testament, calling the Hebrews a peculiar people. The natural subject to a church composed of such heterogeneous materials, would surely be the union of Jews and Gentiles under “ one Lord, “ one faith, one baptism, one God and Father “ of all ;” would surely be the fact, to us familiar, but to them astonishing, that so many “ aliens from the commonwealth of “ Israel, and strangers from the covenants “ of promise, having no hope, and without “ God in the world, were now brought nigh

“ to the Father by his eternal purpose through
“ the blood of Christ.” This is, in truth,
the leading idea throughout the Epistle, as
well as that to the Colossians, which was
written at the same time, and during the
same imprisonment at Rome. We can even
account for the circumstance of this fact be-
coming the subject uppermost in his thoughts
at this period, when we reflect to what St.
Paul in these Epistles attributes the impris-
onment under which he was then suffering :
which is not to his preaching Christianity,
but to his asserting the right of the Gentiles
to be admitted into it without conforming
themselves to the Jewish law.* It was,
therefore, strictly natural that he should be
led to insist upon their common fellowship
under the same faith of Christ, a case so
widely differing from the former habits, and
prejudices, and expectations of either party.
Accordingly, in the third chapter he again takes
up the subject, and farther explains the mys-

* Paley, *Horæ Paulinæ*.

tery hidden till then, which to the Colossians he also terms “the mystery of Christ for which he was in bonds.”—“Ye have heard of the *dispensation of the grace of God* which was given me to you ward; *which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men,* as it is now revealed unto the holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit: *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.*” iii. 1, &c. Under a similar impression the Apostle assures the Thessalonians, that himself, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, give thanks to God always for them all, “*knowing their election of God,*” i. 1, 4: and that “*God hath not appointed them unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*” i. 5, 9: and still more fully in the second Epistle, “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God *hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called*

“ you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the
“ glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus also St. Peter addresses his first Epistle “ to the *strangers scattered* throughout
“ Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and
“ Bithynia, *elect according to the foreknowledge*
“ of God the Father, through sanctification
“ of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling
“ of the blood of Jesus Christ.” I. i. 2.
I. v. 13.

That this is the real intention of St. Paul, in styling the churches “ the elect of God,” may be farther collected from the use he makes of the fact in the way of argument. He introduces it as an incentive to a degree of holiness not less unknown to them before, than the God by whom they were chosen, and the faith to which they had been called :
“ *We* are not of the night, nor of darkness ;
“ *therefore* let us not sleep, as do others, but
“ let us watch, and be sober.” 1 Thess. v.
5, 6. “ God hath from the beginning chosen

“you to salvation; *therefore* stand fast.”
 2 Thess. ii. 13. “Put on, *therefore*, as the
 “*elect of God*, holy, and beloved, bowels of
 “mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,
 “meekness, long suffering.”* Col. iii. 12.
 “The grace of God, that bringeth salvation,
 “has appeared unto all men, teaching us,
 “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
 “we should live soberly, righteously, and
 “godly, in this present world, looking for
 “that blessed hope, and the glorious ap-
 “pearance of the great God, and our Saviour
 “Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, *that*
 “*he might redeem us from all iniquity, and*
 “*purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous*
 “*of good works.*” Titus ii. 11. “What! know
 “ye not that your body is the temple of the
 “Holy Ghost, which is in you, which *ye have*
 “*of God, and ye are not your own?* For ye are
 “bought with a price; *therefore glorify God*

* Virtues, it may be remarked, particularly the growth of the Gospel, and beyond any others unknown to the Gentiles.

“*in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” 1 Cor. vi. 19.

It is evident from these passages that St. Paul draws an inference from the fact of election to the duty of holiness. But the regular consequence of Calvinistic election, is to hold it up as the cause and fountain from which all holiness springs; as the reason why the Christian is zealous of good works, not why he *ought to be*.* If, then, St. Paul argues in the other way, and urges it to the converts as an inducement to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, that they have been chosen to hear the law and the means of salvation offered to them by a God whose servants must purify themselves even as he is pure; I think it follows, that St. Paul speaks

* “*Proinde electio est fons omnis salutaris boni; unde fides, sanctitas et reliqua dona salvifica, ipsa denique vita æterna, ut fructus et effectus ejus profluunt: secundum illud Apostoli, Elegit nos (non quia eramus, sed) ut essemus sancti et inculpati in conspectu ejus in charitate. Eph. i. 4.*”
Artic. Dord. Art. ix.

of election to the grace of the Gospel, and not of such personal election as Calvinists teach : election which leads infallibly to holiness as a mean of the salvation which has been determined from the foundation of the world.

On these grounds I conclude, that the elect of St. Paul are those Gentile converts who had been unexpectedly brought to the knowledge and favour of God, and to consequent faith and holiness. At the same time, it is no doubt true that those first Christian churches were in fact called, and elect, and chosen in a very peculiar manner, wholly inapplicable to the case of individuals in other times. The Holy Spirit, as we are informed in the Scripture itself, immediately directed the steps of the Apostles to those cities where God in his wisdom foresaw that it would be best to plant the earliest churches. In this sense the people of Thessalonica and Philippi were truly *called*, to whom Paul and Silas were directed by special intimations of the

Holy Spirit; and those of Pergamus and Bithynia rejected, which countries the Apostles would have evangelized in preference, if left to themselves.

The same remark may be justly extended to individuals. In every age God has chosen from mankind certain persons, as the instruments of his designs, and ministers of his revelations. To enumerate these, would be to give a summary of the Jewish history. To come nearer to the point: no one can deny that John the Baptist, that the twelve Apostles, and Paul, and Mark, and Luke, and Cornelius, with Titus and Timothy, and the majority of those to whose agency the promulgation of the Gospel was first committed, were selected from their countrymen in a manner no less peculiar than the object for which they were chosen. If there were any doubt of this, St. Paul must himself remove it, when he reminds Timothy, that " God " had saved them, and called them with an " holy calling, *not according to their works, but*

*“ according to his own purpose and grace, which
 “ was given them by Christ Jesus before the
 “ world began ;”* and says, in another place,
 that he was *“ chosen by the pleasure of God,
 “ who separated him from his mother’s womb,
 “ and called him by his grace to reveal his
 “ Son, and preach him among the heathen.”*
 Whether this choice were altogether inde-
 pendent of the suitableness of their character
 to the divine purposes, I am not bound to
 consider. St. Paul, indeed, seems to insi-
 nuate the contrary, by saying, *“ I thank
 “ Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled
 “ me, for that he counted me faithful, putting
 “ me into the ministry, who was before a
 “ blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ;
 “ but I obtained mercy, because I did it igno-
 “ rantly, in unbelief.”* 1 Tim. i. 13. But how-
 ever this be determined, no one can argue
 that these are cases, by which we can judge
 of the mode of God’s dealing with the great
 body of mankind. These are as evidently
 exceptions to the general dispensation of
 things regarding individuals, as the case of

the Jews stands peculiar among nations. God required but one people to preserve his oracles, and saw fit to select the Israelites. So he required but one Prophet in an age to declare his will, and he chose Moses, or Samuel, or Elijah, or Daniel, or John the Baptist, or Paul; but are the rest of the Jews to be considered reprobate, "*non-elect,** and "*left to the just punishment of their sin and unbelief,*" because these individuals are separated from among them as the more immediate ministers of his will? It is here, and not universally, that the question properly applies, which is sometimes asked more triumphantly than reverently, "May not God do what he will with his own?" Where any especial commission is to be given, the Almighty Governor of the world may, in full exercise of his wisdom and justice, choose from mankind the delegate fitted to his pur-

* "*Secundùm decretum electorum corda, quantumvis dura, gratosè emollit, et ad credendum inflectit, non electos autem justo judicio suæ malitiæ et duritiæ relinquit.*" Sententia Dord. Art. vi.

pose, or may raise up one who shall be fitted for it beyond the other sons of men ; but in the ordinary dispensation of his conduct towards mankind, whether regarding the infliction of punishment or the distribution of benefits, he cannot *will to do that with his own* which shall be contrary to the excellency of his nature and attributes.*

It appears to me, that there are two criteria by which the truth of that interpretation of these expressions in St. Paul, which refers them to the election of the Gentiles, may be very fairly tried. First: if it was really this election which the Apostle had in view, and was principally anxious to enforce, then we shall expect to find it most strongly urged and most clearly stated to those churches where the Jewish converts were most nume-

* See a very striking and convincing illustration of this sentiment in Bishop Horsley's Sermons on Matt. xx. 23: "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

rous, and the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish nation most familiarly known. The Jewish religion was, of course, best understood in Asia; and the Jewish converts were most numerous at Rome; and, accordingly, the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians furnish us with the only passages which can be thought to make any thing like a plain declaration of this doctrine; that to the Ephesians, moreover, being generally considered as not addressed to this single church alone, but to all those of the Roman provinces of Asia, among which the authority of the Jews might be supposed considerable, even if it were not proved so by the errors which they succeeded in propagating on the subject of the observation of their law. To the Grecian churches St. Paul is nearly silent on the subject, and only alludes in the most general way to their being called to the knowledge of God; a silence which pleads as strongly as any negative argument can be said to do, when it is remembered that the Epistle to the Philippians was written at the

same time with those to the Ephesians and Colossians, in which the union of the Jews and Gentiles in the worship of the same God makes so prominent a feature. Neither do we trace the doctrine of personal election in the Epistles to the Hebrews. To acquaint them that they were "elect of God," as a nation, there was no occasion; they had always prided themselves too much on the distinction; and they are *not* told they were individually chosen by him to salvation out of the wreck of their countrymen by an irrevocable decree or eternal purpose, which it is reasonable to believe they would have been, if it had been either not true in fact, or unimportant in doctrine.

Secondly, if the passages usually alleged from St. Paul, to prove the doctrine of personal election, were written by him in allusion either to the election of individuals, in so peculiar a manner as the first Apostles of Christianity were chosen, or to the election of the Gentiles into the church of the true

God; then it will follow, that in proportion as individuals ceased to be chosen in that special manner to fulfil the divine purposes, and in proportion as the calling and conversion of the Gentiles ceased to be extraordinary, when indeed the church was composed of them alone, the subject of election will also cease to be insisted upon and taught by the early Christian authors. The facts exactly correspond with this expectation. Among the canonical writers, it is but vaguely alluded to after the destruction of Jerusalem: and in the writings of the fathers we find little authority for the doctrine, and not a single passage which is not reconcileable with that interpretation of St. Paul, for which I have contended. Those writers who are clear and sound in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, are silent, or nearly so, on the subject of unconditional election, which some of them must have often heard from the instructors of their early youth,* and there-

* Milner states this with regard to Justin Martyr, and Irenæus in particular; but makes a different conclusion.

fore, have understood in its just and primitive signification. And they, where they introduce election at all, use it, like St. Paul, as an incentive to holiness. So Clement to the Corinthians, "Let us go to him with a sanctified heart: *influenced by the love of our gracious and merciful Father, who hath made us by election his peculiar people.*" It is notorious, and has been largely proved, that this Calvinistic tenet was not held, except by those who were reputed heretics, for four centuries, and that the term *election* grew into disuse as Christianity gradually became more and more widely diffused: till it was at length involved with questions of fate and free will,

Vol. i. p. 201 and 271. The testimony of Irenæus is very cogent; because he argues elaborately against those who represented one class of mankind as incapable of salvation, and another as certain of it, as perverting the nature of the Gospel, and nullifying the calls to repentance it contains. This is of great weight, from a writer who appeals to the succession from the Apostles for the accuracy of his interpretation of Scripture; it evidently never entered his mind, that such a distinction between mankind could be justly derived from any part of the sacred Canon.

which in truth belong to natural religion* ; and the phraseology of St. Paul was adopted

* Consult Cicero de Fato et de Divinatione. Manilius, in his fourth book, has some passages which, from the internal evidence, might seem to prove him a *supralapsarian*.

Fata regunt orbem ; certâ stant omnia lege :
 Hinc et opes et regna fluunt, et sæpiùs orta
 Paupertas ; artesque datæ, moresque creatis,
 Et vitia, et clades, damna, et compendia rerum.
 Nemo carere dato poterit, nec habere negatum.
 Ecce patrem nati perimunt, natosque parentes,
 Mutuaque armati cœunt in vulnera fratres.
 Non hominum hoc scelus est, coguntur tanta moveri.
 Inque suas ferri pœnas lucerandaque membra.

His attempt to escape from the moral consequences of this doctrine is no less curious :

Nec tamen hæc ratio facinus defendere pergit,
 Virtutemve suis fraudare in præmia donis :
 Nam neque mortiferis quisquam magis ederit herbas,
 Quod non arbitrio veniunt, sed semine certo :
 Gratia nec levior tribuetur dulcibus escis,
 Quod natura dedit fruges, non nostra voluntas.
 Sic hominum meritis tanto sit gratia major,
 Quod cælo gadente venit ; rursusque nocentes
 Oderimus magis, in culpam pœnasque creatos.
 Nec refert, scelus unde cadat : scelus esse fatendum.
 Hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum.

Astrom. iv. 110, &c.

There is a remarkable similarity between these arguments, and those alleged by Jon. Edwards particularly, Part III. Sect. 3, &c. of this Treatise on Free Will.

to strengthen the opinion ultimately espoused by St. Austin * in the fifth century.

These circumstances are not only intelligible, but strictly natural, if St. Paul speaks of the calling of the Gentiles ; but supposing him to declare the universal plan of God's dealings with mankind, I know not how the disuse of the doctrine can be consistently explained.

Bishop Butler, in his Analogy, has a powerful argument to this effect : that if upon consideration of religion, the evidence of it should seem to any persons doubtful ; yet even this doubting concerning religion implies such a degree of evidence for it, as, joined with the consideration of its importance, unquestionably lays men under the obligations to have a dutiful regard to it in their behaviour. On the

* It is quite impossible to account for the authority which this Father has enjoyed, and still maintains, on any common principles ; or to understand why St. Austin against the Manichees, might not be consistently quoted to refute St. Austin against Pelagius.

same principle, it may be justly argued, that if there is a bare possibility of the doctrine of election being founded on a wrong interpretation of St. Paul's words, that doctrine ought not to be made a subject of instruction to a Christian congregation. And that such a possibility has been made out, must at least be admitted, after the review which I have taken of the very questionable circumstances under which that doctrine appears, or is supposed to appear, in two of St. Paul's Epistles. When this is considered, and joined to the certainty that the Apostle could lay no important stress upon a subject which he so rarely, and almost incidentally, introduces, in direct opposition, as will be fully seen, to his practice on the grand articles of a Christian's faith, I cannot help expressing the most unaffected surprise that any minister should conscientiously think himself bound to make this a leading point in the course of his public instruction. For that every individual should be led to suppose that he can come to salvation, if he will, without the counteracting clause, that he cannot *have*

grace to will, without God's special decree; cannot be prejudicial, even if it be found untrue, when "the secret things of the Lord our "God" are disclosed:—but that a single individual should be induced to despair of grace and of salvation, must be of the deepest importance in His sight, who "willeth not the "death of a sinner." So it is safe in practice, even if it should be thought unsound in speculation, to inculcate, with St. James, that "God "giveth to all men liberally:" but how is it possible for a weak brother, who believes in election as a general truth, but humbly doubts concerning his own, to fulfil the prescribed condition, and "ask in faith, nothing wavering?" It is no less practically safe to teach that all shall be rewarded according to their works; and so our Saviour must have thought when he repeatedly described the day of judgment in a mode which defies any other interpretation; while, on the contrary, to leave an impression that works have no concern with any man's salvation, is a kind of sophism, which the illiterate cannot be expected to un-

ravel ; and though in one sense it is the truth, it is by no means the whole truth of Scripture. In short, the dangers arising from the doctrine of predestination, under any of its modifications, are so practical, so plain, and so favoured by the slothful and self-excusing principles of human nature, that it ought to be read in St. Paul with the plainness of the command to believe in Christ, or to love our neighbour, before it is inculcated to a congregation. It matters not that a pious Calvinist disclaims the natural results, or an acute disputant can explain them away : it is notorious that the illiterate enthusiast believes, and the sinner flatters himself with expecting, that, if he is one of the elect, he shall some how or other be finally snatched out of the fire : and if he is not, that no exertions of his own can ever avail. Thus the real conclusion and the practical evil of the doctrine of election meet together.*

* I do not consider this as a matter of argument, but of historical experience. The passage in Burnet is often referred to : " The Germans soon saw the ill effects of the doctrine of decrees. Luther changed his mind about it, and Melanc-

Let the preacher, before he ventures upon this deep subject, consider at once the seduc-

tion wrote openly against it; and since that time the whole stream of the Lutheran churches has run the other way; but both Calvin and Bucer were still for maintaining the doctrines, only they warned the people not to think much about them, since they were secrets that men could not penetrate into. Hooper, and many other good writers, did often exhort the people from entering into these curiosities; and a caveat to the same purpose was put into the Article about predestination." On Reform. part ii. p. 113.

Luther, in his answer to Erasmus's Diatribe, certainly maintains in strong terms the absolute decrees of God. But experience afterwards taught him the wisdom of using great moderation on this head. See his letters, particularly one to Caspar Aq. which is translated by Milner, vol. v. p. 514.

In the year 1657 Baxter wrote, "One objection I find most common, in the mouths of the ungodly, especially *of late years*: they say, we can do nothing without God, we cannot have grace if God will not give it us; and if he will, we shall quickly turn: if he have not predestinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourselves or be saved? It is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs. Thus they think they are excused." Call to the Unconverted, Preface, xxii.

Whitefield in several places candidly acknowledges that many of his followers had wrested his doctrine to their own destruction, and that he grew cautious, which he had not been thirty years before, "of dubbing people converts too soon." Eighteen Sermons. Several excellent papers have

tive nature, and the tremendous consequences, of such an error. How far these consequences may redound upon himself, will depend, no doubt, upon the "*necessity*," which conscientiously, and in the sight of God, he feels "*laid upon him*" to inculcate this as the doctrine of the Gospel. But before he defends this practice upon St. Paul's authority, let him consider that St. Paul addresses as "the elect of God," persons who were his only worshippers in large districts, or even extensive nations; persons who had been called to the knowledge and faith of Christ from the actual exercise of idolatry and habits of the grossest wickedness, by

appeared in the Christian Observer, strongly exemplifying the dangerous consequences of Calvinistic theology. The writer of one says, "Election and final perseverance were the never-ceasing topics of all the conversations and sermons I formerly heard; and indeed they were soon the only topics of a religious nature that I could endure. Then my mountain of self-sufficiency stood so strong, I was a stranger to self-examination, and of course knew not what manner of spirit I was of. A contention and strife about words suited my then unsanctified temper: and if ever one man was disposed to make another an offender for a word, it was myself." Obs. February 1815.

which they were still surrounded on every side; persons who had relinquished, for the sake of the Gospel, the religious worship in which all the rest of their countrymen were persevering: lastly, persons who for the same object had given up their kindred and their father's house, and were either suffering, or destined to suffer, the severest privation and the heaviest loads that pain or imprisonment can lay on nature; and who, if they did not believe themselves especially favoured and beloved by God, were indeed "of all men most miserable." It is our inestimable privilege, that there is nothing similar to circumstances such as these in the situation of modern Christians: and genuine imitation does not consist in borrowing detached expressions, but in applying them to the cases and circumstances in which they were employed originally.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

No quality, to speak generally, is less the character of St. Paul's Epistles than regular arrangement. Writing commonly with an immediate view to the establishment of some particular point, or the refutation of some particular error, he does not introduce the doctrines of Christianity in the systematical order of a theological treatise or confession of faith; but incidentally, as they follow the train of his ideas. The chief exception to his usual neglect of method is the Epistle to the Romans, which is at once the most elaborate and the most systematic of all his writings. Being addressed to a church which he had neither planted nor visited in person, it contains little of local or temporary allusion; and the specific error against which it was directed, has the advantage of leading the Apostle to a full exposition

of the divine dispensations respecting the salvation of mankind.

A close attention to the arrangement of this Epistle is calculated to be eminently useful in discovering the method according to which the leading doctrines of the Gospel may be most clearly and successfully explained.

The Epistle opens with a description of the general sinfulness and depravity of mankind. The Christian faith is offered for the salvation of the soul; and it is with the soul as well as the body, that the existence of an evil or a danger must be established, in order that the remedy may be diligently sought and gratefully applied. St. Paul, therefore, whose professed object in writing to the Romans, was to supersede the necessity of the works of the Jewish law, and to show the insufficiency of the works of the moral law, in order to prove the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith, begins the whole by a declaration of the equal need, to

both Jew and Gentile, of some mode of acceptance and reconciliation with God.

It is by the course of this argument, that he is brought to give a specific account of the way in which mankind were reduced to that state of corruption and helplessness, which he had described in the opening of his Epistle. This he traces to the fall of our first parents, and lays it down as an irresistible truth, that the disobedience of Adam brought his posterity under a curse which would have extended to them universally, had it not been taken off by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

“ Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:—Therefore, 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.” Rom. v. 12 & 18. The result of his argument is indis-

putable, though some of its members are obscure. It is clearly elucidated by the context, and forms a natural conclusion to the statement of the preceding chapters; for, having proved, from the acknowledged sinfulness of both Jew and Gentile, that “all the world was guilty before God;” so that all boasting, whether of divine favour or of man’s merit was excluded; and that even to Abraham, the reward could not be reckoned “of debt, but of grace;” nothing was more natural than that the Apostle should anticipate the question, *ποθεν το κακον*; what brought the human race into this guilty state? To meet this difficulty, he shows that Adam’s sin entailed on himself and his posterity a corrupted nature, and death its punishment; which he argues, is evidently an *hereditary* penalty; inasmuch as we know that infants and idiots die, who cannot be subject to the punishment of any personal transgression. This prepares the reader for the conclusion which had been aimed at throughout—that the soul of man is in a forfeited state, and only redeemed by Christ; that Christ alone is

the author of that salvation, which of themselves they were wholly unable to accomplish; that “ God commended (established) his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” v. 8. “ *As by one man’s disobedience many (οἱ πολλοί, mankind) were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.*” “ Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: *that as sin hath reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*” v. 21.

The important doctrine of the original curse entailed upon the posterity of Adam, which is here formally proved, is generally alluded to as an acknowledged truth in other passages of the Epistles.

“ *Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be*

“made alive.” 1 Cor. xv. 21. And again, 2 Cor. v. 14, “We thus judge, that if Christ “died for all, *then were all dead.*”

This, then, is the Apostle’s doctrine of original sin, which is summed up in our ninth Article as “the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore, in every man born into the world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” It is evident that this doctrine paves the way to the whole dispensation of the Gospel. If mankind had not been in a lost state, there would have been no need of Christ’s becoming man, or suffering death to redeem them: so, unless it is clearly understood and felt that mankind are incompetent to justify themselves in the sight of God, the doctrine of justification through Christ’s death cannot be sincerely or cordially received.

To impress his disciples with a practical sense of this distinguishing doctrine of Christianity, is St. Paul's uniform endeavour; and his example must be followed by all who wish to preach apostolically, and raise the pillar of faith on a basis that cannot be shaken. I shall, therefore, attempt to trace farther the mode in which he pursues this object, and the practical improvement which he makes of the doctrine of original sin.

I. First, I observe, that though St. Paul clearly refers back to Adam the origin of that natural corruption which requires the atonement of Christ, as the passages already cited have proved; yet he does not in his general practice insist upon Adam's guilt as the *immediate* cause of divine wrath against those he is addressing, but prefers to take his argument from its effects upon their own personal character. These consequences he represents as indisputable and universal, which must be constantly borne in mind both in the first application to Christ as the author of salvation, and

throughout the whole of the Christian's life and conflict with the world. The first consequence of that "fault and corruption of nature," which we derive from Adam, is actual sin and transgression of the moral law. The converts at Rome he humbles by a commemoration of the "*idolatry, fornication, wickedness, maliciousness, covetousness, and all unrighteousness,*" to which they had been given up in their unconverted state. i. 29, &c.

To the Corinthians, after enumerating the heinous sinners, who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, he adds,

"*Such were some of you.*" I. vi. 11.

To the Ephesians he says, "You hath (God) quickened, *who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;*

“ *and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*” ii. 4. And very emphatically,

“ Let no man deceive you with vain words ;
 “ for, *on account of these things* (fornication, un-
 “ cleanness, covetousness) *cometh the wrath of*
 “ *God upon the children of disobedience.*”
 Eph. v. 6.

The Colossians he thus reminds of what they owed to Christ : “ You that were some-
 “ time alienated and enemies in your mind *by*
 “ *wicked works*, yet now hath (Christ) recon-
 “ ciled.” i. 21.

In the Epistle to the Thessalonians the Gen-
 tiles are condemned as living “ *in the lust of*
 “ *concupiscence.*” I. iv. 5. In that to Timothy,
 St. Paul declares himself to have been the
 chief of sinners, because he had been a “ *blas-*
 “ *phemer, a persecutor, and injurious.*” I. i. 13.

Titus he instructs to put his flock in mind
 of their former sinful life. “ For we ourselves
 “ also were sometime *foolish, disobedient, de-*
 “ *ceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living*
 “ *in malice and envy, hateful and hating one*
 “ *another.*” iii. 3.

To the Hebrews it was sufficient to show that "the high priest needed *daily* to offer "up sacrifice, *first, for his own sins, and then "for those of the people."* vii. 27.

So 1 Peter iv. 3, "The time past of life "may suffice us to have wrought *the will of "the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, "lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, "and abominable idolatries."*

This, then, is the first consequence of the fall of Adam, evinced by actual sin: "that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the "world become guilty before God;" and ready to embrace with humility and consciousness of guilt the righteousness which is by faith.

Its effects are shown, secondly, by the resistance of man's natural appetites to holiness. This the Apostle declares at length in the memorable passage, Rom. vii. 15: "*That which "I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I "not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know*

“ that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good
 “ thing ; for to will is present with me, but how
 “ to perform that which is good I find not. For
 “ the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil
 “ which I would not, that I do. For I delight
 “ in the law of God after the inward man ; but I
 “ see another law in my members warring against
 “ the law of my mind, and bringing me into cap-
 “ tivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

To the same purpose the Galatians are told,
 that “ the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the
 “ spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary
 “ the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the
 “ things ye would.” v. 17.

“ And the Corinthians, that “ the natural
 “ man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,
 “ for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can
 “ he know them, because they are spiritually dis-
 “ cerned.” 1 Cor. ii. 14.

St. Paul, however, does not confine himself
 to a direct and explicit mode of declaring the
 strength of natural corruption. It is practi-
 cally implied in all those passages where holi-

ness is ascribed to grace ; and these are almost as numerous as the mention of holiness : it is also implied wherever impenitence is attributed to the refusal of grace ; as will be more properly shown under a future head. It is no less clearly implied by the necessity of renovation, so frequently insisted on by the Apostle.

To the Romans he says, “ Ye are not *in the flesh*, but *in the spirit*, if so be that the “ Spirit of God dwell in you.” viii. 9 & 14.

“ For as many as *are led by the Spirit of God*, “ they are the sons of God.”

To the Galatians, vi. 15. “ In Christ Jesus “ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor “ uncircumcision ; *but a new creature.*”

The Ephesians he assures, that, if they have learned Christ rightly, they “ must put off “ concerning the former conversation *the old “ man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful “ lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of (their) “ mind, and put on the new man, which after God “ is created in righteousness and true holiness.*” iv. 22.

A similar passage is addressed to the Colos-

sians: "Lie not one to another, seeing that
" ye have put off *the old man* with his deeds,
" and have put on the *new man, which is re-*
" *newed in knowledge* after the image of Him
" that created him." iii. 9. Compare 1 Peter
i. 23.

These passages prove it to be the doctrine of St. Paul, that, through the sin of Adam, man is born with a corrupt heart, prone to sin, averse from holiness, and unable of himself to please God. This truth, however humiliating and ungrateful, the Apostle does not allow to be forgotten, even by those that are regenerate; but keeps them perpetually reminded of their natural depravity, their actual transgressions, and of the unsoundness of "the little fruit they have in holiness;" so that throughout the whole of their probation they may bear in mind, that Christ's death alone placed them in a state of justification, and that their sanctification is only to be ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

To leave, therefore, out of sight the cor-

ruption of human nature, is to set aside the basis which St. Paul has laid to the whole system of the Gospel; in which our Church too has followed the example of the great Apostle, placing the declaration of man's natural corruption as the first of her doctrinal articles. To relinquish this, is to relinquish the strongest hold possessed by the preacher over the feelings and consciences of his hearers. It is to give up a truth which is declared by the world without, and receives a concurrent testimony from the experience of the heart within. The cause of the degeneracy is known from revelation, and could not have been otherwise explained; but the fact is familiar to all: it meets our eyes abroad, and is felt by our souls at home; and requires only to be stated, to produce practical conviction. It is this which accounts to the Christian philosopher for the anomalous appearance which the human mind presents; for the infirmity of purpose which even its loftiest designs betray; for the inconsistent mixture of low desires with noble enterprise; for the union of mean-

ness with greatness : of much that is abject, with much that is august in the same character : bearing evidence alike to the high original, and the grievous fall which the Scriptures record, and thus give an additional proof of their authenticity, by explaining the mystery which is otherwise inexplicable.

This, too, accounts for the lamentable truth, which leaves the mere observer of past and passing events in such deep perplexity, that the human race, whilst it seems to be making continual progress towards perfection, is still kept at an immeasurable distance from it ; that, in the extensive concerns of nations, “ wars “ and fightings,” notwithstanding our experience of the misery they occasion, and the unsatisfactoriness of their most fortunate results, still find perpetual fuel in the lust of ambition and restlessness of the human mind : that if we turn to the conduct of individuals, in spite of warning and example, imprudence and excess extensively prevail ; and the same errors are committed as to the nature of real

enjoyment, and the means by which it is pursued, which have been lamented by former generations; and that it is impossible for the rational observer, notwithstanding the improvements in science and philosophy, and the arts, to look forward to any probable termination, or diminution, of those moral delinquencies which have blackened, in all ages, the records of the human race.

The preacher, therefore, who follows the statement of St. Paul, on the subject of natural corruption, has all history and experience on his side; and will alone be able to trace to their real source those inconsistencies which the best of his hearers will be most forward to acknowledge in their own hearts. To bring mankind to a sense of their personal guilt and humiliation, was, as we have seen, the first step of the Apostle, in the most systematical of all his writings; so it must be the first object of every preacher, to point out the existence of the disease, in order to check its growth; to prove the necessity of the remedy,

that men may be willing to receive it ; to teach them the value of their Saviour, by showing that they are lost without him. “ They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

I. The universal effect and destructive consequences of the fall, are sometimes practically denied, by exalting what is called the dignity of man ; a phrase, in its first and obvious sense, certainly very little consistent with his scriptural character as a fallen creature, or with our historical knowledge of the wickedness by which that dignity has been debased in every period of time. In the same way the natural corruption of the heart is speciously gilded over and concealed, by magnifying the power of conscience, and implying that its suggestions may be depended upon as rules of action.

But, if we believe St. Paul, it is a necessary result of the corruption of human nature, that nothing belonging to “ the natural man ”

can be held up by the preacher as a guide. He contradicts the fundamental points of his religion, whenever he appeals to the moral sense, or to conscience, as affording any thing like a sufficient indication of what is right or wrong in the sight of God. Conscience, and reason, or that modification of it which is termed the moral sense, are not to be used by us as if they themselves furnished laws which we should obey, but for the purpose of pointing out when we agree with, and when we deviate from that rule of action, which has been previously established as our guide ; whether that rule be the law of the land, or the precepts of a particular philosophy, or the customs of society, or the commands of God. It is evident that we cannot appeal to any natural power of man, as an ultimate test of merit and demerit, without assuming that human corruption has not affected that natural power. The Christian, on the contrary, both reads and feels that it has ; to the Christian, therefore, reason and conscience are the ca-

suists, revelation alone is the law: and if his conduct is not perpetually referred to that law, or if it is guided by any other, he will soon discover that he is pursuing a track widely deviating from the Gospel.

II. I next observe, that, as far as we may be allowed to judge from the mode in which St. Paul introduces this leading doctrine of Christianity, it appears that he deemed it more necessary and advisable to enforce among his disciples the positive effect of original sin upon their own hearts and lives, than the punishment to which they were liable from the fall of Adam, considered as *their federal head*. He was well aware, that the guilt of actual transgression comes immediately home to the hearer's conscience. Whereas, "it is the hardest thing in the world to bring carnal reason to submit to and approve of the equitableness of God's proceedings against us for the sin of Adam. Flesh and blood can hardly brook the acknowledgment that it is most righ-

teous, that we should be *actually* and *personally* wretched, who were *federally* disobedient and rebellious.”*

That the Apostle foresaw this, and was constantly on his guard lest he should unnecessarily throw a snare in the way of his converts, is evident from his cautious and tender method of handling the subject. He was bound to declare, that “ by one man sin “ entered into the world, and death by sin.” But lest this should seem a severe dispensation, he is careful to turn aside any rising imputation against the goodness or justice of God, almost before it could be conceived ; and intermixes with the very terms of this general condemnation, the assurance that mercy had abounded more than justice ; that the benefits prepared for man, by the reconciliatory sacrifice of Christ, were greater than even the loss by Adam. He so involves his argument of the fall of the human race with

* Hopkins on the Covenants.

their recovery, as not to leave it doubtful, for an instant, that the act of mercy was both contemporaneous and commensurate with the act of justice. "After the first offence," says Bishop Taylor, "God could not stay from redeeming;" "nor could Paul stay from proclaiming, that we are redeemed."*

To show this in a just point of view, it deserves particular remark, that all the passages which prove the penal death of mankind from the defection of their first parent, are, at the same time, declaratory of the remission of that penalty through the atonement of Christ. "*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.*" Rom. v. 18. And in the subsequent verses, which were before quoted, the same ideas are repeated in the same order. So also to the Corinthians: "*As in Adam all die, even so in*

* Mrs. H. More, Essay on St. Paul.

“ *Christ shall all be made alive.*” 1 Cor. xv. 22. Again, 2 Cor. v. 14, “ We thus judge, that if *one died for all, then were all dead.*” If we invert the proposition, it will stand thus—When all were dead, Christ died for all.

This repeated coincidence must be the effect of design, and of wise design ; founded alike in tenderness of heart, and true knowledge of human nature. It proves the jealousy which the Apostle felt for the honour of God, and the anxiety which he entertained, in common with the other sacred writers, that his attribute of goodness should be justly appreciated. He leaves us no example of an unqualified statement of a truth difficult to be understood, with a hardy unconcern for the impression it might leave on the minds of the hearers ; but unites, as it were, the pardon with the penalty, as if to remind us, that at the moment when the original curse was pronounced, the promise in Christ was given.

III. I remark, thirdly, that St. Paul does

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not precisely state the extent or degree of human corruption. That it had brought all men, from Adam, under sin and condemnation, he distinctly proves ; and no less clearly asserts, that an evil principle is always lurking in the flesh, which can only be successfully opposed by the influence of the Holy Spirit. This was the practical truth, enough for man to know : he has a constant propensity to sin, and, therefore, must be subject to punishment : he cannot maintain a life altogether holy, and, therefore, cannot merit reward. This, too, every man who will examine himself, must intimately feel, and can subscribe to without hypocrisy. It is far better to strike the mark, than to shoot beyond it ; for if a man's conscience does not answer to the condemnation of the preacher, if he cannot find himself to be so deeply wicked as he is represented, there is danger of his imagining that he is better than he is expected to be. For all practical purposes, it is sufficient to declare that " the carnal mind is at enmity " with God ;" that " the imaginations of the

“ heart are only evil continually:” that “ in
“ the flesh dwelleth no good thing:” lastly,
that “ the condition of man after the fall of
Adam is such, that he cannot turn and
prepare himself by his own natural strength
and good works to faith, and calling upon
God.”*

Where, therefore, the Apostle has left this subject, as may be seen in the former quotations, the modern preacher may be well contented to leave it, in his public instructions. St. Paul is better authority than even the Homilies, excellent as they usually are: and their language on this point has no counterpart in his writings. I do not find him declare the consequence of the fall in terms like these: “ Man, instead of the image of God, was now become the image of the devil: instead of the citizen of heaven, he was become the bond-slave of hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity and

* Art. X.

cleanness, but being altogether spotted and defiled, insomuch that now he seemed to be nothing else but a lump of sin.”* “Man is of his own nature fleshly and corrupt, &c. : without any spark of goodness in him, only given to evil thoughts and evil deeds.”†

* Homily on the Nativity.

† Homily on Whitsunday.

I cannot think that there would be any *real* disagreement on this point between those who yield to Scriptural authority, if they would first examine and define the meaning they affix to the terms they employ.

That the proper motive to a virtuous life is the desire of pleasing and obeying God, and that this desire cannot become the ruling motive without the preventing and accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit, is incontrovertibly declared and universally implied throughout the Gospel, as will appear in the succeeding Chapter. Many persons, therefore, maintain that human nature is *totally corrupt*, because it is, without grace, not only incapable of this evangelical obedience, but averse to it. Admit this definition of total corruption, and there can be no farther dispute.

Others, however, maintain that the character of total corruption cannot justly be applied to a being who is confessedly capable of the benevolent affections, and of humane, compassionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures; and disposed naturally and unavoidably to approve some actions, under the peculiar view of their being virtuous and

This strong and unqualified language, which is neither copied from Scripture nor sanc-

of good desert; and to disapprove others, as vicious and of ill desert; and having in it some elements not indisposed for certain acts of virtue.

This opinion appears to me most consistent: and I believe that on this moral part of the rational, i. e. of the natural faculties, the free agency and responsibility of man depend.

The assertion of St. Paul which is commonly adduced on the other side, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing;" literally, good dwelleth not, *οὐκ ὄκει δ'γαθόν*: cannot go so far as to deny that human nature has "a spark of goodness" in it: inasmuch as the Apostle in the same verse alludes to one, when he proceeds to say, *to will* is present with me; but how to "perform that which is good I find not. *For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do.* For I delight in the law of God *after the inward man*; but I see another law in my members warring against the "law of my mind." Nor does it materially affect the argument, whether St. Paul is here speaking of the renewed or unrenewed man; since the same complaint was uttered beyond the sphere of spiritual advantages, *video meliora, probogue; deteriora sequor.*

With the inward man, then, i. e. with the soul or rational faculties, and with the *will* resulting from their proper exercise, grace co-operates, without which the will could produce no good effect, "fruitlessly warring against the law of sin which is in the members."

tioned by experience, is imitated by many pious persons whose scruples I greatly res-

This opinion cannot be more clearly exemplified than by the parable of the Prodigal; who is represented, "when he came to himself," that is, when his reason led him to reflect on the consequences to which he had been reduced by guilt and folly, as exclaiming, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The assistance which these first motions of the will arising from the sincere use of the understanding, instantly and continually receive, and by which alone they become effectual, is beautifully described in the following verse: "*And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*"

The parables of the talents, and of the sower, some of whose seed *fell on good ground*, seem to me strongly to corroborate this doctrine, and to be quite irreconcilable with any other. Nor can I interpret, or indeed understand in any other way the Apostle's illustration, Heb. vi. 7, 8.: "*For the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*" In this passage *the earth*, or soul, and *the rain*, or grace, are treated as distinct and separate.

I conclude by observing the inconsistency which inevitably entangles the supporters of the opposite principle.

pect, under the notion that the mercy of Christ cannot be sufficiently extolled unless

For example: "Man's will, since the fall, hath of itself no ability to any spiritual act; every good motion of it must come from the grace of God, preventing, accompanying, following it. There is not, therefore, in the will of the natural man *any* active power to work his own conversion. There are yet *certain outward acts, pre-required*; as, to go to the church, to sit reverently, to hear: in these we have freedom of will either way."—Hall, *Via Media*, quoted from Synod. Dord. Suffrag. Theolog. Brit. ad artic. quartum.—Now, these acts, to go to church, to sit reverently, to hear, must be either good or bad, or absolutely indifferent in themselves. But it will not be argued that they are bad; neither can they be indifferent, or they would not be pre-required: they must partake of good, therefore; whence it follows that human nature cannot be entirely corrupt, even from the principles of those who assert it; and that it is, in a mode which we cannot explain, and in a degree which we do not pretend to define, an agent in its own improvement and renovation.

After all, the question as to any *practical consequence* is merely a question of words. Both sides acknowledge that an action not performed on a right principle, if the agent has the means of knowing the right principle, is unacceptable to God. The only question is, whether the action is therefore justly termed *bad*, and the agent is *totally corrupt*; and it seems to me that those who insist on this have a hard battle to fight, when confronted with common sense:

man is sunk to the lowest abyss; or the helplessness of mankind sufficiently declared, except by confounding them with the beasts that perish. But it is not necessary, or wise, or apostolical, to sacrifice one point in order to gain another. Besides, "corrupt men will be proud of a possession, how much soever it may be acknowledged a divine gift; as the Corinthians made the spiritual gifts bestowed for the use of the Church an occasion of pride and division."*

The object of all preaching should be edification. That object is best effected, when the voice of the preacher strikes home to the conscience of the hearer. Now, a congregation must consist of two classes, in whatever proportion they may be mixed: one made up of those, who, having never embraced the Gospel as the hope of their salva-

laborant, cum ventum ad verum est; merely because they have taken up a position which it is not more difficult than useless to maintain.

* Owen on the Spirit.

tion, are wandering at a greater or less distance from its doctrines and precepts; the other of those, who, having personally ratified the covenant of their baptism, have advanced by different degrees of progress in the road which Christ has set before them. The latter class, it is plain, can receive little benefit from the description of a state in which they are not, and perhaps never have been. It must be addressed to the former.

Yet it is very possible that these persons reflecting with themselves ever so sincerely, may not recognize the strong portrait drawn by the preacher of their natural corruption. To the title of Christians, undoubtedly, they have at present only an hereditary claim: but they are conscious of amiable affections; they are not strangers to the emotions or the acts of charity; perhaps they cannot charge themselves with any gross or habitual sins: and the circumstance of their being in the church, is of itself a presumptive proof that they have not renounced their allegiance to their

Creator, or their hope in Christ, however unreasonably entertained. Such persons should be considered as standing at the gate, and requiring to be led onward into the temple, with firmness certainly, and with no compromise of the truth, but still with a tender hand. Of this character was the Scribe who came to Jesus, and acknowledged, that to “love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings or sacrifices,” Mark xii. 33.* This man was no convert, and came with no friendly feelings towards our Lord: yet does he not deter him by repulsive language, but says, in the most conciliating tone, “*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*”

Again, when a certain ruler came to Jesus, asking him, “Good Master, what shall I do

* Compare Matth. xxii. 35.

“that I may inherit eternal life?” and replies to our Saviour’s first answer, that he had “ob-
“served all the commandments from his youth
“up;” Christ does not at once alarm him by de-
claring that all his obedience was of no value;
nor justify us in thinking that his regular life,
as far as it went, had not been more acceptable
to God than the contrary conduct would have
been; but rather, “beholding him, loved him:
“and said, *One thing thou lackest: go thy way,*
“sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the
“poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:
“*and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*”
Mark x. 21.

In imitation of this divine example, St. Paul uniformly assumes the tone and language of conciliation. “King Agrippa, believest thou
“the prophets? *I know that thou believest.*”
And then taking advantage of the concession,
“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,”
he proceeds, “I would to God that not only
“thou, but also all that hear me this day,
“were not only *almost*, but *altogether* such as I
am!” Acts xxvi. 28.—Neither does he em-

ploy himself in violent invectives upon human nature in general ; leaving it always understood, that it is corrupt, and must be renewed ; but his strong language is directed against specific sins, and that open unrighteousness of the heathen world against which the wrath of God was revealed.

It is for the imitation of conduct bearing such high authority that I plead. Against actual sin, let the preacher enforce the condemnation with which the Scriptures abound, and unequivocally affirm that “ they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God :” but let him not confound weakness of faith with notorious profligacy ; let him not condemn the social and natural affections, but lead them to a higher object ; let him not reprobate charity as if it were a vice, but show that “ there is one thing which it lacketh,” without which it is not acceptable to God.

It is sometimes considered as a proof of the advantage to be obtained from the habit which

I am here presuming to discourage, that such preaching generally proves attractive to the lower classes. This, however, may be accounted for, without furnishing any justification of the practice. For, first, the lower classes, unless they are truly religious, usually *are* gross sinners, and, therefore, are neither surprised nor shocked at being supposed so themselves, and at the same time feel a sort of pleasure which need not be encouraged, when they hear their superiors brought down to the same level: and, secondly, it seems to furnish them with a sort of excuse for their sins, to find that they are so universal, and so much to be expected of human nature.*

* “The common people like strong doctrine, and seldom take the least offence at its strength. One reason is, that the lower people are credulous, and apt to take upon trust any doctrine that is vehemently preached. Another is, that they reflect and reason little, and do not easily perceive the holiness of life and practice to which the doctrine binds them, nor even the manner in which a doctrine condemns themselves. A farther reason of their loving strong doctrine is, that they love to be somewhat roughly dealt with, and can in any way be vehemently and strongly impressed. The brief mention of two or three strong doctrines to an unlettered

The considerate minister will not court such dangerous applause: there is no edification communicated by exciting feelings of disgust on one side, and of malignant exultation on the other. St. Paul was aware that it was safer to persuade than to repel; and knew that even the passions and prejudices of the mind may become powerful auxiliaries to the work of grace, when rightly touched and skilfully directed. Even at Athens, shocked as he must have been by the profanation of sacred worship and ignorance of the Almighty Creator, by which he was surrounded, he does not break out into passionate exclamations against the impurity and senselessness of heathen idolatry, but takes advantage of a circumstance in that very idolatry, to bring over the minds of the people to the truth he came to deliver. Let no minister think it a proof of success, or of faithfulness to the Gospel, that he retains one class of his congregation, and disgusts the other;

audience, is, therefore, both a means of being popular among them, and if this be all, a means of doing little good." Christ. Obs. Jan. 1816.

but rather, if such should unhappily be the case, let him examine his conduct with scrupulous anxiety, lest some imprudence, even in the declaration of the truth, some want of conciliation in his performance of the commission intrusted to him, may have deprived him of that blessed reflection and highest consolation, "I take you to record this day, I am pure from "the blood of all men." Acts xx.

The spirit of these remarks is applicable to other doctrines. Many preachers take to themselves the satisfaction expressed by St. Paul, that he "had not shunned to declare the whole "counsel of God," whose *manner* of declaring it bears very little resemblance to that of the Apostle. But this subject seemed particularly to require them. There is no more common occasion of divisions in a congregation, than the indiscriminate severity with which those are sometimes arraigned, who do not answer the preacher's idea of entire *regeneracy*: nor any more frequent or specious error, than the notion that enough cannot be given to Christ

or to grace, unless the corruption of human nature be expressed in the strongest terms. Nor can we either deny or wonder, that this notion is favoured by the language of the early reformers; who wrote against the corruptions of a church, in which Pelagian principles were not only tolerated, but received and acted upon; and whose opponents maintained the doctrines of merit and works of supererogation.

Without attempting to define the limit of human corruption, or to point out the extent of natural power, we may safely affirm it to be no just inference, that because salvation is not of works, therefore man "is only given to evil thoughts and evil deeds:" or, because he is "very far gone from original righteousness," therefore "he is become the image of Satan." Neither does it follow that "any man should boast," even if it be conceded that there is a "better part of human nature." For, after all, "what hast thou, O man, that thou hast not received?" Suppose it allowed, that man is born with any good principle, any relics of the

ruins of his original righteousness, he is not the author of this principle in himself, any more than of his own being : it came to him, together with "every good and perfect gift," from the "God and Father of lights;" and the real subject of inquiry is, not what man has by nature, but what God has left him, after the fall. This reflection ought to mitigate the jealousy which is often felt, against leaving any crevice for human pride. Adam in Paradise was perfect; but he owed that perfection to his Creator: and the only doubt is, whether after he had sinned, God entirely deprived him of his "own image," and of all the graces and excellencies with which he had been endowed; or whether he left some memorial of his high original still remaining, some traces still undefaced of the glory in which he had been created, and from which he had fallen by transgression; whether any seed of virtue yet existed alive within him, after the soil had become unkindly, and the climate unfavourable to its vegetation.

There is no doubt indeed, which is the weaker side of the human heart: it is too much

inclined to trust to itself, and too proud of its own powers, and requires to be continually reminded of what Scripture and experience equally prove—its natural enmity against spiritual things. But the justest argument may lose its force, when it is carried too far, or urged without discretion. Mankind, after the fall, were still the work of God, and the object of their Redeemer's love.

It appears upon the whole, that three rules ought to be observed, in order to treat this subject with practical advantage: first, that we should so preach the corruption of human nature, as to show our absolute dependence upon the atonement of Christ for salvation, and upon the Holy Spirit for sanctification: secondly, that we so preach it, as to vindicate the ways of God to man, by proving that he offers a remedy co-extensive with the evil: thirdly, that we so preach it, as to make the hearer understand, that sin, however congenial to the depraved mind, is alike inconsistent with the original innocency of the human race,

and with their final destination; inasmuch as they have been “bought with a price,” and become the “sons of God, and joint heirs with “Christ,” and are expected to “be holy, even “as He who hath called them is holy.”

CHAPTER IV.

ON GRACE.

THE doctrines of grace and justification by faith spring immediately from the fact of the corruption of human nature, established, as we have seen, by St. Paul.

Had man continued firm in that innocency and uprightness which he received from the hands of his Creator, his righteousness, though as much the divine work as it is now, would not have been an acquired endowment, but born with him like the strength of his limbs or the faculty of reason. The influence of the Spirit would not have met with a sensible opposition in the natural desires; would not have been obtained by prayer as an adscititious gift, but employed in thanksgiving as a native faculty. “ Then there would have been no desertion on God’s part, because no apostacy on man’s; no clouds in his mind, no tempest in

his breast; no tears, nor cause for any; but a continual calm and serenity of soul,"* the unforfeited bounty of the "Author of every good" and perfect gift."

But as it is the doctrine of St. Paul, that Adam lost, by transgression, the "original" righteousness in which he had been created, and transmitted a vitiated nature to his posterity, it follows that some new righteousness, some new principle, some power with which it is not naturally endowed, must be infused into the human heart, before it can become pleasing to an all perfect Being, or establish the habits of piety and virtue. This the Apostle bears constantly in view. Throughout his writings, conversion to the Christian faith, perseverance in it, renunciation of sin, and the practice of holiness, are universally ascribed to the influence of divine grace, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. So he writes to the Romans, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: *but if ye through the Spirit* do mortify the deeds of

* Hopkins.

“ the body, ye shall live. For, *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” viii. 11.

To the Ephesians he says, “ I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, *that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*” iii. 14.

To the Philippians, i. 6. “ *He that has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ:*” and ii. 13. “ *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” Also iv. 13. “ *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*”

To the Colossians, i. 9. “ *We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*”

To the Thessalonians, I. iii. 12. “ *The Lord*

“ *make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men:*” and I. v. 23. “ *The very God of peace sanctify you wholly:*” and I. ii. 13. “ It is, in truth, *the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe:*” and II. i. 3. “ We are bound to *thank God always* for you, brethren, *because that your faith groweth exceedingly ; and may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good work.*” II. ii. 16. “ *The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from all evil.*” II. iii. 3.

To Titus. “ He saved us by the washing of *regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*” iii. 6.

To the Hebrews. “ Let us come boldly to *the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” iv. 16. Also xiii. 20. “ *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which*

“ is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” *

These passages do not so much explain a mysterious doctrine, as imply an habitual conviction. They do not exhibit the cold and heartless statement of a fact to be believed, or of a belief to be professed, but the settled impression of a heart which felt experimentally, that mankind, in their fallen condition, “ cannot turn and prepare themselves to good works and faith, without the grace of God preventing them, that they may have a good will; and working with them when they have that good will.” † Indeed St. Paul seems fully aware that this is the necessary consequence of the fall; and having proved formally and expressly the effect of Adam’s disobedience upon his posterity, he treats it as a result too plain to require argument, that man, in order to his salvation, must receive something by grace

* Compare 1 Pet. i. 5.

† Art. X.

which he has not by nature, and uniformly considers it as a truth neither disputable nor disputed, that faith and holiness are no natural produce of the human heart, but implanted and nourished there by the " Spirit of God."

A review of the quotations, I think, must lead to a conviction that the ideas of sanctification and grace were thus habitually associated in the Apostle's mind, so that it was unnatural to him to remind the churches of the holiness expected of them, without reminding them of the means by which it must be produced, established, strengthened, and preserved. A preacher who should enforce the one without reference to the other, would act as a sort of Egyptian taskmaster to his congregation: he issues the order, but denies the means of its accomplishment. There would be, too, a perpetual opposition between his language, and that of our liturgy: which, apostolical as it truly is in all respects, has in no instance caught more of the manner of St. Paul, than

in the connexion it preserves between a holy life and the influence of the Spirit.

Thus much then is unquestionably certain : St. Paul declares grace to be necessary to all “ good works, to faith, and calling upon God.” He affirms this by implication, when he teaches the natural inability of man : he affirms it positively, when he ascribes the ability of the renewed man to “ God, working in him both to “ will and to do.” On this point there can be no hesitation ; and all that appeal to the same authority, ought to agree in the same doctrine.

The subject, however, branches out into some important questions which cannot be thought to be decided by the passages which I have hitherto collected from St. Paul.

First, to whom is the offer of grace extended ? For it is evident, that grace may be essential to salvation, and yet not bestowed upon all, unless all are intended to enjoy the means of

salvation. Secondly, is it bestowed irresistibly? i. e. in that effectual degree, that none, to whom it is vouchsafed, can finally fall away.

I. Respecting the first of these questions, those who uphold the system of an absolute and a conditional covenant, or personal election, explain the divine counsels in this way: God, they argue, promises pardon and remission of sins to all that believe and repent; but he promises grace to believe and repent only to those whom by his absolute covenant he has engaged to bring through faith and repentance to salvation. So that the conditional covenant promises pardon to all, on the terms of their doing what without grace is impossible: and the absolute covenant promises grace to an elect portion of mankind, enabling them to comply with the conditions.

On the other hand, the example of St. Paul authorizes us to believe and argue, that grace sufficient to salvation is given to all who are dedicated to Christ in baptism. This is im-

plied without a shadow of doubt, or the slightest intimation that the contrary would be imagined, in every passage of the Epistles which alludes to grace, or exhorts the converts to holiness. He leads them to believe that grace is within the reach of all, without reserve or distinction: and that the Spirit "works" in the souls of all, enabling them "to work out their own salvation." His prayers are to the purport, that they might grow in grace; might be strengthened, established, comforted by grace: that the good work which had been begun in them might be performed unto the end: but he no where insinuates the possibility of grace being refused to any, or not enjoyed by any, who had been called to the knowledge of the truth, and had not wilfully renounced this privilege. Language cannot be stronger than the assurance to the Corinthians: "God is faithful, who *will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" His tone to them, and to Timothy, when he is instructing him

how to bring over others to the faith, contains a remarkable difference. To the Hebrews he says, "*Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need* ; but of those "that are without" he uses an expression of doubt unknown to him on other occasions ; saying, that the "servant of God must in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves ; *if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.*"

Now, it cannot be alleged that St. Paul had no opportunity of introducing the doctrine of partial grace or particular election to the churches which he addressed. Many of them had admitted gross errors into their practice ; others, as the Galatians, had swerved widely from sound doctrine ; many individuals were "unruly, and vain talkers and deceivers, who subverted whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." Tit. i. 10, 11. These corruptions, however, are nowhere attributed to the denial of grace, but

always to the abuse or neglect of it. The Corinthians had very imperfectly purged themselves from the immoralities of their heathen state: but how does he reprove them? “ Know ye not that your bodies are the *members of Christ?* know ye not that your body “ is the *temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?*” 1 Cor. vi. 16, &c. This is evidently saying, that the wickedness of the Corinthians was not owing to the denial of grace on the part of God, but to the abuse of it on their own.

In his directions to Timothy, the Apostle enjoins that great prudence and circumspection should be employed in the choice of those persons who were appointed to instruct the younger members of the community, and maintained for that purpose out of the funds of the church: but the marks according to which they were to be selected for this higher and more important office, are the right use of the grace they have hitherto enjoyed: whether they have “ shown piety at home, and requited

“ their parents,” diligently following every “ good work ;” that there might be less probability of their giving “ occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully,” as had been done by some, who had already turned aside after Satan.” I. v. 13. But it is not insinuated that those who had acted unworthily of their calling, had so acted because they had never been chosen of God as vessels of real grace ; but that they had yielded to the infirmity of the flesh, and drawn back “ unto perdition.”

Universally, St. Paul urges improvement in faith, holiness, and charity : but he no less universally implies that the means of grace are possessed by all, and only exhorts them to apply those means. In this case, his example is more cogent than the strongest arguments. It proves, either that while he was aware that some were rejected of God, and denied saving grace, he kept back the fact, as liable to mislead and discourage ; or that to all who are called to the Christian faith by baptism, “ God

“ giveth liberally” the power to persevere unto the end in working out their salvation.

On the first of these suppositions, the practical inference for a Christian minister is this : that if St. Paul did not deem the churches he addressed “ able to bear” the doctrine of particular election, i. e. of the effusion of special grace on some individuals, and the denial of it to others irrespectively, he has left us an example of discretion and forbearance, which those who acknowledge him as their model are bound to imitate.

This example, however, is violated, both in spirit and in letter, by those who do not agree with St. James in affirming that “ God giveth “ to all men liberally, who lack wisdom and “ ask of him :” but assert that he gives it to those only whom by his absolute covenant he has purposed to sanctify by the exclusive effusion of his grace. Instead of imitating the discretion of the Apostle, the doctrine they hold

leads them to contradict his uniform tone, and oppose his plainest language.

I. First, St. Paul exhorts Christians to show, by their *practice*, that they are “*alive unto God through Jesus Christ.*” “Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof. Ye are not in the *flesh*, but in *the spirit*, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, *For, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” Rom. viii. 14. Here St. Paul, it is plain, allows no other evidence that any man has the adoption of sonship, except his being led by the Spirit;—or that the *Spirit dwells in him*, except his *not living to the flesh*: a doctrine pure and holy, worthy of God, and not liable to be mistaken by man. Again, to the same purpose, when he desires to remove all doubt as to a man’s “having the spirit of God,” he copies his divine Master, and refers us to its fruits. “Now, the *fruits of the Spirit* are love, joy, peace,

“ long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And *they that are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Gal. v. 22.

The preacher of special grace assumes a very different tone. “ The *reign* of sin consists not in the multitude, greatness, or prevalency of sins ; for all these are consistent with a state of grace, and may be in a child of God, in whom sin doth not nor cannot *reign* ; but in the in-being of sin without grace, whether it acts more or less violently, yea, whether it *acts at all or no* ; yet if the habit of sin possess the soul without any principle of grace implanted which is contrary to it, that man may be said to be still under the dominion of sin. This mortification then of sin as to its reigning power, is completed in the first act of conversion and regeneration.”*

The difference between this language and

* Hopkins on the New Birth.

St. Paul's is evident at the first glance. The one makes grace the test of holiness; the other makes holiness the test of grace. The one appeals to an implanted principle of grace against the prevalency of sin: the other makes the existence of sin a proof of the absence of the Spirit. Suppose it granted for a moment, that each doctrine is equally true: it surely will not be contended that they equally tend to edification, or that if both are "lawful" to a minister, both are alike "expedient." St. Paul was not above the consideration of this difference. Why should his followers be wiser?

II. Another practical evil of the doctrine of special grace, is the necessity which it implies of some test of God's favour, and of the reconciliation of Christians to him, beyond and subsequent to the covenant of baptism. St. Paul, it has been seen, insists upon the necessity of regeneration: he declares that "the natural man *is at enmity with God, and cannot receive the things of God:*" he calls the

heathen nations "*children of wrath,*" and "*sinners of the Gentiles :*" he speaks of the "*old man as being corrupt according to the deceitful lusts :*" in short, he expresses, under a variety of terms,* the assertion of our Saviour, that "except a man be born again, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

With equal clearness he intimates, that the Christians he addresses *were* thus regenerate : as having "*put off the old man with its deeds ;*" and having become the "*temple of the Holy Ghost,*" and "*the members of Christ ;*" as having the "*spiritual circumcision,* and being "*buried with Christ in baptism ;*" Rom. vi. 3 ; Col. ii. 12 : as having "*received the spirit of adoption,*" Rom. viii. 15 ; and as "*being washed, sanctified, and justified,* in the name of "the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." To the Galatians, "*bewitched,*" as he says they were, "that they should not

* Rom. ii. 6, &c.

“obey the truth,” he still writes, “Ye are all
“the *children of God* by faith in Christ Jesus.
“For, as many of you as *have been baptized*
“*into Christ, have put on Christ.*” Gal. iii. 26.

These addresses and exhortations are founded on the principle that the disciples, by their dedication to God in baptism, had been brought into a state of reconcilment with him, had been admitted to privileges which the Apostle calls on them to improve. On the authority of this example, and of the undeniable practice of the first ages of Christianity, our Church considers Baptism as conveying regeneration, instructing us to pray, before baptism, that the infant “may be *born again*, and made an heir of everlasting salvation;” and to return thanks, after baptism, “that it *hath* pleased God to “*regenerate* the infant with his Holy Spirit, and receive him for his own child by adoption.”

But, on the contrary, if there is a distinction between special and common grace, and none are regenerate but those who receive special grace, and those only receive it who are elect;

baptism is evidently no sign of regeneration, since so many after baptism live profane and unholy lives, and perish in their sins. Therefore, the preacher of special grace must, consistently with his own principles, lead his hearers to look for some new conversion, and expect some sensible regeneration. This brings him to use language in the highest degree perplexing to an ordinary hearer. To take an example from the same writer, whose only fault is the inconsistency to which he is reduced by his attachment to the system of election : “ The best duties of unregenerate men are no better, in God’s account and acceptance, than abomination. There is nothing that such men do, in the whole course of their lives, but at the last day it will be found in God’s register-book, among the catalogue of their sins. This man hath prayed so often, and heard so often ; made so many prayers, and heard so many sermons, and done many good works ; but yet, all this while, he was in an unconverted estate : these, therefore, are set down in God’s day-book in black ; and they are registered among

those sins that he must give an account for; not for the *substance of the actions* themselves, but because they come from rotten principles, that defile the best actions which he can perform.”*

Suppose this language addressed now as it was originally, to a congregation dedicated to Christ in baptism. What would be the feelings of a plain understanding, or a timid conscience, unable to unravel the windings of these secret things, on learning that the sinfulness or innocency of actions does not depend upon their being permitted or forbidden in the revealed law, but on the doer being in a regenerate or unregenerate state at the time when he performs them? How is this fact of *regeneracy*, upon which no less than eternity depends, to be discovered? The Apostle enu-

* Hopkins on the New Birth. Observe the difference between his language and our cautious Reformers: “Since actions which spring not of faith in Christ, are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.”

merates the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit; but his test is insufficient, for the two lists are here mixed and confounded. The hearers appeal to the Church, an authorized interpreter of Scripture. The Church acquaints them, that they were themselves regenerated, and made the children of grace, by the benefit of baptism; while the preacher evidently treats them as if it were possible they might be still unregenerate.

I am perfectly aware, that it is the doctrine of the whole Gospel, that whatever is not done to the glory of God, (if done by those to whom he is revealed,) and with a view of obedience to him, and of pleasing him, is not acceptable to him, or to be rewarded by him.* This

* This is expressly declared in our 13th Article respecting "Works done before the Grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit." The Article is known to have been levelled against a Pelagian tenet held by the Roman Catholics: and is founded on the explicit declaration, "without faith it is impossible to please God:" without the least allusion to those who have been baptized, "are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church."

truth might be made out by our natural reason,* even if it were not declared by the Apostle, that the right motive for well-doing is the desire of “glory, and honour, and immortality.” To be instant at all seasons in urging this, is plain, and edifying, and conformable to apostolical simplicity. But it is not true, setting aside the question of expediency as to teaching it, if it were true, that actions lose their character, right and wrong their distinction, virtue and vice their opposition, according as they are done by a nominal or real Christian, and under common or special grace. The actor may lose his reward, but the action retains its nature. The deed may be good in itself, though not spiritually performed; and although as coming from no just principle it obtains no acceptance with God, or recompense at the judgment-day. Now, as the object of all who

* “That our regard to the will of the Deity ought to be the supreme rule of our conduct, can be doubted of by nobody who believes his existence. The very thought of disobedience appears to involve in it the most striking impropriety.” Smith’s Moral Sentiments, Part III.

believe in a future state, must be to inherit an everlasting reward, it is surely enough, both for the purpose of alarm and inducement, to affirm this, without the intervention of nice distinctions, in which human reason must be perplexed, and human virtue may be lost; without introducing assertions as to the social affections and charitable feelings, which contradict experience and outrage reason; which startle the ignorant hearer, and misrepresent the Christian faith. “To the law and to the testimony,” both for the actions which the Gospel prescribes, and for the motives which the Gospel acknowledges; but let not the salvation of a flock hang upon their rightly understanding a difficult term, or seeing their way clearly through the unrevealed will of God.

I do not deny that there may be a danger, on the other hand, in addressing a congregation collectively as *regenerate*, since the term has neither been accurately defined in Scripture, nor restricted to one sense in the common language of divines. It is, therefore, very pos-

sible, that they should imagine something more to be necessarily included in that metaphor, than the change of state in which they were placed by baptism, and so be lulled into a fallacious security, without examining themselves as to the important fact, whether they have really those marks which accompany a "new creature." However absurd the reliance on any virtue of the *opus operatum* may be, it is not sufficient to trust that such absurdity must necessarily preserve men from adopting it. The confidence in the rite of circumcision and other externals among the Jews of old, the abuse of baptism itself by some mistaken Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries,* and of that ceremony, together with extreme unction, in the Romish church, and the unwarrantable notions which (it is to be feared) are too often associated with the Lord's supper still, are lamentable evidence of the facility with which mankind run away from realities to ceremonies, and content themselves with the shadow of the spiritual substance.

* See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xx.

But I contend, at the same time, that it is no less erroneous to call men, collectively, to regeneration, as to some renovation, transformation, or new creation, which *must necessarily* take place in all true Christians at a definite time and in a sensible or memorable manner subsequent to their baptism. This is the grand principle of those old divines who wrote after Calvinism had been reduced to a system, and made the groundwork of practical instruction. According to that system, there is required to regeneration “the infusion of a new real spiritual principle into the soul and its faculties;” this they spoke of as an “instantaneous production;” an “immediate supernatural work of God in us and upon us,” like an act of creation taking place “in an instant.”* This was the gift of special grace, and never bestowed except effectually to salvation.

No one can deny, that if this infusion of special grace is regeneration, and such are its

* Owen on the Spirit, book iii. sec. 19, 21.

consequences, it cannot be generally held to take place at baptism.

Happily for our Church, the framers of its rituals took their doctrine from the general tenor and promises of Scripture; and by a providential care extending over a church so framed, the succeeding believers in Calvin were never allowed to introduce their subtleties into her intelligible and rational formularies. Therefore we are instructed to declare, that those who are devoted to Christ as infants by baptism, are regenerate, i. e. are “accepted of God in the Beloved,” and dying “without actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.” And therefore we hold that those who grow up, may, or may not, fall from this state of grace; and that those who have fallen may or may not recover, and be finally saved: and therefore that all are to be exhorted to “examine themselves whether they be in the faith;” to repent, and turn to their Saviour, if they are not; to labour, if they are, still more after the “inward renewing of their souls day by day.”

That God acts by system, and according to one rule, we cannot doubt; we trace that uniformity of plan which belongs to Infinite Wisdom in every part of nature that is open to our inquiries. But human systems and divine, are very different things; and the source of the most perplexing errors in theology has been the attempt to reconcile all cases to an uniform rule, assumed to be infallible. For instance, it is impossible, without exciting doubts or encouraging errors, to use the same language as applicable to all the members of any modern congregation; or to imply that all who seek salvation through Christ are led in the same way, and go through the same course.*

Many who have once been pronounced regenerate, have afterwards entirely apostatized from their baptismal vows, and lived to all

* This is *implied*, when the phrase *new birth* is insisted upon: because the propriety of the metaphor depends upon its taking place at a definable point of time; which was the case, of course, with the Apostolical converts to whom the metaphor was originally applied.

outward appearance “ without God in the “ world,” till they are brought back, (shall we term it?) or added to the fold by some strong conviction of sin, some impression which may be definitively fixed and exactly traced. The person thus saved “ must necessarily both be sensible of it at the time, and remember it all his life afterwards. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgot. A man might as easily forget his escape from a shipwreck.”*

There is another class, who from the dawn of reason have fluctuated between sin and repentance ; not being without inward conviction of the holiness required of them by their baptismal engagements, but suffering the good seed that had been sown to be choked by worldly cares or sinful allurements, till by the grace of God acting more or less gradually, they are brought to seek repentance carefully with tears, in the name of their “ Advocate “ with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

* Paley, Sermon VII.

But allowing that a fearful majority, through the effect of inadequate education, and the intercourse of corrupt society aiding their natural proneness to sin, revolt from the obedience they owe to God: yet surely it will not be denied that some, "the happiest of their kind," have never thrown off that yoke of Christ which was laid upon them at their baptism; from the first opening of their infant understanding Christ has shone upon their hearts, and shed an influence which, through the blessing bestowed upon their parents' prayers, and the vigilance with which their rising passions have been watched and restrained, has never been extinguished. They have not indeed been free from sin; the flesh has risen against the spirit; and every examination of themselves tells them of transgressions and omissions of the full and perfect law, which testify the corrupt will striving against the power of grace: but this does not prove that they ever have been in a state of alienation from God, have ever thrown off their allegiance, or forfeited their adoption; sin has never been

allowed or habitual; and the evil nature, we know, "remains even in those that are regenerate." If, therefore, they were called upon to fix the date of their conversion, if they were led to suppose that some instantaneous change, some new creation, must take place in every heart that is effectually renewed, they who have really too much reason to rejoice, would be alarmed with unnecessary fears, and suffer a disturbance of which many of their inferiors in grace and the fruits of grace might be unconscious. He that had been "dead, and was alive again," had been "lost, and was found," was happy; but how much happier he who received the blessed assurance, "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine!"

Indeed, one can scarcely help believing; either that refinements upon the sublime truths of the Gospel had introduced such subtleties as I have been combating, before St. John wrote; or that he foresaw in the spirit that such curious questions would hereafter arise and trouble

the church : when he thus refuted, by a prophetic anticipation, the unscriptural theology of the absolute covenant : “ If ye know that He (the Son) is righteous, ye know that *every one that doeth righteousness is born of him*. Little children, *let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous*, even as He (God) is righteous. *He that committeth sin is of the devil*, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin : whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*”

I would not be understood to insinuate, that the persons who may preach under the full belief of the truth of doctrines here impugned, do, in fact, admit any ultimate proof of election and special grace, except personal holiness. Above all, the old writer, whom I have quoted, is free from any such charge ; insomuch, that his respectable editor expresses an apprehension, lest he should be thought by some to savour of

legality. But what is gained towards the great object, edification, by making a strong assertion in one page, the effect of which must be explained away in the next? In order to make room for a system, why break the connexion between election and holiness, real grace and real sanctification, which the Apostle so indissolubly preserves?

Whether the doctrine of personal election, with all its concomitants, be true or false, I must think it sufficiently proved, that, as far as St. Paul's example is valid, any subtle distinctions between true and special, or common grace, are mere nullities as to any practical purposes of the preacher. St. Paul expressly affirms, that no man can attain any degree of holiness without grace; and no less clearly intimates that all men, under the Gospel, are endued with such grace as may enable them to strive against natural corruption, to seek for the larger influence of the Spirit, and to work acceptably in the sight of God: such grace, as when it meets with a willing mind, is increased

“day by day,” and “inwardly renews” the Christian; where it is neglected and “done despite” unto, is gradually withdrawn, and the obdurate sinner at last “given over to a “reprobate mind.”*

This, I say, is the inference which an unbiassed survey of the Apostle’s doctrine conveys. And language like this is safe, because it is confirmed by the experience, and re-echoed by the conscience, of every individual. It is confirmed by the experience of the advanced Christian, who was at first weak in the faith, and subject to frequent lapses; but, still holding fast his profession, grew in grace: which being poured upon him more abundantly, displayed its effects in a more complete conquest of the natural man, in greater spirituality, in more earnest zeal; and gradually perfected

* “God has ordained, that wherever the promise of the Gospel shall be preached, there shall be and is ordinarily so much supernatural grace offered together with the outward means, as may justly convince the impenitent and unbelieving of a wilful neglect, if not a contemptuous rejection.”
Hall, Via Medir.

that godliness and holiness which is the triumph of the Spirit, and the ornament of the Gospel: The sinner gives a no less convincing, though a different proof, of the existence of grace within him: his progress in wickedness has its steps and degrees, as well as the true Christian's progress in holiness: he is at first opposed by grace, working with his conscience or reason; he must long neglect this inward light, before it will be quite extinguished; till God at length, whose "spirit will not always strive with man," "will no longer have mercy," but "hardens his heart," by taking away that which might soften it, and "gives him over to a reprobate mind, since he did not like to retain God in his knowledge."

It is indeed a sufficient confutation of the doctrine of special grace, that it absolutely nullifies the sacrament of baptism. It reduces it to an empty rite, an external mark of admission into the visible church, attended with no real grace, and therefore conveying no real

benefit, nor advancing a person one step towards salvation. But if baptism is not accompanied with such an effusion of the Holy Spirit towards the inward renewing of the heart, that the person baptized, who of himself and of his own nature could “do no good thing,” by this amendment or regeneration of his nature is enabled to bring forth fruit, “thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold,” and, giving “all diligence, to make his calling and election sure,”—if the effect, I say, of baptism is less than this, what becomes of the distinction made by John, “I indeed baptize with water, but he who comes after me, shall baptize with the Holy Ghost?” What becomes of the example of Christ himself? After his baptism, the descent of the Holy Spirit in a visible form, was surely intended to confirm his followers in a belief that their baptism would confer upon them a similar gift; and besides the washing away of their sins, and the remission of the penalty entailed upon the posterity of Adam, would bestow upon them a power enabling

them to fulfil the covenant laws of their religion.*

On the other hand, it is sometimes urged that *national conversions* are unknown to the Scriptures, and that the particular instances of conversion described in the Acts, are models

* For the agreement of this with our Church, see Article XXVII. the Baptismal Service, and the Catechism. I cannot resist the satisfaction of supporting the general tenour of these sentiments by the valuable authority of Bishop Ryder. "The question of regeneration, as far as it regards the use of the term, is in my opinion satisfactorily determined by the Articles and Offices of our Church, and by the meaning uniformly annexed to it in the four first centuries of the Christian æra.

"I would therefore wish generally to restrict the term to the baptismal privileges; and considering them as comprehending not only an external admission into the visible church, not only a covenanted title to the pardon and grace of the Gospel, *but even a degree of spiritual aid vouchsafed and ready to offer itself to our acceptance or rejection.* At the dawn of reason, I would recommend a reference to these privileges in our discourses, as talents which the hearers should have so improved as to bear interest, as seed which should have sprung up and produced fruit." Primary Charge, p. 17.

for us at this day.* If it is meant by this allegation, that not whole nations, but a comparatively few individuals, were converted during the age of the Apostles, the fact is undeniable. The Christian churches were scattered like fertile spots in an immense wilderness; a few believers among millions of idolaters. But surely no impartial hearer of the Scriptures can argue, that national conversion is not contemplated there; when the Messiah is promised as he in whom "all *nations* of the earth," not certain individuals of all nations, should be blessed; when he is prophetically described as the "desire of *all nations*;" when the express and comprehensive command was given, "Go and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That these words imply a benefit placed within the power of the whole

* How far they may justly be considered as still models for us, was discussed in the first Chapter. The doctrine of Paley, Sermon VII. there referred to, seems to me safe and incontrovertible.

nation generally, and not of a select part from each nation, cannot at least be denied on the face of the words themselves; which convey the impression that Christianity was to be gradually diffused, and the offer of the Gospel made without reserve.

No preacher therefore is authorized, either by our church, or by St. Paul, to leave a doubt on the minds of his hearers, whether they are within the pale of God's favour; but, on the contrary, is bound to enjoin them to seek "boldly at the throne of grace," for power to confirm their faith, and work out their repentance, and live worthily of their high calling.

If the Apostle's doctrine concerning the universality of grace has been correctly represented, the second question, whether grace is always efficacious, has been decided already. But it will throw additional light upon the most important of all subjects, if we inquire separately whether St. Paul con-

siders mankind as active or passive recipients of grace: in other words, whether sufficient grace unto salvation is never bestowed, without finally leading to salvation. Those who affirm this, maintain that grace completely subdues the will, and so irresistibly brings it over to faith in Christ, that man has it not even "from the remainder of his own sinful nature to oppose, or will not to believe:?"* much less in a nature wholly corrupt, and without a spark of good surviving the fall, can he co-operate with the work of the Spirit.

No one can be blind to the dangerous tendency of such doctrine; no one, I should imagine, would incur the hazard, except from an over-ruling sense of duty, of thus promoting rashness, supineness, or despair. It

* Even this was not granted to the opponents at Dort. In vain they asserted, "Man hath it not from any power of nature, that he *can* believe; that is merely from the grace of God; but still he hath it from the remainder of himself, that he can will *not to* believe."

becomes, therefore, a matter of high practical interest to examine St. Paul's mode of addressing the churches on this head: and I am inclined to think, that in several passages he speaks of a co-operation, or, at least, an exertion on man's part, which is incompatible with his being "a mere patient, working no more than dead, senseless matter in the artificer's hands."* For instance, when he encourages the Philippians to use their own power earnestly, from a consciousness of the grace by which they would be supported: "*Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you.*" ii. 13.

Also, where to the Galatians he speaks of the human power acting with the Spirit to produce good works: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he *that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*" Gal. vi. 7.

* Hooker on Justification.

The principle contended for, that free will is necessary to the merit of an action, is clearly admitted, 1 Cor. ix. 16: "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; *for necessity is laid upon me*: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this *thing willingly, I have a reward*: but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me." Also 2 Cor. ix. 7: "Let every man do according as *he is disposed in his heart*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*

Again, a natural exertion seems to be implied in these instructions to Timothy: "Charge those who are rich in this world, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they *may lay hold on eternal life*." I. vi. 19. Warn sinners, "that they may *recover*

* A similar result of still higher authority is deducible from John, ch. ix. 41: "If ye were blind, Jesus saith unto them, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth."

“ *themselves* out of the snare of the devil,
“ who have been taken captive by him at
“ his will.” II. ii. 25. Add James iv. 6;
7, 8.

I do not pretend that these passages are strong, or clear, or numerous enough, to decide the question; and even if they were more in number or clearer to the point, it might still be argued that such exertion or co-operation was the effect of the renewed will. The matter is of less consequence, since it is the positive doctrine of our Church, that such renewal, and such extent of power, is the privilege of baptism: and there can be no danger in leaving the question so far undecided, as St. Paul seems to have left it, together with the precise extent of human corruption, on which, in fact, it ultimately depends. Since he has not allowed us to be uncertain, that without grace mankind can attain neither faith nor holiness, there is little practical difference whether we maintain that the natural will is entirely subdued or gently

led: or how much original identity we suppose to continue after the effectual renovation. The attributes of God remain unimpeached, as long as it is allowed that the same power is given, the same mercy shown, the same grace vouchsafed to all.

But the other part of the inquiry is of momentous consequence—whether man, though he has it not of any power of nature, that he can co-operate with grace, yet “has it from “the remainder of himself,” that he can reject grace offered or given? And surely it is beyond all doubt that the Remonstrants at Dort, in asserting this latter clause, have St. Paul on their side.

For, first, he declares of the Gentiles, that “God gave them over to a reprobate mind, “*because they did not like to retain God in “their knowledge:*” and accuses the unbelieving Jews of wilful obduracy, when he

* Rom. i. 2, 8.

says, "After *thy hardness and impenitent heart*
 " (thou) treasurest up unto thyself wrath
 " against the day of wrath and revelation of
 " the righteous judgment of God."* This is
 surely intimating that each had rejected
 something placed within their power, even
 though addressed to unbelievers. Our con-
 cern, however, is with the members of the
 visible church. Exhorting those under simi-
 lar circumstances, St. Paul says, "We, then,
 " as workers together with (Christ), beseech
 " you that you *receive not the grace of God in*
 " *vain.*" 2 Cor. vi. 1.

To the Ephesians: "*Grieve not the Holy*
 "*Spirit* of God, whereby ye are (have been
 " *ἐσφραγισθητε*) sealed unto the day of re-
 " demption." iv. 20.

To the Thessalonians: "*Quench not the*
 "*Spirit.*" I. v. 17.

To the Hebrews he is particularly explicit,
 apparently because they were too ready to
 consider themselves unconditionally and im-

* Rom. ii. 5.

mutably the favourites of God. "Take heed, brethren, lest their be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." But "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day: *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*" iii. 12. He says again, "Look diligently, *lest any man fail of the grace of God.*" xii. 3. Timothy, himself, though "called with an holy calling, according to God's purpose and grace," he exhorts to "neglect not the gift that is in him," I. iv. 14; to "*stir up the gift of God.*" II. i. 6. "*That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*" II. i. 14.

Now it must, I think, be acknowledged, that whatever degree of power really existed in the persons to whom these words were written, to reject the grace proffered them

through the Gospel, and whether any or no; yet they are addressed throughout these passages as possessing what is commonly, though improperly, called freedom of will. And it must be remembered, that not a single passage on the contrary side can be set against these;* all that is argued on the other hand, is merely *inference*. No one, however, will deny, that it is safer to admonish mankind not to expect such grace as shall supersede all their own exertions, or overcome their wilful obduracy; than to persuade them, or allow them to persuade themselves, that the power of true grace is so irresistibly efficacious, that the subject of it cannot "fail," even if he will. It is satisfactory, therefore, to find that what is safe in this instance, is likewise apostolical, and may be practised without appearing to keep back "the counsel

* Some passages have been carelessly admitted into discussion on this point, which the most cursory review of the context will show to be spoken of the spiritual gifts bestowed upon the early ministers of the Gospel: as Rom. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 6, 7; 2 Cor. iii. 5; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

“ of God,” or to fear lest Christ should be unable to preserve his own Gospel from error.

But a stronger argument is still in reserve. For, if grace is so irresistibly bestowed, that it does not leave to mankind even the influence of their own corrupt nature in rejecting it, it must follow, that no one who has once received grace, can afterwards so fall away as to die impenitent. If the will is so entirely passive that it could not resist the reception of grace, it cannot, of course, lose it when received, but in this respect must remain passive to the end. It is perfectly consistent, therefore, that all who support the doctrine of efficacious grace, should maintain likewise final perseverance; and if final perseverance is contradicted by the Apostle, it is impossible that the former tenet should be true.

That St. Paul does contradict it, is undeniable. Addressing the Gentile converts

upon the rejection of the house of Israel, he says, Rom. xi. 19, "Well, because of unbelief
 " they were broken off, and thou standest by
 " faith. Be not high-minded ; but fear. For
 " if God spared not the natural branches,
 " take heed lest he also spare not thee. Be-
 " hold, therefore, the goodness and severity
 " of God : on them which fell, severity ; but
 " toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his*
 " *goodness ; otherwise*, thou also shalt be cut
 " off."

In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul supposes the case of a convert becoming subject to those sins which exclude a man from any
 " inheritance in the kingdom of God." If the case could not have happened, it would not have been supposed.

" I have written unto you not to keep company (with him), *if any man that is called*
 " *a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an*
 " *idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an*
 " *extortioner ; with such a one not even to*
 " eat." 1 Cor. v. 11.

Rebuking those who, by the abuse of their

“liberty, become a stumbling-block to those “who are weak,” he asks, “Through thy “knowledge shall the weak brother *perish*, for “whom Christ died?” I. viii. 11.

The tenth chapter of the same Epistle reminds the Corinthian church of the apostacies which took place among the Jews; and the punishments they suffered in consequence: and this conclusion is drawn, ver. 11: “Now “all these things happened unto them for “examples: and they are written for our “admonition, upon whom the ends of the “world are come: wherefore let him that “thinketh he standeth, *take heed lest he fall.*”

The Thessalonians St. Paul assures that the reason of his sending Timothy as the bearer of his letter, was his fear lest they should sink under the persecutions with which he heard they were threatened. “For this “cause, when I could no longer forbear, I “sent to know your faith, *lest* by some means “the tempters have tempted you, and *our* “labour be in vain.” I. iii. 5.

In his second Epistle he instructs the same

church how to act, in case of a member so conducting himself as to require to be separated from the congregation: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that *walketh disorderly*, and not after the tradition which ye received of us." II. ii. 6.

Throughout the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, grievous cases of lapse are both supposed as possible, and mentioned as having occurred; and it is clearly intimated, that they are to be expected in every church. After naming Hymenæus, and Philetus, "who concerning the truth had erred, and *overthrown the faith* of some," he adds, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some to honour and some to dishonour.*" 2 Tim. ii. 21.

So to Titus: “ A man that *is an heretic*,
 “ after the first and second admonition, reject ;
 “ knowing that he that is such, *is subverted.*”
 iii. 10.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle, as might be expected, continually admonishes them of the necessity of the greatest caution ; as they had been too long in the habit of considering themselves the peculiar favourites of God. He uses these among other remarkable expressions : “ *If we sin wilfully* after that we
 “ have received the knowledge of the truth,
 “ there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
 “ but a certain fearful looking for of judgment,
 “ and fiery indignation, which shall devour the
 “ adversaries.” x. 26. Even of himself he says,
 “ I keep under my body, and bring it into
 “ subjection ; *lest* that by any means, when I
 “ have preached to others, *I myself should be a*
 “ *castaway.*” * 1 Cor. ix. 27.

* This is one of the many passages which have suffered by the general bias of the age in which our translation was made. There is certainly no reason why *ἀδοκιμος* should not be translated *reprobate* here, as well as in 2 Tim. xi. 8,

The general tendency of these passages must have led the early Christians to conclude that they were by no means secure, though they had been made partakers of the grace of the Gospel; and that, though they were admitted as heirs to the kingdom of God, it was possible they might still fail of final salvation. However certain St. Paul might think it, or know it, to be, that they *would* persevere to the end, and obtain the crown of righteousness, he evidently did not find it expedient to give them this assurance, but rather to exhort them to hold fast the faith without wavering, lest they should ultimately fail.

That the doctrines of efficacious grace, and its necessary consequence, final perseverance, should have found numerous votaries in a church, whose members profess to “ receive

reprobate concerning the faith; or Tit. i. 16, *to every good work reprobate*. But as the case is, an English reader has not the opportunity of knowing, that St. Paul talks of the possibility of his own *reprobation*, i. e. rejection, on account of unfitness for reward.

the promises of God, as they are contained in Scripture,"* may well be deemed surprising. If St. Paul had written expressly against the latter tenet, as some suppose he did the Epistle to the Hebrews,† he could not have used stronger language consistently with the indisputable fact of the churches he addresses being, as bodies, under the immediate protection of God.

It is true, these doctrines follow as consequences from other doctrines, supposed to be found in Scripture; and on this account are they to be supported, in spite of Scripture? Where premises are ascertained beyond the reach of doubt, either by demonstration or by admitted authority, they must indeed be taken with all their results; and the only question can be, whether the results spring necessarily

* Article XVII.

† This remark might have been made with equal justice of St. Peter's second Epistle. See particularly the insuperable passage, ii. 20, &c. and iii. 17, 18; and John, ii. 8: "Look to yourselves, that *we lose not* those things which we "have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

from the premises. But if the premises themselves are disputed points, they cannot be better tried than by examining their consequences.

Dr. Reid tells us, that he had originally been a firm believer in Locke's theory of ideas; till at last finding other consequences to result from that theory, which gave him more uneasiness than the nonexistence of matter, he began to examine into the foundations of that universally received theory, and soon convinced himself, as he has since convinced most others, that the hypothesis was itself erroneous. Had the advocates of final perseverance been led to review, in this manner, the foundation of that doctrine, perhaps they would never have raised the superstructure.

The fact is, that the nature of man, and the attributes of God, both combine to render it improbable that those who have long believed in the "good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," should so ultimately fall away, as "to crucify the Son of God afresh,

“and put him to an open shame.” By the constitution of human nature, moral habits acquire great power over us. Motives to bad actions, which were at first weak and easily resistible, may become all but insuperable, after long indulgence; so that it may be foreseen with considerable certainty, by one who knows the general habits and character of another, whether he will be overcome by any particular temptation or no. The divine wisdom has ordained, that habits of piety and virtue should be no less strengthened by exercise and time; that motives to sin should gradually lose their force; that natural corruption should oppose less and less resistance to the Holy Spirit: and although we are assured that, till the very close of our pilgrimage on earth, we must “keep our body under, and bring it into subjection;” still experience shows that the longer we have persevered in holy ways, the easier it will be to reduce our passions under the influence of religion, and of course the less will be our danger of “parting from grace given.” “The principle

of virtue, improved into a habit, will be, in proportion to the strength of it, a security against the danger which finite creatures are in, from the very nature of propension, or particular affections." *

We have still further ground for confidence in the lively interest which God himself is graciously represented as taking in the final success of his faithful servants: "The Lord knoweth those that are his." "God will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If "any man love me," says our Saviour, "I and my Father will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He who promised to his disciples, to be with them even to the end of the world; and to Peter, that he would pray for him, that his faith might not fail; will never leave us or forsake us, till we ultimately refuse to follow him.

* Butler's Analogy, chap. v.

To hold out this general assurance, as an encouragement to pious habits and a consolation to the weak Christian under spiritual afflictions, is not only justifiable, but useful and apostolical. But to the question, whether the doctrine of final perseverance, in its usual acceptation, is preached by St. Paul, the passage I have cited must return an answer in the negative. He declares that "to our safety, our own sedulity is required,"* in as decisive terms, as if our safety depended upon our sedulity alone. And every discreet follower of St. Paul will be no less careful to prevent his flock from believing that they have "apprehended or attained, or are already perfect," till they have reached the end of the race that is set before them.

* Hooker. If all who preach on "the certainty and perpetuity of faith in the elect," had judgment and wariness like his, there would be no danger lest the topic of Christian consolation should become the ground of unhallowed presumption.

CHAPTER V.

ON JUSTIFICATION.*

THE point of immediate interest with mankind, after learning the humiliating truth of their condemnation, is, to be made acquainted with the means of their reconciliation in the sight of God. And this is the arrangement of St. Paul, as we shall observe, by referring once more to the course of his argument to the Romans. As, in the order of events, the atonement of Christ, though determined “before the foundation of the world,” was consequent upon

* Since divines have greatly differed in the sense they have attached to the word Justification, it may be necessary to define it, according to our Church in the Eleventh Article, as the being “accounted righteous before God.” Those who speak of a present and final justification, introduce a needless perplexity; and those who identify it with salvation, though with some passages of Scripture on their side, differ from our Church; as is evident from the mere title of the Thirteenth Article, “Of Works done before Justification.”

the fall of man; so, in his explanation of the divine dispensations, the Apostle uses the doctrine of human corruption, as an introduction to that of their acceptance through faith. Having, in the first instance, as was fully shown, brought all under conviction, that "their own works or deservings" could give them no claim to the favour of God, but that, on the contrary, they were justly subject to the "wrath, revealed from heaven against all "ungodliness and unrighteousness," i. 18; having stopped "every mouth," and proved "all the world guilty before God," iii. 19: he sums up the argument, "Therefore by the "deeds of the law (the moral code, as is evident from the context) there shall no flesh be "justified in his sight." iii. 20. He then proceeds to declare that the mercy of the Creator had devised a mode by which he consented to pardon the sins of his repentant people, and to accept their imperfect obedience: "But now "the righteousness of God without the law is "manifested, being witnessed by the law and "prophets (i. e. testified throughout the whole

“ course of the Jewish Scriptures); even the
“ righteousness of God which is by faith of
“ Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them
“ that believe; for there is no difference; for
“ all have sinned, and come short of the glory
“ of God: being justified freely by his grace
“ through the redemption that is in (*by*)
“ Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be
“ a propitiation through faith in his blood, to
“ declare his righteousness for (*in*) the remis-
“ sion of sins that are past, through the for-
“ bearance of God. To declare, I say, at this
“ time his righteousness, that he might be
“ just, and the justifier of him which believeth
“ in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is
“ excluded. By what law? of works? nay:
“ but by the law of faith. *Therefore we con-*
“ *clude that a man is justified by faith without the*
“ *deeds of the law.*” iii. 21, &c.

This is the mysterious doctrine revealed in the Gospel, and insisted upon as the foundation-stone of his preaching throughout all the Epistles of St. Paul. Whatever objections

men may make, whatever argument they may deduce from speculations on the divine nature and attributes, might be important in natural religion: but if we believe the New Testament to be revealed from God, we must repress these speculations, and receive what we find thus positively declared. St. Paul frequently insinuates that these doctrines are not only undiscoverable to natural reason, but even disagreeable to it. Perhaps it is on this account, that he is fuller upon them, more earnestly repeats them, and more frequently returns to them.

The fact, however, is certain, that he represents justification by faith in Christ, as the main pillar of the system, the removal of which would be the subversion of every other doctrine; with which, in short, the whole must stand or fall. To prove this is the principal object of some of the Epistles, where he saw that it was endangered by Jewish prejudices; but he wrote none in which it is not distinctly laid down as the character of the

Gospel he preached, that “ being justified by
 “ faith, we have peace with God, through our
 “ Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. v. 1.

This fact cannot be seen in its due importance, without a regular series of examples.

“ God hath chosen the foolish things of the
 “ world to confound the wise; and God hath
 “ chosen the weak things of the world to con-
 “ found the things that are mighty; that no
 “ flesh should glory in his presence. *But of*
 “ *him ye are in Christ Jesus; who of God is made*
 “ *unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sancti-*
 “ *fication, and redemption.*” 1 Cor. i. 27, &c.

A little onward in the Epistle, St. Paul, when speaking of the divisions in the Corinthian church, proposes this as a test of a faithful minister: “ *Other foundation can no man*
 “ *lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.*”
 I. iii. 11.

The second Epistle to the same church is no less explicit: “ All things are of God, who
 “ *hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,*
 “ and hath given to us the ministry of recon-

“ ciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ,
“ *reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing*
“ *their trespasses unto them, and hath com-*
“ *mited unto us the word of reconciliation.*
“ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as
“ though God did beseech you by us: we pray
“ you in Christ’s stead, *be ye reconciled unto*
“ *God. For he hath made him to be sin for us,*
“ *who knew no sin, that we might be made the*
“ *righteousness of God through him.”* 2 Cor.
v. 18.

The Epistle to the Galatians being expressly written to prove this doctrine, I will only extract a single passage: “ The Scripture hath
“ concluded all under sin, that the *promise by*
“ *faith of Jesus Christ* might be given to them
“ that believe. Wherefore the law was our
“ schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that
“ *we might be justified by faith.* For ye are all
“ *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”*
Gal. iii. 22.

To the Ephesians St. Paul writes, God,
“ who is rich in mercy, for his great love
“ wherewith he loved us, even when we were

“ dead in sins, hath quickened us together
 “ with Christ; for by grace are *ye saved*,
 “ *through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is*
 “ *the gift of God, not of works*, lest any man
 “ should boast.” ii. 4, &c.

To the Philippians, iii. 9, after declaring his exact compliance with the ceremonial and moral law, as a Hebrew, he concludes: “ But
 “ what things were gain to me, those I counted
 “ loss for Christ; that I may be found in him,
 “ *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.”

To the Colossians he is particularly full, and sums up the doctrine thus: “ It pleased the
 “ Father, that in him (Christ) should all ful-
 “ ness dwell; and *having made peace through*
 “ *the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all*
 “ *things unto himself*; by him, I say, whether
 “ they be things in earth or things in heaven.
 “ And you hath he reconciled, if ye continue
 “ in the faith grounded and settled, and be

“ not moved *away from the hope of the Gospel.*”
i. 19, &c.

To the Thessalonians: “ God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain *salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.*”
I. v. 9. See also II. ii. 26.

To Timothy: “ God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and *one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.*” 1 Tim. ii. 6. Add II. ii. 10.

To Titus: “ After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*” iii. 3.

It may seem unnecessary to quote from the

Epistle to the Hebrews, the principal object of which was to prove the fulfilment of the promise in Christ: however, to complete the induction, I will select a single passage: “ Christ, being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by *his own blood*, he entered in once into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us.*” ix. 11. *

It appears, therefore, that there is not a single Epistle in which the same doctrine of the reconciliation of man to God, through Christ’s blood alone, i. e. of justification by faith, is not urged and pressed upon the brethren, most fully, powerfully, and distinctly. The

* Compare 1 Peter, i. 19: “ Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot;” and ii. 24. Add John: “ Jesus Christ the righteous, is the propitiation for our sins; and not of ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” I. ii. 2.

result of these passages is this, that the object of Christ's taking upon himself the human form and nature, was not only, or chiefly, to teach a purer moral code, suited to the advancement of mankind in knowledge and civilization; not only, or chiefly, to declare a future state of rewards and punishments; this might as well have been revealed in the manner of the Mosaic law: but to redeem mankind, when they were lost through sin; i. e. to rescue a fallen race from the punishment they had incurred at the hands of their Creator. Thus was Christ foretold to Abraham, as He in whom "all the nations of the earth should be *blessed*:" thus was he described by the Prophets as he who "*was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*:" thus was he welcomed by his har-binger, St. John, "Behold the Lamb of God that *taketh away the sins of the world*;" thus he characterized himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; *no man cometh unto*

“ *the Father, but by me:*” and thus, as has been shown at large, he was preached by St. Paul, with a minuteness of explanation and variety of expression which could only arise from the conviction that there was “ no other “ name under heaven by which mankind could “ be saved.” Christ, therefore, is the only agent concerned as a meritorious cause in our justification: even faith has no part in it, considered as a cause, being only the mean through which we claim and appropriate to ourselves the benefits which the sacrifice of Christ procured. “ As the looking up of the old Israelites did not of itself procure any health unto them, but the promise made in the object, which was the brazen serpent, whereupon they looked, gave them health by their looking up: even so, after the like sort, are we saved by our faith and spiritual looking up to the body of Christ crucified.” * In St. Paul’s sense, therefore, faith implies a total reliance upon Christ in the whole work of our salvation—an entire renunciation of our own merits,

* Bradford’s Letters.

considered as contributing towards it—a humble dependence that, “being justified by his blood,” we shall also finally “be saved from wrath “through him.” Rom. v. 9. .

There has been in all ages a strong tendency to oppose this doctrine of justification. The principal error which St. Paul himself was called upon to combat, was that of the Judaizing Christians, who taught, either openly or by implication, that the Gospel was not in itself sufficient, but that circumcision, the Levitical atonement, abstinence from particular meats, and other ceremonial observances, were necessary towards justification. This error, which was the subject of the council at Jerusalem, and was a cause of dissension even among the Apostles themselves, is alluded to in most of the Epistles, and circumstantially discussed in that to the Galatians, where it is explicitly declared to be subversive of the Christian covenant, not on local or temporary grounds, but by arguments that are of all ages and countries. He did not condemn circum-

cision as a thing heretical, or constrain the Jews to forsake it, well knowing that it is of no consequence whether a man conform or not to any different custom which may prevail in his own country: he does not argue as if the obligation to eat meats of every sort were any more binding than that of abstinence from them; for, “neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision;” and “whether a man eat or eat not, he is neither better nor worse:” but he earnestly and powerfully contends that the dependence upon these things, as if they were meritorious in the sight of God, or could procure the remission of sins, is contradictory to the terms and nature of the Gospel. “Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any

“ thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which
“ worketh by love.” Gal. v. 2—6.

The importance which St. Paul attached to this deviation from the true faith, may be understood, both by the strain of zealous indignation which distinguishes his Epistle to the Galatians, and by the earnestness with which he reproved St. Peter himself, who, on this subject, could hardly be persuaded to lay aside his national prejudices. And the arguments by which he opposed the specific error of the day, are applicable to all times. Nothing must be added to Christ in the article of justification. Dependence on the works of the Mosaic law was confined to the first age of Christianity; but to substitute any other works for the Jewish ceremonial, so as to let them fill the place which the sacrifice of Christ should alone occupy, is to introduce the same fundamental error in principle, though not in terms. I would not, indeed, be understood to mean that the works of the moral law are not of more universal obligation than the positive enactments

of the Jewish ritual ; but only to affirm, with St. Paul, that both are equally unable to contribute towards justification. Men are always prone to confound the distinction between the foundation of the building, and the parts essential to its use and beauty. All the graces of holiness are necessary to form the perfect Christian—"the temple of the Holy Ghost." "But other *foundation* can no man lay, than "that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The attachment to Jewish ceremonies was no sooner dissolved by the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jews as a people, than a fresh inroad upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice was virtually made by a race of ascetics and anchorites, who nourished that self-righteousness which is so natural to the human heart, under the disguise of "will-worship and voluntary humility." Then began the curious refinements and proud pretensions to sanctity, joined to unprofitable ceremonies and bodily austerities, which ended in the establishment of the throne of the lamentable, though predicted, apostacy

in Papal Rome. It is in the nature of the Roman Catholic religion silently to undermine the true notion of Christian justification; and such must be its practical effect as long as pardons, masses, auricular confessions, with penance and satisfaction for sins, are supposed available, however its language and professed tenets may be purified by the influence of the Reformation. Whether purgatory is believed—whether fasts, celibacy, or penances are imposed, is not a matter of indifference; wherever they exist, they will gradually supersede the righteousness which is by faith, and, like the errors of the Judaizing Galatians, destroy the spirit of the Gospel. The consummation of this revolt from Christ was fulfilled in that impious system of *indulgences*, which at length turned the eye of enlightened reason towards “the law and the testimony.” And so it proved, that when men of strong minds, like the first Reformers, applied to the fountain-head for doctrines which had been totally neglected by the ignorant infatuation of many centuries, a new revelation seemed to burst upon

them. The Head of the church had been completely dethroned. Pardon had been dispensed by the hands of men ;* sins remitted by compliance with human ordinances: the saints had not only attained heaven themselves by their meritorious works, but had some merit to spare for others ; which is, in fact, to hold, either that the satisfaction of Christ is not sufficient, or that mankind may “ have peace with God ” through other access than that which he affords. Thus the doctrine of Luther and Cranmer was rather a restoration than a reformation of the Christian scheme : and the arguments they used in support of it were the same which St. Paul had used to the advocates of the Jewish law, whether moral or ceremonial, in addressing the Romans and Galatians.

* The tenth article alleged against Barnes by Gardiner affirmed, “ that a man, being in deadly sin, may have grace to do *the works of penance, whereby he may attain to justification.* ” The rest, for refusing assent to which Barnes suffered at the stake, are many of them equally unscriptural. —Fathers of the Church, vol. i.

The prevailing error of later generations is equally destructive to the true doctrine of the Gospel, though more favourable to good morals; and is not the less to be guarded against for coming under a more specious form. An age which flatters itself that "vice has lost half its evil in losing all its grossness," is sure to entertain an inadequate apprehension of the value and necessity of the atonement, and to exalt, proportionably the sufficiency of obedience to moral duties, and of a useful life, for the purpose of justification. This mistake particularly belongs to an advanced state of civilization: a rude age has recourse to a severe ritual, and trusts to the efficacy of penances, and ceremonies, and gifts to the church or ostentatious charities: an intelligent age sees the vanity of these; but justifies itself by its supposed morality. Now, error is never eradicated with more difficulty, than when it is mixed with truth. A crop that is altogether bad may be swept down at once; but it requires the most careful husbandry so to separate the bad from

the good, as not to root up the wheat with the tares. And as it cannot be doubted that a strict compliance with the moral law is necessary to *form* the Christian, a door is easily opened for the erroneous belief that it is able to *justify* the Christian.

To this it may be added, that the vice which most naturally springs up in a state of refined society, is pride, the very vice which is most exactly opposed to the reception of the Gospel. The acceptance of salvation as "a free gift," implies the acknowledgment of personal insufficiency; but pride refuses any such acknowledgment, and whispers that it is derogatory to the dignity of human nature to suppose it unequal to satisfy the strictest demands. A feeling of this kind perverts the truth, however plainly declared, and insists on resting our salvation upon something we do, instead of what has been done for us. Hence the prevailing inclination, sometimes professed, and sometimes glossed over by certain unmeaning terms, to look upon the Gospel only as a superior code

of morals, sanctioned by an explicit declaration of rewards and punishments ; a part of Revelation of extreme importance, no doubt, but how unlike the main object of Christ's mission, has been already shown in the language of his chief Apostle. In short, the severe remark of one of our earliest reformers is still too applicable : "The Turk, the Jew, and the Papist," to which may be now added, the nominal Christian, "build upon free-will, and ascribe their justifying to their works. The Turk, when he has sinned, runs to purifyings or ceremonies of Mahomet, and the Jew to the ceremonies of Moses, and the Pope unto his own ceremonies, to fetch forgiveness of their sins : " the nominal Christian pleads his generally moral and useful life : " but the true Christian goes through repentance toward the law to the faith that is in Christ's blood."*

If, then, justification by faith alone, is the foundation of the Christian scheme, as St.

* Tindal on the Obedience of a Christian Man.

Paul unequivocally declares; and if justification by works, of some sort or other, is the error most flattering to the human heart, and appears, under various shapes, in the corruptions of every age; it follows, that the preacher of the Gospel should regard this point as at the same time most important, and most likely to be assailed. It is against this doctrine that the enemy is sure to direct his chief attacks, but which is, nevertheless, indispensable to the safety of the citadel, and must be kept at all hazards, or what is left will not be worth preserving. Of this there can be no doubt, if we believe St. Paul, who employs the principal part of three Epistles upon this single article, condemning all confidence in the ceremonial law throughout his Epistle to the Galatians, and rejecting alike the ceremonial and the moral law, as grounds of justification, to the Romans and Hebrews. He even interrupts his argument for the sake of a digression to prove that faith in the divine promises was the principal source of Abraham's favour; i. e.

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that the way of salvation is in fact the same "yesterday, to-day, and ever."

In order to keep this doctrine pure, it is necessary to bear constantly in view the example of St. Paul, and represent, in its just dimensions, the extent and power of natural corruption. Convince the world "of sin and judgment," and it will seek "righteousness" where alone it can be found. Human nature has received so much silent improvement through the influence of Christianity, that some may imagine it has no right to be still addressed in St. Paul's language. But fact forbids us to apply such deceitful flattery to the age we live in. Those who reject the truth, and "have not liked to retain God in their knowledge," still bear daily witness that there is no real or consistent goodness in the man who does not learn from the Gospel, and is not actually under the dominion of grace. This is true of those who keep up enough of "the form of godliness" to satisfy general opinion. Then,

whether we survey our cities or our villages, we find sin in all its shapes and extremes of heinousness, to which the terms used towards an unconverted heathen would not be inapplicable. There is, indeed, a difference, and a sublime one, between the Apostle's days and ours: for wickedness is now reprov'd by a multitude of contrasted characters—the thousands are now multiplied which have not bowed the knee to Baal—more shining lights exist in the midst of a perverse generation—more trophies are seen of the power of Christ over Satan; but the natural man is still at enmity with God, because at enmity with holiness—still of itself prone to evil and averse from righteousness—still equally liable to become what the first Christians had been before their conversion; and if so, then each individual should be plainly taught that he has equal need of redemption through Christ's blood, and earnestly invited to throw the burden of his sinful nature upon Him who "died for all men:" if he is indeed "led by the Spirit," and become "a new creature," he must equally confess

that he is "justified freely through the grace " which is by Christ Jesus." The propensity of a self-righteous pride must be counteracted by a perpetual recurrence to St. Paul's doctrine, that it is the revealed will of God, to "count faith for righteousness:" that through this medium alone he will pardon the actual transgressions and habitual infirmities of mankind; that their good works he will not admit as claims, though he expects them as offerings. Whoever rejects this mode of acceptance with God, "is debtor to do *the whole law*: *Christ is become of no effect* unto him, *whosoever is justified by the law*: he is fallen from grace." Gal. v.

It is by means of this justification, and through the immediate agency of Christ in the salvation of every true believer, that a connexion is established between heaven and earth, and faith becomes, as it were, a chain between them. A spiritual intercourse begins, which is to last for eternity. Over every individual who has cordially received his "yoke," and

sealed by his faith the covenant of baptism, Christ watches with a more than paternal care : anxiously guards his eternal interests ; infuses his grace more and more, as it is more and more cherished and improved : and in the difficulties and dangers of the Christian's pilgrimage, is able and willing " to save unto the uttermost." This connexion, this spiritual dependence of man upon his Saviour, results from the doctrine of justification by faith rightly understood, and practically applied : not merging the interests we have in Christ, in " barren generalities, which take in the world at large, and only affect the individual as an infinitesimal part of that world ; but bringing it home to the bosom of all, as the sole principle of their holiness here and their hope hereafter.

One of the first means of inspiring the Apostle's ideas, is to use the Apostle's words in the sense which he gave them. Intimately feeling that faith was the essential part of a Christian's profession, he includes in that word

the whole religious and moral duty required of a Christian.* In violation of his example, why has the general term *religion* been suffered to usurp the place of faith? a word almost unknown to the Gospel; certainly not authorized, in this sense, by St. Paul; and equally applicable to the sacrifices of the Jew, the idolatry of the Gentile, the prostrations of the Mahometan, the aspirations of the Deist, and the formal worship of the nominal Christian. Apostolical doctrine must be conveyed in apostolical terms, or the ideas excited will be at variance with the truths delivered.

Here, perhaps, some grave and good persons will take alarm, and say, This is to give the hand of fellowship to the Solifidian or Antinomian. Turn to St. Paul, we may reply; can you find language stronger than he uses, to

* This is well expressed in these words of Hopkins: "A true, saving, and justifying faith, is not any one single act, either of knowledge or will; but a complicated grace, made up of many particular acts, and is nothing else but the motion of the whole soul towards God and Christ."—Covenant of Grace.

enforce the doctrine of justification by faith alone? yet what was the change he effected in his converts, turning their actions together with their hearts from "darkness to light?" It is everlastingly true, that the promise of the Gospel is given to faith, and that from faith, the only holiness acknowledged by the Gospel, springs: but it is with those alone who do not truly apprehend the truth, or who wilfully pervert it, that this doctrine can be supposed to chill the love of virtue. This need not be matter of argument, but of fact. When was immorality more flagrant, or the general practice of mankind more totally without restraint of laws, revealed or natural, than during that dark period of the Christian church, when the notion of merits and of works of supererogation prevailed, to the exclusion of the true doctrine of justification? Again, what public morals were at the beginning of the last century, is notorious both from the history of that time, and from the indelible records which its writings have transmitted to us. If, then, we in-

quire into the religion of that same period, we shall learn that the " Gospel principle of faith had begun to be held by many for fanatical; and that those who understood its true original, found so much difficulty in adjusting the distinct rights of grace and morality, that things were come to such a pass, (morality was advanced so high, and faith so frittered into nonsense,) that it became the fashionable tenet of the times, to consider Christianity as a re-publication of the religion of nature."* Look now to the opposite side. Who have been more conspicuous for charity under all its bearings, for zeal in the cause of religion, for temperance in all those pleasures which are of a doubtful character; in short, who have more recommended Christianity by their practice, than those who have most earnestly supported and defended St. Paul's doctrine of justification?

* Warburton's Discourse on the Holy Spirit. Neither the Bishop nor myself must be accused of saying this without limitation. No doubt there were many shining exceptions to the prevailing error of the age.

Shall we not look in vain for a life more pure and innocent, more sincere in primitive simplicity, than that of the venerable Hooker? yet he showed his sense of this doctrine, which he had preached during his ministry, by his last words: "Where I have failed, Lord, show mercy to me; for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for His merits, who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners."* An appeal to the history of the church will show every reasonable inquirer, that in all ages those have obeyed Christ most strictly as their guide and teacher, who have most openly avowed and most sincerely received him as their Saviour and Redeemer.†

* Walton's Life of Hooker.

† A remarkable testimony to this purpose occurs in Dr. Chalmer's Address to his Parishioners at Kilmany. "I cannot but record (he says, p. 40) the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment, which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years among you. During the whole of that period, in which I made no attempt against the natural enmity of the mind to God, while I was inattentive to the way in which

this enmity is dissolved, viz. *by the free offer* on the one hand, and *the believing acceptance* on the other, of the Gospel salvation; while Christ, through whose blood the sinner, who by nature stands afar off, is brought near to the heavenly Lawgiver whom he has offended, was scarcely ever spoken of, or spoken of in such a way as stripped him of all the importance of his character and his offices, even at this time I certainly did press the reformations of honour, and truth, and integrity among my people; *but I never once heard of any such reformation having been effected among them.* I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till reconciliation to Him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him, was set before them as the unceasing object of their meditation and their prayers; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interests with God, and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforesaid made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations. But now, a sense

of your heavenly Master's eye has brought another influence to bear upon you. You have at least taught me, that *to preach Christ* is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches."

This is surely important matter of consideration for the young and earnest minister. We find here the same person recording the different effect of two different modes of preaching which he himself had exercised; and attributing his ultimate success to the essential doctrines which all acknowledge the Gospel to contain.

CHAPTER VI.

ON SANCTIFICATION.*

I HAVE urged, and I believe with truth, that no inducement will operate so strongly towards a holy life and conversation, as the genuine doctrines of the Gospel. Only the naked proposition, that works contribute nothing to justification, can be laid hold of by the Solifidian : which is indeed indisputably true, but by no means the whole truth which Christians ought to hear. “ Faith alone justifies, yet faith alone is not sufficient.”† St. Paul well knew the human heart, and foresaw the perversions which might rob even “ divine philosophy” of its

* I adopt this term in preference to the phrase “ good works,” because the latter appears rather to signify certain specific and unconnected acts of goodness, than that universal holiness, and life of obedience, which is required of Christians, and forms the subject of the present chapter.

† Luther’s Com. on Galatians.

charms: ever watchful, therefore, for the honour of his Master's cause, by a prophetic anticipation, he confutes the Antinomian in the very passages which might seem most favourable to that heresy. The division of the Epistles into separate verses, and the custom of quoting these verses singly to prove particular points, has given a colourable support to numerous subtleties, which a reference to the context would clear away at once. With regard to the present question, it is not a little remarkable, that an association ever presents itself to St. Paul's mind between the mercy of Christ, and the holiness of the Christian; and that a strong declaration of the doctrine of justification by faith, never fails to draw from him, within a very few sentences, an equally strong admonition to the justified man, of the necessity of sanctification. I observe this the more particularly, because I am aware that many excellent persons have not seen in the same light the conduct of the Apostle. Preach the truth, they say, openly; and trust to God, who "giveth the increase," to preserve it

pure from error or perversion. This language would come with more force, if it were backed with similar confidence on St. Paul's part; but there is no lesson he teaches more anxiously, both by his practice and his writings, than the duty of removing a stumbling-block from a brother's way. In the spirit of the arguments he employs on similar subjects, he would say upon this, *You* clearly see that faith in Christ will produce obedience to his commands; you do well: another thinks that faith exempts him from the obligations of the moral law. And what? Through your strength "shall a weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"

In compliance with the plan I have prescribed to myself, I shall point out by various passages, the association which I mentioned as habitual in the Apostle's train of reasoning.

This occurs first, in the same natural order as we have observed in the former doctrines, in the Epistle to the Romans. "Where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound:

“ that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so
 “ might grace reign through righteousness unto
 “ eternal life. What shall we say then? *Shall*
 “ *we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*
 “ *God forbid.* How shall we that are dead to
 “ *(by) sin, live any longer therein?*” v. 20.
 vi. 1. And again, to the same church, the
 conclusion drawn from the merciful revelation
 he had unfolded is this: “ I beseech you,
 “ therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God,*
 “ *that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,*
 “ *holy, acceptable unto God, which is your rea-*
 “ *sonable service.*” xii. 1.

To the Corinthians, after forbidding particular sins, “ *Ye are bought with a price: there-*
 “ *fore glorify God in your body and in your*
 “ *spirit, which are God’s.*” vi. 20.

In the second Epistle, “ We thus judge,
 “ that if one died for all, then were all dead ;
 “ and that he died for all, *that they which live*
 “ *should not henceforth live unto themselves, but*
 “ *unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*”
 v. 15. Add vii. 1.

To the Galatians, in the same turn of argu-

ment, though with a particular allusion to the general subject of the Epistle: "Brethren, " ye have been called unto liberty; *only use* " *not liberty* for an occasion to the flesh, but " by love serve one another." v. 13. Add v. 24; vi. 7.

To the Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved " through faith; and that not of yourselves, " it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any " man should boast. *For we are his workman-* " *ship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,* " which God hath before ordained that we " should walk in them." ii. 8. Add iv. 1 & 17.

"To the Philippians, after encouraging their "joy in Jesus Christ," he adds, "*Only* " *let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel* " *of Christ.*"

To the Colossians: "*If ye* then be risen " with Christ, seek those things which are " above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand " of God. When Christ, who is our life, shall " appear, then shall ye also appear with him " in glory. *Mortify, therefore, your members* " *which are upon the earth.*" iii. 1.

To the Thessalonians: “ *Furthermore*, we
 “ beseech you, brethren, and exhort you *by*
 “ *the Lord Jesus*, that as ye have received
 “ of us how ye ought to walk and to please
 “ God, *so ye would abound more and more.*”

I. iv. 1.

The Epistles to Timothy and Titus deserve the especial consideration of every minister, as exhibiting the earnest anxiety of St. Paul to build up all the Christian graces upon Christian doctrine, “ that the man of God may be perfect, “ thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” In particular, after giving various exhortations adapted to the various conditions of life, he concludes: “ These things teach and exhort. “ If any man teach otherwise, and consent not “ to wholesome words, even the words of our “ Lord Jesus Christ, and to *the doctrine which* “ *is according to godliness*, he is proud, know- “ ing nothing, but doting about questions and “ strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, “ railings, evil surmises, perverse disputings.”

1 Tim. vi. 2, &c.. Add I. i. 10.

The “ commandment” is given to Titus

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throughout in the same tone. For example :
 “ *The grace of God that bringeth salvation has*
 “ *appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying*
 “ *ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live*
 “ *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present*
 “ *world; looking for that blessed hope, and*
 “ *the glorious appearing of the great God*
 “ *and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself*
 “ *for us, that he might redeem us from all*
 “ *iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar*
 “ *people zealous of good works.*” Again : “ Ac-
 “ cording to his mercy he saved us, that,
 “ being *justified by his grace*, we should be
 “ made heirs according to the hope of eternal
 “ life.” To which he immediately subjoins,
 “ This is a faithful saying, and these things
 “ I will that thou affirm constantly, that they
 “ *which have believed in God, might be careful to*
 “ *maintain good works.* These things are good
 “ and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish
 “ questions,” &c. iii. 9.

So, lastly, to the Hebrews, after declaring remission of sins, through Christ : “ *Having,*
 “ *therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into*

“ the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us
 “ draw near with a true heart with full as-
 “ surance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled*
 “ *from an evil conscience,* and our bodies
 “ washed with pure water; and let us con-
 “ sider one another to *provoke unto love and to*
 “ *good works,*” x. 19, &c. “ *For if we sin*
 “ *wilfully after that we have received the know-*
 “ *ledge of the truth,* there remaineth no more
 “ sacrifice for sins.” x. 26.

The other apostles all give an example of the same practice. St. James enjoins, “ Be
 “ ye *doers* of the word and *not hearers only,*
 “ deceiving your own selves. For as the body
 “ without the spirit is dead, so *faith without*
 “ *works* is dead also.” i. 22 : and ii. 26.

St. Peter, I. ii. 24. “ (Christ) his own self
 “ *bare our sins in his own body* on the tree,
 “ that we, being dead to sins, *should live unto*
 “ *righteousness,* by whose stripes ye were
 “ healed.”

St. John, I. ii. 2. “ *He is the propitiation*
 “ *for our sins : and hereby we do know that we*
 “ *know him, if we keep his commandments.*”

I have pursued these quotations to a length which may perhaps seem tedious; but the fact is, that this very uniformity in St. Paul's practice is the circumstance which shows the importance he attached to the proper union of the doctrines of justification and sanctification. I before proved by examples, that there is no one Epistle in which justification by faith is not insisted on; it now appears that there is none in which that doctrine is not insisted on as an argument for holiness. Its practical application to this purpose is not left to be collected from the general tenor of the Gospel, but is introduced in the same order, and in the same invariable association.

The example of St. Paul in this matter is of no light consequence. It shows that he was not afraid of exalting the merit of works, by declaring their necessity; or of derogating from the all-sufficiency of Christ, by asserting, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It shows too, that he foresaw the

possible misinterpretation of a doctrine which he did not think it superfluous to guard from error.

To imitate St. Paul, therefore, in this grand point, is to preach Christ at once to be relied upon as a Saviour, and to be obeyed as a King, and, together with the texts which declare justification to be a free gift, to lead the hearers to their consequent obligation by the context. Where this is neglected, the corrupt heart finds a thousand ways of deceiving itself into false security. It is not necessary that a preacher should in terms deny that holiness is required of a believer: the very contrary is often implied, or supposed to be implied, in the sermons even that mislead; but when Christ's indefinite and unconditional mercy is the only prominent feature of a discourse, and all the duties of a believer are kept in the shade, a false impression may be often given, where the intention to give it would be sincerely disclaimed. The great desideratum in Christian teaching is an asso-

ciation between justification and holiness of life, as cause and effect : an association which should arise regularly and spontaneously in the mind, according to the connection which the Apostle has traced ; Christ died for us that we might live to him.

The importance of this will appear more plainly, if we recall to mind the nature of that spiritual character which the Gospel is intended to produce ; a change in the heart, in its affections, objects, and desires, so extensive and entire, that the Apostle more than once compares it to a new creation. “ If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature* ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” 2 Cor. v. 17. “ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind ; but that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, *the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the*

*“ new man, which after God is created in
“ righteousness and true holiness.”* Eph. iv. 17.
The injunction to the Romans is to the same effect: *“ Be not conformed to this world, but
“ be ye transformed by the renewing of your
“ mind.”* xii. 2.

It appears from these passages, and will be seen more clearly if they are read with the context, in which the fruits of this *new creation* are usually instanced, that it is the Christian's business, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to restore in himself, as far as possible, that primitive innocency which was lost by Adam's transgression; to cultivate certain graces, certain virtues, and a general conformity to holiness: thus gradually *“ bringing
“ into captivity every thought to the obedience
“ of Christ.”* And, although those who have been happily educated in the bosom of Christianity may not universally have to throw aside those actual habits of sin, by which the gentile Corinthians or Ephesians had been stained and degraded: still they have the

same original "*man*" to contend against, "which is corrupt:" they have still a "mind" prone to sin, which must "be renewed;" and against the *new* or Christian principle implanted by the Gospel, against those graces and duties, and strictly regulated passions required by St. Paul, the original sinful nature is always more or less rising in opposition.

This corrupt and unholy tendency is termed by the Apostle *the flesh* and *the works of the flesh*, and placed in contrast with *the Spirit* and *the things of the Spirit*. A single passage eminently describes this warfare, the objects to be aimed at, and the dangers impeding the Christian's attainment of them: "This I say, then; *walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfil the *lusts of the flesh*. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these *are contrary the one to the other*: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

“ Now the works of the flesh are manifest ;
“ which are these : adultery, fornication,
“ uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witch-
“ craft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath,
“ strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders,
“ drunkenness, revellings, and such-like ; of
“ the which I tell you before, as I have also
“ told you in time past, that they which do
“ such things shall not inherit the kingdom
“ of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
“ joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, good-
“ ness, faith, meekness, temperance ; against
“ such there is no law. And *they that are*
“ *Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affec-*
“ *tions and lusts.*” Gal v. 17.

The Christian's sanctification, then, consists in his rightly combating that sinful disposition which opposes his renovation according to the Spirit ; in his cultivating the fruits of the Spirit till they are matured in holiness and conformity to the pattern of the Gospel ; and thus gradually building up within himself that new edifice, which has its foundation in the

Spirit of grace, and its support in the assistance of his Saviour. This renovation can neither be conferred nor acquired instantaneously. The resolution to make the requisite exertions may be suddenly formed, or it may be the deliberate result of long meditation: but in either case, or in any supposable case, the work itself must be gradual: must be the slow operation of patient attention, frequent self-examination, and continual prayer. By these means and exertions, “the motions of sin” are restrained, the “works of the flesh” are gradually laid aside, the “old man is put off,” and the seed of the Spirit “beareth fruit and bringeth forth” more or less abundantly.

But if sanctification is thus both indispensable and of laborious acquirement; if reason and Scripture assure us, and experience proves, that to the consummation of this holy work, the will actuated by divine grace, must zealously and patiently contribute, and persevere unto the end through repeated disap-

pointment, mortification, and self-denial;— what is to become of those late conversions, which allow no time for such an evidence of their sincerity? I confess I cannot discover in St. Paul the vestige of an encouragement to a death-bed repentance. Yet far be it from me to set limits to the mercy of God or the power of Christ, or to affirm that to be desperate and ineffectual, which all just thinkers acknowledge to be suspicious and improbable. If the conversion is not the mere effect of terror; if the heart is moved as well as the conscience; if the repentance be such that it would be followed by a change of life, were opportunity of trial given; there is room not for hope only, but for confidence: but these are secret things; God alone can know the reality of such conversion; to man it is only conjecture; for the nature of such a case precludes the manifestation of those tokens, by which we are taught to decide whether faith is saving. Thus much, I think, must be allowed, that the peril of a sinner who sinned on, in hope of such a repentance, would

scarcely be greater than that of a minister who should hold up such an apparent conversion to the admiration of his flock, as an instance of the efficacy of their Saviour's blood. To the sufferer under the terrors of impending death and unrepented sin, let the "miracles of divine mercy" be properly and judiciously set forth: but preach to a congregation the dreadful exit of a wicked man, not his forced repentance, which must at best be clouded with suspicion and uncertainty. He would be grossly ignorant of the deceitfulness of evil habits, and the deceivableness of the human heart, who could suppose that none might be thus fatally led to put off reformation as long, in the hopes of obtaining grace for repentance equally sincere. It is affirmed, that the custom of making the execution of criminals in Denmark and at Rome a scene of solemn pomp and ceremony, with the absolution and assurance of salvation which is publicly given them, has had the effect of inducing some enthusiasts to feign, and others to commit crimes, for the sake of

securing to themselves a similar reward. That the efficacy of a death-bed profession of faith, when expressed in confident assurance, and depicted in glowing colours, should excite a fallacious hope in some ill-constituted minds, which was by no means contemplated by the preacher, is an event far more natural and probable. But it could not follow from a closer imitation of St. Paul, who, to those who "have fought the good fight, and kept the faith," and to those alone, holds out the assurance of a "crown of righteousness."*

* I have not forgotten that God may do what he will with his own, and that those in the parable who were called at the eleventh hour, received every man his penny. But this parable will afford but slender consolation to the death-bed of a sinner. In a Christian country there can scarcely be, correctly speaking, "an eleventh hour." A man can hardly say, "no one has hired him," who has been deaf to the voice of the Gospel, reaching him in some form or other of admonition, all his life. There is reason to fear that he is oftener the "wilful sinner who has had knowledge of the truth." Our blessed Lord's descriptions of the day of Judgment are not much more consolatory.

When St. Paul, as we have seen, declares a holy life to be necessarily consequent upon a justifying faith in Christ, he at the same time points out the proper motive to obedience: that such is the will of God, the command of Christ, and the condition of everlasting happiness. This is expressed in many, and implied in all the passages already cited, as enjoining sanctification. On a point both clear and undisputed, it would be superfluous to enlarge. Two quotations will be sufficient to show the only persuasives to obedience, which can be consistently urged before a Christian assembly.

“ We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. For we must all, appear before the judgment-seat of God, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.” 2 Cor. v. 10.

“ Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not *with eye-service*,

“ as *men pleasers*, but in singleness of heart,
“ *fearing God*. And whatsoever ye do, do it
“ heartily, *as to the Lord*, and *not unto men* ;
“ knowing that of the Lord ye shall *receive the*
“ *reward of the inheritance* ; *for ye serve the Lord*
“ *Christ*. *But he that doeth wrong shall receive*
“ *for the wrong* which he hath done ; and there
“ is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto
“ your servants that which is just and equal,
“ *knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*”
Colos. iii. 22.

This, then, is the real distinction between heathen morality and Christian practice, that one is followed without any notion of obedience to God as a moral governor, the other keeps the intention of pleasing him perpetually in view, and renders the whole life, as it were, an act of religion : the one, therefore, is rewardable by the world, or the conscience, or whatever other principle inspired it ; the other has God for its object, and “ the end everlasting life.”

The enforcement of this point is indispensable. Since the approbation of the world is, on the whole, though by no means universally, in favour of virtue; since the testimony of conscience always rewards; since there are benevolent affections in human nature, which make certain virtuous actions pleasing to the doer; the Christian needs to be frequently reminded, that these are not the motives by which his actions are to be guided or sanctioned. A dutiful obedience to Christ is his "reasonable service." For this purpose was he redeemed, that he might be one of a "peculiar people," "adorning the doctrine of their Saviour in all things." It is not enough for him that what he does may be conformable to the will of God; "but he therefore does it, *because it is the will of God.*" *

Indeed, it is vain to suppose, that while a tempting world exists without, and a principle of corruption "infects unseen" within, any

* Baxter's Christian Directory.

inferior motives or springs of action can preserve a consistent course of virtuous conduct. Good example, amiable feelings, or the desire of reputation, may lead to a few insulated acts which will have a fair appearance in the eyes of the world; but the love and fear of God alone can command universal allegiance, keep the rebellious passions under constraint, or “bring the thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”*

It is thus that faith and holiness must be inseparably joined, both in the preacher's doctrine and the hearer's practice. No room must be left for imagining that faith is one thing and

* 2 Cor. x. 5. “Ce n'est pas simplement pour guérir les vices par d'autres vices; ce n'est pas seulement pour faire pratiquer aux hommes les devoirs extérieurs de la religion; c'est pour une vertu plus haute que celle des Pharisiens et des plus sages du Paganisme. La loi et la raison sont des graces suffisantes pour ces effets. Mais pour dégager l'ame de l'amour du monde, pour la retirer de ce qu'elle a de plus cher, pour la faire mourir à soimême, pour la porter et l'attacher uniquement et invariablement à Dieu, ce n'est l'ouvrage que d'une main toute-puissante.” Pascal, Let. Prov. 5.

morality another. If “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” it is because “they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God:” this is the Christian’s hope: “whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world:” this is his trial: “lastly, God is not unrighteous, that he will forget our works:” * this is his encouragement to persevere unto the end, “laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that he may attain eternal life.”

* 1 John, iii. 9. Heb. vi. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 19.

CHAPTER VII.

ON PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

THE peculiar circumstances in which those are necessarily placed, who are dedicated to the Christian faith in their infancy, and acquire a gradual knowledge of their religion as their understanding opens, together with the various degrees of advantage or disadvantage possessed by various situation in respect to the correctness of this knowledge; these circumstances arising out of a NATIONAL faith impose a corresponding duty upon the preacher, which must be discharged with fidelity, discernment, and discretion.

Christianity, it will be acknowledged, in order to be individually available to salvation, must become a *personal* concern. As Tertulian justly observes, “fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani.” In the first ages, the open as-

sumption of the Christian faith was, for the most part, a matter of long and serious consideration. It commonly took place at a time of life when the converts could both understand and ratify the covenant which reconciled them to God, and engaged them for the future to obey a new law, and “put off the old man “with its deeds.” They underwent, as catechumens, a long and strict probation. When they were convinced of the truth of the Christian doctrine, and had pledged themselves to the utmost of their power to live accordingly, they were directed to perform a solemn exercise of prayer and fasting for the forgiveness of past sins; and then, and not till then, they received baptism, and were pronounced regenerate.* Even in the third century, Origen acquaints us that the Christians were accustomed carefully to examine into the morals and dispositions of those who offered themselves; and admitted none, till they had given some evidences of a progress in virtue.† So serious

* Justin. Apol. i. 79

† Origen. contr. Cels. l. iii. 50.

was the obligation considered, and so strict the discipline preserved, that many who were persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, delayed the profession of it by baptism, as in this age men procrastinate repentance, because they could not prevail on themselves to resign those sinful habits, which they were well aware must be resigned by Christians. *

In the case of infant baptism, there are evidently no similar means of ascertaining the actual disposition. The benefit received is strictly gratuitous, or "of free grace." It is promised, however, to faith and obedience, presupposed in the recipient, and pledged in his name by the sponsors: whence it follows that the blessing attached to the sacrament must fail, if the conditions fail in those who are capable of performing them: and that the faith and obedience must become actual and per-

* See Wall on Infant Baptism, ch. x. and the passage of Gibbon alluded to in page 161. Tertullian says, in his Apologeticus, "Nemo in carceribus Christianus, nisi hoc tantum: aut si et aliud, *non jam Christianus.*"

sonal, in those who arrive at mature age. It has not altered the nature of Christianity, that its external privileges are become national. Whoever, therefore, professed the hope of the Gospel, must individually embrace the doctrine of the Gospel: must consent as sincerely as the earliest converts, to refer whatever he does in word or deed to the glory of God: with the primitive humility of the Apostles must renounce all confidence in his own strength, and must look for salvation through Christ's death with as much personal gratitude as if Christ had suffered for him alone. Though in many cases it may be impossible, as was formerly acknowledged, for those who have been placed in covenant with God by baptism to state at what time and by what process the truths of the Gospel became an active principle in the mind, still it is undeniable that in all who attain the age of reason they must become so, or the covenant is made void: and it is a definite and intelligible question whether they have actually taken this hold, or no. How the tree was nourished and

invigorated, and enabled to sustain the inclement seasons which opposed its early growth and strength, we may in vain inquire; but whether it bears fruit or not, and whether that fruit gives evidence of a sound stock, any one may examine either as to himself or others. Is the heart possessed of a sincere conviction of its own sinfulness and need of a Saviour: does it manifest its dependence on the Holy Spirit by an habitual intercourse with God through prayer: does it feel a practical sense of the great business of this life as a probation and preparation for eternity? These are infallible characters of faith: and though they will be found in different degrees in different individuals, no one should be satisfied with himself, and no one should suffer his congregation to be satisfied, till he can trace these characters in the heart.

But if such a frame of mind is indispensable to a Christian's reasonable hope, it is evident that a preacher can in no wise take it for granted that it exists in his hearers as the

necessary and gratuitous consequence of baptism; but must require of all who have the privilege of baptism, that they strive to attain it; that, being *regenerate* in condition, they be also *renewed* in nature: and constantly examine themselves whether they have this proof within them, that they are born of the *Spirit* as well as of *water*, and can make the “answer of a good conscience towards God.”

In a state of society like that in which our lot has fallen, it is peculiarly necessary to be instant and urgent in enforcing at all seasons this individual appropriation of the truths of the Gospel. In proportion as a community advances in opulence, the more numerous are the temptations to evil of every kind with which it abounds: pride and luxury spread a thousand snares; and as the labour becomes gradually heavier which is required to retain each individual in his own sphere, or to lift him above it, worldly cares coincide with the natural disinclination to spiritual things, and alienate the mind from all interests beyond

those of the present time. Very many, therefore, even of those who do not throw off all external professions of religious obligation, content themselves with certain undefined ideas of a Mediator and a mitigated law, and with the performance of those stated ordinances which one age hands down, not without gradual abridgment and relaxation, to another.

I am aware it is too common to throw out disparaging insinuations against *the forms* of religion, If there is any weight in precept, or any authority in experience, they are absolutely essential. But let it ever be remembered that they are the means, and not the end. Public prayer and public services are not religion, but the cultivation of religion; the outward aids by which it has been appointed that piety should be cherished, recruited, and confirmed; and the Christian be enabled to approve himself to God in that habitual subjection of his affections to the divine command which is the sure evidence and genuine fruit of faith.

While nature is corrupt, and this world a scene of probation, there will always be a tendency to substitute the external profession for the actual obligations of Christianity. It is much easier to comply with certain ordinances, than to purify the heart, to control a passion, or conquer a guilty habit. In the judgment of charity, attention to the outward duties of religion is a presumptive evidence of real faith; just as the common acquaintance takes the soundness of constitutional health for granted, where no positive symptoms of disease appear. But it is the physician's business to inquire farther: not be so easily satisfied; and to assure himself not only in a negative way that all is apparently right, but positively that nothing is wrong.

It has been hinted more than once, how little encouragement to insincere profession existed in the Apostles' days. Yet, notwithstanding the difference of circumstances, the preacher even here may shape his practice after an apostolical model. Those who em-

braced the faith at a mature age, were still liable to fall; and, from the evil example and persecuting spirit of its adversaries, were peculiarly exposed to temptation: St. Paul, therefore, though not generally addressing those who had been baptized in infancy, is still called upon to treat a case like theirs. As an infant, regenerated by baptism, and concerning whose salvation if dying in infancy, our church would authorize no doubt, may grow up to forfeit its privileges, together with its innocency; so might an adult "depart from "grace given," and "make shipwreck concerning the faith."* If Demas had died at the period in which the Epistle to the Colossians was written, where honourable mention is made of him, his fellow disciples would doubtless have reckoned his departure happy: but a few years afterwards we read, "Demas

* "A case which I promised to speak to, is that of those who fall off, after they have once been savingly regenerated. If such persons fall away by desertion and disobedience, still their baptismal consecration, and their covenant-state consequent, abide and stand, *but without their saving effect, for the time being.*" Waterland on Regeneration.

“ hath forsaken me, having loved this present
“ world.”* .

As this change of character cannot exist, so far as we have the means of judging, without a change in the individuals actual state in the sight of God ; there is no part of the Christian life in which it is not necessary for a man to scrutinize his heart, and ascertain the soundness of the spiritual root within him. Therefore, St. Paul describes it as his practice to “ preach, warning every man, and teaching “ every man in all wisdom ; *that we may present “ every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*” Col. i. 28. To the same purpose he admonishes the Corinthians, “ *Examine yourselves, whether ye be “ in the faith ; prove your own selves.*” II. xiii.

† I stop short of the question as to Demas’s subsequent recovery, which seems probable from the Epistle to Philemon. For its practical purpose, the argument is incontrovertible: Demas, the faithful convert, was at “ peace with “ God through Jesus Christ.” Demas, having swerved from the faith and fallen away, was no longer safe: Demas repenting, and doing again his first works, was replaced in a state of salvation. All beyond is among “ the secret things.”

5. And the Philippians, “ *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” ii. 12. And Timothy, “ *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.*” I. vi. 12. To which St. Peter’s exhortation may be justly added, “ *Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.*” II. i. 10. St. Paul, in short, takes nothing on trust; he brings all to rigid examination. He reminds the Ephesians that they must “ *put on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit:*” he exhorts the Thesalonians, after predicting much future apostacy, that they “ *stand fast, and hold the traditions which they had been taught:*” and enjoins the Colossians, “ *As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in the faith.*”* What is particularly to the present purpose, he charges in the most solemn manner his fellow-workers, Timothy and Titus, to guard their disciples against any departure from sound doctrine or

* Eph. vi. 3. 2 Thess. ii. 15. Colos. ii. 6.

sound practice. “ Preach the word ; *be instant* “ *in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke,* “ *exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.*” 2 Tim. ii. 2. “ *Rebuke them sharply, that they* “ *may be sound in the faith: they profess that* “ *they know God, but in works they deny him.*” And after enumerating the virtues which belong to the moral character of the Christian, he concludes, “ *These things speak and exhort,* “ *and rebuke with all authority.*” Tit. i. 13 ; and ii. 15.

If this was requisite in the golden age of the Christian world, surely it shall not be thought superfluous in these times for the preacher to stir up all hearts, that they “ receive not the “ grace of God in vain :” to tear aside the veil which self-deceit is wont to spread before the eyes : to admonish all against the seductive error of mistaking national advantages for personal immunities : for that “ every man who “ hath this hope in him ” is a *doer of the word, and not a hearer only, and purifieth himself even as God is pure.*

In whatever state of society men are collected together, a strong current will always set against Christianity; though not always in the same channel. Our own state has little superstition to encounter: it is free from the violence and cruelty, and other vices of malevolence, which disfigure a ruder period. But it is full of other dangers, which render it not the less necessary personally to extract and appropriate from the fountain-head of Scripture a system of Christian conduct. In a luxurious and opulent community, a certain standard of manners becomes fixed and established; custom renders them habitual: the young Christian, as he enters into life, falls naturally into the stream and glides along: and who would stop, and take the pains to resist or cross the current, unless the warning voice of the preacher admonished him of the danger of the course? General custom, we will say, has established that a certain degree of sumptuousness should be the characteristic of a rich man's table: that a certain attention and expense should be devoted to the ostentation of

dress and equipage, and the various concomitants of luxury: that a certain portion of time should be given up to the various modes of recreation with which an opulent country abounds. No one will venture to deny that there is a limit somewhere, though it is not my concern to fix it, beyond which these indulgences and expenses must be forbidden; that there is a point, where they cease to be consistent with practical Christianity; yet how few look round and inquire on which side of that boundary they themselves are travelling: how few would ever check the career of vanity, unless admonished by the preacher that they will not be judged at the last day by the customs of society, but by the precepts of the Gospel; and that these things are not trifles, or matters of indifference, but the chief tests of principle which lie within our power, or can be determined by our choice; and form in fact the distinctions, by which reality is discerned from profession. The gradual attrition of a world in which corruption abounds, is calculated imperceptibly to wear down and

deface the beauty of that image which the Christian is expected to exhibit, who is "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" unless it be perpetually repaired by reference to the original. We have only to consider for a moment the injunctions which the Apostles enforce to charity of thought and word, as well as of deed; to spiritual-mindedness; to humility; to indifference towards the opinion of others, in all cases where custom leads one way and duty another; to zeal in the practice and propagation of religion; to perseverance in prayer; to resignation under afflictions, to gratitude in temporal prosperity: we have only to consider these, in order to be convinced of the perpetual necessity incumbent on the preacher to fix the attention of his hearers on the original draft of Christianity, instead of its imperfect copy as represented in the mixed and tumultuous scene of human society.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD.

THAT the object of the Christian's aim and desires is something which this world cannot supply, is not only declared in a few explicit passages, but implied throughout the whole of the New Testament. Nor is it there less clearly intimated, that this world does propose certain enjoyments and pursuits, against the seductions of which the Christian has to maintain a vigilant guard and incessant conflict. Hence arises an inquiry of vital importance and interest, as to the interpretation we ought to give to the language of the Apostles concerning the WORLD, and the degree of intercourse with it a Christian may justly hold.

In the first place, it is undeniable, that in

Scripture the world, and the believers in Christ, are set in strong opposition. Our Saviour himself gives the example: "The *children of this world* are, in their generation, wiser than "the children of light." Luke xvi. 8.—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you "another Comforter, that he may abide with "you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom "the world cannot receive, because it seeth him "not, neither knoweth him; but ye know "him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be "in you." John xvi. 16.

So the character which Jesus gives of his disciples is, "They are not *of the world*, even "as I am not of the world." John xvii. 16.

In the spirit of these expressions, St. Paul enjoins the Romans: "Be not *conformed to this world*, but be transformed by the renew- "ing of your mind." Rom. xii. 2.

He says to the Corinthians, "We have re- "ceived not the *spirit of the world*, but the "spirit which is of God." 1 Cor. xi. 12. To the Galatians: "God forbid that I should "glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus

“ Christ, *by whom the world is crucified unto me,*
“ *and I unto the world,*” vi. 14.

Christians are still more decisively distinguished from the world in the two passages that follow: “ But when we are judged, we
“ are chastened of the Lord, that we should
“ not be condemned *with the world.*” 1 Cor. xi. 32.—“ You hath he quickened, who were
“ dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in
“ times past, ye walked *according to the course*
“ *of this world,* according to the prince of the
“ power of the air, the spirit that now worketh
“ in the children of disobedience.” Eph. ii. 2.

To the same purpose St. James makes it one of the characteristics of true religion, that a man “ keep himself *unspotted from the world,*” i. 27; and declares expressly, that “ the
“ *friendship of the world is enmity with God,*” iv. 4; and the principal aim throughout St. John’s Epistles is to exhort Christians to “ *love*
“ *not the world,* neither the things that *are in*
“ *the world.*”

The first question which arises here is, whe-

ther it becomes the duty of the apostolical preacher, on the strength of these passages, to consider the business of the world at large altogether a separate concern from that which the people of Christ's kingdom ought to regard ; whether St. Paul authorizes him to instruct his hearers, that, if they are true Christians, they are to reckon themselves a sort of secluded body, unconcerned with the events that pass around them, and keeping at a distance from all subjects, whether literary or political, which have not religion immediately in view ? or, whether, on the other hand, they are to esteem the general business of the world as that which they are to bear a part in, and to carry on, and to intermix with, as far as is possible without a compromise of religious duties, or a sacrifice of the unalienable allegiance they owe to Christ ?

It is not uncommon to meet with sentiments and insinuations founded on the partial and narrow views of the genius of Christianity which I have above alluded to ; though few,

probably, would be willing to avow them, when openly and broadly stated. To argue on such principles, would be no less erroneous, than to interpret universally those remarks of St. Paul concerning marriage, which he himself applies "to the present distress." That interpretation would be grounded upon a notion, that God elects, from time to time, a certain number as his children, and heirs of the adoption, from among the "children of wrath and unbelief." It is equally unworthy of the spirit of the Gospel to assume, that the business of this world is to be carried on by those who are without the pale of God's favour, for the benefit of a few believers; and to understand the words of St. Paul so literally, as if it were beneath the notice of a Christian to concern himself with the welfare of his country, or the affairs of nations, or the arts of civilization; as if his only business were the performance of his own immediate duties, leaving all temporal things to those who are strangers to the grace of real religion.

On the contrary, Scripture authorizes us to teach it as the will of God, in gradually diffusing the light of Christianity, not to separate an inconsiderable portion of mankind, as true Christians, from the affairs of the passing world, but to ordain that the affairs of the world should be dispensed by persons actuated by the motives of the Gospel, and supported by the faith of Christ. This appears, first, from the conduct of Jesus himself, who dissuaded and diverted none of his hearers from their former callings, excepting those whom he himself supplied with a new employment, the higher office of disseminating the truth; and is confirmed, secondly, by the nature of St. Paul's injunctions to the converts addressed in his Epistles. These so far from withdrawing from their regular and lawful avocations, he positively instructs to pursue them. In the case of the Thessalonians, he has occasion to correct the very error of supposing that the business of the world is incompatible with the profession, or unworthy the regard of Christians; and reminds them of his own example,

that even the commission given him, of preaching the Gospel, did not prevent his sometimes reverting to his original occupation. “ For
“ yourselves know how ye ought to follow us ;
“ for we have behaved not ourselves disorderly
“ among you ; neither did we eat any man’s
“ bread for nought ; *but wrought with labour*
“ *and travail night and day*, that we might not
“ be chargeable to any of you.” 2 Thess. iii. 7.
In the same way, his Epistles to Titus and Timothy contain directions applicable to the various stations and employments of life, and intimating, without reserve, that the distinctions of society are to be universally maintained, and that its business is wholly compatible with the duty of a Christian, as long as it is pursued with the spirit of a Christian.

The novelty which the Gospel introduced, with regard to the affairs of this world, was not, that they were to be made no concern, but that they were not to be made a final concern. The views of the Gentiles were, of course, like their hopes, limited to this passing

scene. The Christian looks “to a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* Therefore he intermixes in temporal affairs, with a view to their subserviency towards his principal and ultimate object. This was the new and unforeseen idea, enforced by the Apostle to the converts from an ignorant and debasing idolatry; not that they should be careless as to the general welfare and earthly advantage of their fellow-men, a species of apathy which the tenour of the Gospel universally condemns; but that they should propose to themselves, in their legitimate pursuits, a higher object than this world can offer; and be inspired by a motive altogether unknown before, “doing all to the glory of God.”

Under this consideration, the term “world” is used, with strict propriety, to signify present objects and present pleasures, as neither exclusively nor principally, to be pursued by the Christian. Hence the powerful exhorta-

* Heb. xi. 10.

tion, "If ye then be risen with Christ, "*set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth,*" Col. iii. 3; which is exactly analogous to the declaration of St. John, "If any man *love the world*, the love of the Father is not in him. For *all that is in the world*, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is *of the world*. And the *world passeth away*, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John iii. 16, &c.

Christianity, then, it may be fearlessly affirmed, is not a confined or partial religion, suited to an insulated sect, but ill adapted to become national, except as a lifeless profession: on the contrary, its views are as widely extensive as the attributes of its Author; and its blessings are limited, not by its own genius, but by the disobedience of mankind. It is too true, that we have little reason for expecting to see the affairs of the world directed, generally, in conformity to Christian principles;

but the cause of hindrance is not to be sought in the nature of the religion; and there is still less reason to imagine, that they might not be so directed, both lawfully for the individuals concerned, and most desirably for the world at large.

I see little room for difference of opinion on this point. An error like that of the Thessalonians, in refusing all secular engagements, is provided against by the exigencies of life, which powerfully enforce the command of the Apostle, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat:"* and the present age, perhaps beyond any other, furnishes us with examples outweighing a thousand arguments, in proof that it is possible to employ the brightest talents in the cause of religion, and convert the highest human distinctions to its service.

A considerable difficulty, however, still remains. Before the coming of Christ, the world was in a state of opposition against God, to

* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

which its present appearance bears little similarity. Not only his will, but even his existence was unknown to most civilized nations: a senseless idolatry had usurped the worship due to the Creator of all things, and a corresponding immorality degraded the character of mankind. Many passages, therefore, in the Scriptures, which condemn the world at large, and exhort Christians to come out of it, are spoken of a world in that state, and cannot be strictly applied to a world nominally Christian, or which has been offered the means of acceptance with God, and received the benefit of the sacrifice of Christ. St. Paul himself acquaints us, that his was “the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself.”* Hence it may be thought, that the contrast which we meet with, in the passages before quoted, and, indeed, throughout the Gospel, between the world and the true Christian, has lost all its propriety; and that the preacher is no way justified in

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

warning his hearers to beware of the world's friendship, deceits, or temptations.

Let us, therefore, consider against what the early Christians were directed to be on their guard, when they were exhorted to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The caution was issued against practices inconsistent with the Gospel, and against objects which this world presents, and which look no farther; as covetousness, excessive pleasure, or ambition. Now, whether the world, though nominally Christian, shall ever cease to encourage, by general opinion, practices forbidden by the religion it professes, or to hold out temporal objects for human pursuit, is a question irrelevant to our inquiry. It were devoutly to be wished;—but experience supplies little encouragement to our hopes, which are, besides, still farther damped by the title which is given in many passages of the Gospel to Satan, who is designated as "*the prince of this world;*" where he exercises a power in hostility to Christ, and is ever on the watch to

draw back unto perdition those who are called to the knowledge of the truth, and the hope of everlasting life.

But if we look to the present age, which is our more immediate concern, it certainly cannot be pretended that there is no opposition existing, and, therefore, none to be dreaded between the world and Christianity. This opposition must be unequivocally acknowledged, till the precepts of the Gospel are universally received as the law by which the morality of actions is to be estimated, and till the corrupt passions cease to become "a law unto themselves," with the connivance or consent of mankind. As long as sins of impurity, such as are declared by the Gospel to exclude from any "inheritance in the kingdom of heaven," are passed over with complacency by society, unless attended with very gross aggravations; as long as a life spent in a course of uselessness, frivolity, and vanity, is considered as an innocent employment of the talents of time, fortune, and understanding committed to our

improvement ; as long as a practice like that of duelling, which must either involve the risk of suicide or murder, is not only deemed venial, but honourable, so that an avowed repugnance to it is an absolute exclusion from some professions ;* so long, at least, conformity with the world is enmity with God ; so long the

* It is to be lamented that Johnson's well-known casuistry on this subject should have been preserved and handed down by Boswell to the injury of posterity. But no authority can do away the force of the precepts which enjoin Christians, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord." We may justly regret to find the *English moralist* on this occasion siding with the Jesuits in one of their worst corruptions. "On peut tuer celui qui a donné un soufflet, quoiqu'il s'enfuie, pourvu qu'on évite de le faire par haine ou par vengeance, et que par-là on ne donne pas lieu à des meurtres excessifs et nuisibles à l'état. Et la raison en est, qu'on peut ainsi courir après son honneur, comme après du bien dérobé." See the *Lettres Provinciales*, Let. VII. This is exactly Johnson's argument ; Boswell's *Life*, vol. ii. p. 450, "A man may shoot the man who invades his character, as he may shoot him who attempts to break into his house." It is right to observe, for the credit of the biographer, that an antidote to the poison is offered by a note in the later editions.

Christian is called upon to choose which he will serve, the world or Christ: as long as those who profess the law of the Gospel shall acknowledge a law which opposes it, so long must the true followers of Christ form a world within the world.

It will be less invidious, perhaps, and more convincing, to confirm this statement by the authority of a writer who surveyed mankind with the eye of unbiassed philosophy. He lays it down as undeniable, that “in every civilized society, in every society where the distinction of ranks has once been completely established, there have always been two different schemes or systems of morality, current at the same time: of which the one may be called the strict, or austere, the other the liberal, or if you will, the loose system. The former is generally admired and revered by the common people: the latter is commonly more esteemed, and adopted, by what are called people of fashion. The degree of disapprobation with which we ought to mark the vices of levity, the

vices which are apt to arise from great prosperity, and from the excess of gaiety and good humour, seems to constitute the principal distinction between those two opposite schemes or systems. In the liberal, or loose system, luxury, wanton, and even disorderly mirth, the pursuit of pleasure to some degree of intemperance—the breach of chastity, at least in one of the two sexes, &c. provided they are not accompanied with gross indecency, and do not lead to falsehood and injustice, are generally treated with a good deal of indulgence, and are easily either excused or pardoned altogether. In the austere system, on the contrary, those excesses are regarded with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. People of rank and fashion are very apt to consider the power of indulging in some degree of excess, as one of the advantages of their fortune; and the liberty of doing so, without censure or reproach, as one of the privileges which belongs to their station. In people of their own station, therefore, they regard such excesses with but a small degree of disapprobation,

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censure them and either very slightly or not at all.”*

As long, then, as this continues to be a just representation of public opinion, so long will the preacher be required to protest against it as an incorrect rule, and an unsafe guide, and so long will it be his duty to elevate the views of his flock above the general tone of morality towards the unerring standard of the Gospel. Till the Christian and the man of the world more nearly agree, the distinction between the visible and invisible church will be unhappily too just, and the difference must be clearly marked out between those who suffer “the cares of this world, “and the deceitfulness of riches, to choke the “word,” and those on the other hand who “re- “ceive it into good ground, and bring forth fruit “thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold.”†

The result of this difference is, that a constant opposition exists between the two con-

* Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, b. v. ch. 1.

† *Matt.* xiii. 22.

tending principles of the world and the Gospel : and its effect upon the Christian is to involve him in a perpetual conflict, not only with his own inward corruption, but with the world around him ; which disguises the aspect of things, and represents what is honourable in the sight of men as innocent in the sight of God. Amid the confusion of right and wrong, which arises from a nominal conformity to the Gospel, and a practical deviation from it, it is no easy task to discern the precise line to which compliance may go, and where it must be resolutely withheld. Christians, therefore, are to be warned, that Satan is the prince of that world, in which they are placed to walk for a time, and in which their business and their thoughts are necessarily engaged : so that it is not to be considered as a friendly country, where they may throw aside caution, indulge repose, or sit down in security : but it is an enemy's land, and abounds with dangers. They are in danger from their own passions, if they fly from business ; and they are in danger from the temptation which the world

puts in their way, if they enter into it: spiritual pride besets the recluse at home, and the love of the world's favour encounters the man of business abroad.* And it is this insecurity which renders the world a state of probation.

For example: how difficult is it to maintain an intercourse with the world, without allowing temporal motives to sway our pursuits and actions, instead of those which the Gospel sets before us: and since the honourable exertion of mental talents ensures general applause and reputation, how easily are we seduced to employ them for this object, in a manner which

* “ Quid aliud in mundo quam pugna adversus diabolum quotidie geritur? quàm adversus jacula ejus ac tela assiduis conflictationibus dimicatur? Cum avaritiâ nobis, cum impudiciâ, cum irâ, cum ambitione congressio est: cum carnalibus vitiis, cum illecebris secularibus assidua et molesta luctatio est. Obsessa mens hominis et undique diaboli infestatione vallata, vix occurrit singulis, vix resistit. Si avaritia prostrata est, exurgit libido: si libido compressa est, succedit ambitio: si ambitio contempta est, ira exasperat, inflat superbia, vinolentia invitat, invidia concordiam rumpit, amicitiam zelus abscindit.”—Cyprian de Mortalitate.

does not forward piety, and shows little consideration of the honour of the Giver !*

* This must not be understood to mean, that no studies are worthy of pursuit which have not religion in immediate view. Providence, no doubt, has designed, that the intellect bestowed upon mankind should be exercised in every profitable way. Indeed, it can scarcely be exercised in any way which is not more or less subservient to the promotion or propagation of religion. The real faith of an inquiring mind must be raised upon the rational conviction of the understanding, and that conviction must rest upon historical evidence as its basis. Could we suppose learning to retrograde, and a shade to be thrown over the history of past ages, the evidences of the Christian faith would sink soon into oblivion, and the objections of the infidel be left without a reply. It is familiarly known what various learning and what multiplied modes of research have been combined, to fix the pillars of our faith on a foundation which cannot be shaken. And if it appears from hence to be God's ordinance, that the wonders of the creation and the truth of his revelation should be made known by every branch of learning ; it appears no less to be his will, that every branch of learning should be prosecuted in its turn. There are some pursuits, however, that are not useful, and some are far more useful than others : and throughout the whole there is great room for the exercise of Christian humility and discretion, in choosing those pursuits which are within our power, according to our view of God's will, instead of for the sake of any return which may be expected from the world.

The most usual and successful bait, however, which the world holds out, is pleasure. Some relaxation of mind, some variety of employment, the pious man has need of, no less than the studious man. Very few tempers have so little of human infirmity remaining about them, that they can bear a life of solitude, without affording an entrance to the un-social passions; or can allow their mind to be constantly bent towards severer pursuits, without yielding to the dominion of narrow prejudices and confined views, which disparage both their religion and its divine Author. Innocent pleasures are among the means which God has ordained to preserve the heart in its proper tone, and restore the mind to its equilibrium when overcharged with business or care.

But this concession, which truth demands, opens the way to the disputable question, what *is* innocent relaxation, and what, on the contrary, is sinful compliance with a corrupt world. With regard to this point, the usual error is an attempt to fix a definitive limit of universal obli-

gation ; whereas a situation which is safe for one temper, becomes a snare to another ; and a compliance which one character might make without risk, would endanger the stability of his neighbour.

The prevailing bias, at all times, decidedly leans towards too ready an agreement with the current customs and opinions. But as, on the one hand there is a natural disposition to deem innocent whatever is conformable to general practice : so, on the other, there is sometimes a tendency to reckon general practice in itself a sufficient ground of condemnation. In things, however, of an indifferent and uncertain nature, where the absence of positive precept leaves room for difference of opinion, St. Paul's example gives us two universal rules ; one, that we neither convert a weak or wavering brother into an open enemy, by vehement and over-scrupulous opposition ; and again, that we do not lead him into eventual danger and temptation, by treading too close on the confines of sin.

Alluding to his conformity with the Jewish ceremonies, whilst at Jerusalem, "*to the Jews,*" he says, "*I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made (i. e. became) all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*" 1 Cor. ix. 20. What are we to understand by this declaration? Not that he shut his eyes to wickedness, or sanctioned idolatry by his presence; but that he kept in view the principle, that, in circumstances, complaisance and candour were more likely to forward the cause of Christ, than unauthorized scruples or inflexible austerity.

On the other hand, when the question occurred respecting the legality of joining in the feasts which followed the heathen idolatrous sacrifices, he points out the importance of ex-

ample, and the danger of countenancing the appearance of evil. It is true, he argues the matter is indifferent in itself: "Meat com-
"mendeth us not to God: for neither, if we
"eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not,
"are we the worse. But take heed, lest by
"any means *this liberty of yours become a stum-
"bling block to them that are weak.* For if any
"man see thee which hast knowledge sit at
"meat in the idol's temple, shall not the con-
"science of him that is weak be emboldened
"to eat those things which are offered to idols;
"and through thy knowledge shall the weak
"brother perish, for whom Christ died?" 1
Cor. viii. 8.

Much as the particular circumstances to which the Apostle alludes in these passages differ from any in which we can be called upon to act, he thus furnishes us with general rules of universal application as to the spirit which influences the true Christian, who, while he is careful to "give none offence" by unnecessary severity, is no less anxious that his

liberty may not become an occasion of falling to another.

Both this kind of courtesy, and this kind of caution might be adopted with great advantage at the present day. There are certain diversions, and a certain degree of intercourse with general society, about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of which there not only does, but may reasonably exist, that sort of difference in opinion, which prevailed among the Jewish converts as to the Mosaic rites, or among the Gentiles, as to meat offered to idols. “ One believeth that he may eat all things ; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not ; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth : for God hath received him. One man regardeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Rom. xiv. 23. Instead of the spirit of Christian candour here recommended by St. Paul, such difference of opinion is made a

sort of party distinction, and is thought to betoken, in one class, an affectation of "righteousness over-much;" and on the other side to justify the accusation of subserviency to the world, and a love of pleasure in place of love to God. Thus the union among brethren who have one common interest, is dissolved, and the friendly collision which would be beneficial to both parties is exchanged for an injurious opposition.*

There must, undoubtedly, be no sinful compromise, no conformity with practices unworthy our profession, because they are commonly admitted by the world, for the sake of any eventual good which might be hoped from such connivance. The advantage is doubtful,

* "This caution must be remarked, that men should be severer towards themselves than others, in the use of their Christian liberty, not making their own opinion or practice a rule to their brethren. In this, as in all indifferent things, a wise and charitable man will, in godly wisdom, deny himself many times the use of that liberty, which in godly charity he dare not deny to his brother." Bishop Sanderson.

the evil certain. Wherever the question involves right and wrong, the scale is turned at once. But it is a false severity to confound things indifferent in themselves with things wrong in themselves. Nor is it just, or practically useful, to inveigh in general terms against public assemblies and amusements, sanctioned by society, as if all toleration of them were positive evidence of a worldly spirit, and a heart alienated from God; and as if a practice necessarily became unchristian, because it had public opinion in its favour. The object which the preacher ought to seek is, not so much to withdraw his congregation from certain compliances and practices,—a scruple which proves nothing as to the actual state of the heart, and may be prompted by hypocrisy, or disregarded through civility,—as to win their heart over to the faith they profess; and for that purpose, to overcome in them the love of all things which may lead to evil, and cannot promote spiritual improvement. If he attempts this object by direct invective, he raises against himself the careless and

doubting hearer, and furnishes him with weapons, by undertaking to fix a boundary-line in a matter almost undefinable. Indeed, in the present condition of society, such a mode of preaching can scarcely fail to divide the congregation into two parties, both very deficient in that candour which is the brightest ornament of the Christian's crown, and in that moderation which is most able to diffuse the influence of his religion.

There is something well worthy of remark and imitation in the Apostle's mode of treating questions of this nature. Harassed, as it would appear, with inquiries concerning the expediency of marriage, and the lawfulness of joining in the Gentile feasts, and other circumstantial scruples, he breaks off somewhat abruptly, as if reproofing those who seemed to think salvation depended on those externals, and lays down one broad and general rule, applicable to all ages, and all similar questions :
" This I say, brethren, the time is short : it
" remaineth, that both they who have wives

“ be as though they had none ; and they that
“ weep, as if they wept not ; and they that
“ rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and
“ they that buy, as though they possessed
“ not ; and *they that use this world, as not*
“ *abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth*
“ *away.*” 1 Cor. viii. 29.

So the discreet minister will forbear to treat agreement or disagreement with the general practice as if it afforded a true test of the religious state ; and will hesitate to speak of things that are simply inexpedient, as if they were absolutely unlawful ; but will endeavour rather to undermine that “ affection for things “ on the earth,” which might not yield to open violence. And if he takes his stand on the ground of inexpediency, he has certainly much to argue : for there can be no doubt that public assemblies and diversions have a strong tendency to withdraw the mind from things above to things below ; that the common routine of society is generally a waste of time, if not of something still more valuable ; and that it is

rare, indeed, to find a person addicted to these compliances with the world, who does not confine his views of religion to a very low and insufficient standard.

Again, it is more invidious than profitable, in these days, to speak of a decided distinction between the world and the church, without so much limitation and exception as must destroy the force of the comparison. Such language is only calculated to flatter vanity on one side, and to encourage prejudice on the other. The two extremes are, without doubt, most remotely separated : but they are melted into one another by such imperceptible shades, and advance or recede by such nice gradations, that it is impossible to point out the exact horizon of either. At the same time there is a truth, an universal truth, which must neither be withheld nor disguised : that the world, even the nominally Christian world, has objects which are not Christian ; that it offers many pursuits which are inconsistent with the Gospel, and many more which are hindrances in

the way of real faith; that it tempts with pleasures which indispose to piety, and are adverse to the love of God. Into these dangers the mind will infallibly be led, and swerve towards these objects, unless it is habitually referred to an example more spiritual, and a standard more exalted, than the general practice of mankind exhibits.

With this view, let the preacher lay before his congregation the practical parts of the Epistles. What the letter of the law may have left unrevealed, its spirit will supply. It will soon appear that the presiding faith, the fervent love of God and of heavenly things, the simple and humble mind which the Apostles demand, are incompatible with the tumult of much intercourse with general society, and with the vanity and bustle of worldly pleasures. It will appear that the habitual relaxation of a Christian is not to be sought in amusements that weary where they ought to refresh, that ruffle the temper which they are intended to compose, and disturb those better affections

of the heart, which it is most important to cherish ; but in the quiet charms of friendship, in the indulgence of domestic tenderness, in the pursuit of those elegant charms of literature and the arts, which are not only harmless and unimpeachable, but chasten and adorn the mind.

It has been truly observed by one to whom the present age owes the highest obligations, that “ rich and multiplied are the springs of innocent relaxation. The Christian relaxes in the temperate use of all the gifts of Providence. Imagination, and taste, and genius, and the beauties of creation, and the works of art, lie open to him. He relaxes in the feast of reason, in the sweets of friendship, in the endearments of love, in the exercise of hope, of confidence, of joy, of gratitude, of universal good-will, of all the benevolent and generous affections, which by the gracious ordination of our Creator, while they disinterestedly intend only happiness to others, are most surely productive to ourselves of complacency and

peace. Little do they know of the true measure of enjoyment, who can compare these delightful complacencies with the frivolous pleasures of dissipation, or the coarse gratifications of sensuality.”*

The great business of the preacher is to bring over his congregation to a practical feeling of this incontrovertible truth; an object which he is more likely to accomplish by setting before them the pure and exalted nature of their religion, their situation on earth as strangers and pilgrims, and the better country which is the prize of their high calling, than by questionable assertions concerning intercourse with the world, or general invectives against those who hold it to be lawful. St Paul has summed up in a single passage, the considerations which ought to weigh with persons placed in a transitory, perilous, and responsible state: “My brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, what-

* Wilberforce's *Prac. Christ.* chap. vii. § 1.

“soever things are lovely, whatsoever things
“are of good report: if there be any virtue,
“and if there be any praise, think of these
“things.”* According to this text let the
wavering opinions of society be tried, and the
limits of a Christian’s compliance with the
practice of the world will be decided.

* Phil. iv. 8.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

I AM well aware, that, among the subjects which I have brought under discussion, in this attempt to examine the preaching of St. Paul, there are some concerning which speculative differences may exist, as they always have existed, between Christians equally honest, pious, and humble. Those who consider it as unworthy of a divine revelation, that any of its doctrines, or any branches of its doctrines, should admit of possible error, or dispute, or latitude of interpretation, proceed upon a wrong estimate of the disposition and nature of man, which requires to be excited by curiosity and stimulated by difficulty. It is probable, that if the points to be believed were so distinctly enunciated, as to leave no room for question or discussion, they would remain a dead letter on the records, without any practical effect upon the heart. On the other hand, difficulties pro-

voke inquiry, inquiry demands attention ; in the midst of which, faith, as a governing principle, is exercised and strengthened, and the importance of religion takes firm hold of the mind during the examination of its truth : the troubling of the waters renders them salutary. *Controversy*, indeed, is unfavourable to piety, and to every Christian feeling : it is too commonly the food of malevolence, rancour, and obstinacy ; but the examination and comparison of the different parts of Scripture, and the attention to the revealed counsels of God which religious inquiry induces, are favourable to the growth of vital religion, and the impression of faith upon the heart ; far more favourable, if we judge from experience, than a settled calm.

Such a calm was never more universal than during the prevalent sway of the Roman Catholic religion. The points of belief were dogmatically prescribed. Whoever ventured to doubt, or instituted a discussion, was silenced by reference to a general council or infallible decree. Therefore, in the end, religion became

a string of cold propositions ; which, even supposing they had given a just view of the Gospel, were no more calculated to exert an influential power over the mind, than the words of a catechism upon a child. Whatever we find (to speak comprehensively) of genuine piety in that long dark period, during which the papal sway hung like a baleful cloud over the religious horizon, is to be looked for among those who dared to examine the records, and dispute the oracular sentences of their ancestors, and to inquire at the mouth of Scripture for themselves.

Again, we acknowledge, with lively gratitude, that religion has a much stronger hold on the affections of the English nation now, than it could be said to possess before the disputes which originated in the active zeal of Wesley and Whitefield. Their enthusiastic pretensions applied a stimulus to men's minds, and their mixture of truth with error excited a general inquiry, which broke the calm, and interrupted the dangerous repose, which had succeeded the tumultuous disputes of the se-

venteenth century, and had induced so deep a lethargy, that Religion herself was deceived into a slumber.

It will be remembered, however, that those doubts and disagreements which may arise honestly and consistently with that due submission which reason owes to revelation, are upon points, if not unimportant in themselves, yet not essentially affecting practice or piety. Concerning the degree of human corruption, or of human liberty, the nature of the divine predestination and the extent of grace, we know and daily perceive, that the sincerest minds consulting Scripture with humble diffidence, may come to different conclusions. But in questions of practical interest, as, whether we can be justified before God by "our own works or deservings," whether a holy life be necessary to a justifying faith, or whether we can attain that faith or holiness without the influence of the Spirit, there can be no honest or pardonable error: for I do not call it honest to set up reason as a judge of what revelation ought to be, and to

substitute human opinion for divine truth. What Priestley called rational Christianity was not deduced from Scripture, but the coinage of his own imagination, to which he perverted the Scripture: to argue thus, is not to inquire into, but to supersede revelation.

I have anxiously endeavoured to avoid any appearance of similar presumption.

——— Quod vitium procul abfore chartis,
Atque animo prius, ut si quid promittere de me
Possum aliud vere, promitto.

At the same time I foresee that some few of the passages I have quoted under the several heads of doctrine, though certainly not wilfully misinterpreted, will be deemed by some persons to express more, and by others to prove less, than the sense which I have attached to them. But if the sum of the whole be faithful to the general tenour of St. Paul, both as to subject and manner, which I feel prepared to maintain; then it will appear that there are two characters of preaching widely differing

from each other, yet at opposite extremes equally removed from the spirit and practice of the Apostle.

I. The first of these, either openly or by implication, represents the Gospel as a partial scheme, in which only a certain portion of mankind, even within the visible church, have any personal interest. Such is the aspect given to the mercy of Christ, when he is considered as having died for the elect alone; an opinion now maintained by few: and also when it is believed that those only have the opportunity of such grace as is productive of a lively faith, whom God has specially appointed to deliver from the curse entailed on Adam's posterity. These views necessarily range mankind into two classes, the elect and non-elect, who are supposed to differ from one another, not as having either ratified, or failed to ratify, their baptismal vow; not as having been endowed with different degrees of the Holy Spirit, according to their improvement of that gift; but as being either irremediably the objects of

the wrath of God, or specially of his favour and love. It follows inevitably, that they who are *passed over* by God, are virtually neglected by the preacher. The sinful or wavering hearer is not affected with the topics of exhortation, of alarm, and of excitement, which the Gospel affords; but he is led by the general tendency of the preacher's doctrine to look for, or at least to expect, some inward call, some decisive movement of the soul to Christ, which shall be accompanied by an irresistible subjugation of the heart to divine grace, and an indisputable assurance of his election.

Now, this style of preaching, and every approximation towards it, is completely at variance with St. Paul; who, "knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuades men" to leave the ways of ungodliness, and repent, and be converted, and do the works of faith, by those powerful and intelligible motives of hope and fear which the Gospel supplies, and by the general assurance that all who come boldly shall find grace to help in time of need: that

Christ will give light to all who arise from their sleep of death, and turn towards him; that all to whom the Saviour is preached, are possessed of an inestimable privilege, which it lies with themselves either to improve by diligence, or forfeit by neglect.

A Calvinist, I am aware, will interpose here, and assert his practice to be, in effect, what is here described; and that he invites all to draw near to Christ, to call upon God, and use the means of grace. No doubt he does this; but such exhortations are robbed of their practical value, when their effect is counteracted by a general tone of doctrine, which represents election as the cause and origin of all lively faith, and the irrelative favour of God as the source of such grace as shall necessarily produce it. The preacher is perfectly consistent in his use of exhortations, because it is part of his system that God accomplishes his decrees by the instrumentality of these and similar means. But the hearer is no less consistent in his argument, that if the decree is

gone forth, or he is any way the object of divine regard, his case is settled, his salvation sure.

This mode of preaching, which carries within itself the elements of its own inefficiency, could only be justified by the undeniable authority of the Apostles. On this question I have appealed pretty largely to St. Paul in particular; and I will undertake to say generally as the result of that examination, that he does not address a single passage to any of his churches, which could lead those who read his Epistles to doubt their own capacity to receive the terms of salvation. It follows, that all those to whom the Gospel is preached, are to be considered as enjoying the like capacity, and possess an equal claim to be treated as objects of the love and grace of God.

I would entreat any one who may be convinced, on whatever grounds, of the truth of the Calvinistic tenets, and may hesitate whether it be not therefore his duty to declare

them as the counsel of God, to study, with prayer for an unbiassed simplicity of mind, the instructions given to Timothy and Titus, written, as we may reasonably suppose, for the information of ministers in every age. These instructions are totally silent upon the subject of election, reprobation, and all those doctrines which either by direct inference or fair deduction lead to the Calvinistic views. Is it possible to conceive, that if St. Paul had seen these points as they are seen by their zealous modern professors, which, no doubt, he would have done if they had been a just representation of God's will, he would have written three authoritative letters to teachers of the faith, which contain no hint or intimation that these are to be made the subjects of their preaching? Can the same be argued of justification, grace, or holiness? Must we not suppose that St. Paul would have treated these doctrines as those treat them who now believe them to be just, and therefore important, and who are instant in enforcing them both "in season and out of

“ season,” in conversation and the pulpit, and with an air and tone which leaves those who differ from them to conclude that they are scarcely considered as having reached the threshold of their faith, and are certainly total strangers to experimental religion ? .

It is not, indeed, a sufficient statement of the case, to allege that St. Paul is *silent* upon this subject. The one thing which he enjoins his fellow-labourers to keep in view is edification. For this purpose he charges them not “ to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, *which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is of faith,*” 1 Tim. i. 4 ; “ to keep that which is committed to their trust, “ avoiding *profane and vain babblings,* and *oppositions of science, falsely so called,*” ib. vi. 20 ; “ not to *strive about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers,*” 2 Tim. ii. 14 ; and “ to avoid foolish and unlearned *questions, knowing that they do gender strife,*” ibid. 23. Compare Titus, iii. 9.

The account here given of the consequence of a wrong choice of subjects * for general in-

* No one has written upon this matter more impartially than Bishop Horseley. With a strong sense of the depth and difficulty of the Calvinistic questions, he is quite decided against their introduction into the pulpit. "Teach with authority upon the momentous doctrines of man's corruption, of Christ's atonement, the gratuitous acceptance of man's imperfect walks in regard to Christ's merits; of the justification of man; always adhering strictly to the Scriptures, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Homilies. I would entreat you of all things to avoid controversial argument in the pulpit upon what are called the Calvinistic points, the dark subject of predestination and election I mean, and the subordinate questions. Differences of opinion upon those subjects have subsisted among the best Christians from the beginning: and will subsist, I am persuaded, to the end. But in certain leading principles, Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, and we of the Church of England, are all, I trust, agreed. While we agree in these, I cannot see to what purpose we agitate endless disputes upon dark (I had almost said presumptuous) questions, about the order of the divine decrees, (as if there could be any order of time in the eternal energies of the divine mind,) and about the manner of the communion between the Spirit of God and the soul of the believer." Charge III.—"I have long been persuaded, that the best thing for the Church would be, that the Calvinistic controversy, as it is called, should be suffered to go to sleep: and the worst thing for the Church will be, if it is kept alive by being

struction, could scarcely have been more applicable if the Apostle had been reproving the

made the perpetual topic of preachers in common congregations." Charge IV.—“ I would earnestly persuade those who may feel themselves the best qualified for the argument, to abstain from it in their discourses before common congregations. They might engage in it without discredit to themselves; but with what profit or advantage, I would ask, to themselves or to their hearers? Certainly with none at all. These intricate questions tend to nothing but perplexity and scepticism: and the discussion of these conduce to endless discord and dissension. You know who they were who are said to have sought the solitude of a retired hill, there to pursue their arrogant speculations:

- ‘ Of things abstruse they reason’d high,
- ‘ Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
- ‘ Fix’d fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
- ‘ And find no end, in wandering mazes lost.’

Leave these barren disquisitions to the theologians of that school. Apply yourselves with the whole strength and power of your minds to do the work of Evangelists. Proclaim to those who are at enmity with God, and children of his wrath, the glad tidings of Christ’s pacification; sound the alarm to awaken to a life of righteousness, a world lost and dead in trespasses and sin; lift aloft the blazing torch of revelation, to scatter its rays over them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide the footstep of the benighted wanderer into the paths of life and peace.” Ibid.—The advantage of agreeing with such authority, and of being supported by such language, has

very practice of introducing the Calvinistic questions amongst them. And with regard to the principle of his injunction, there is no room for doubt: the point for the preacher to study, is "godly edification:" but what is not necessary for belief or practice, cannot tend to edification; and the most zealous Calvinist will not assert, that a belief in his doctrine of election is necessary; while, with regard to practice, we might rather affirm, that it is never even innocent, except when it is disregarded, and always pernicious, when professedly made a principle of action.

To argue that the Calvinistic tenets can derive no support from Scripture, would betray a very partial knowledge of Scripture, or a very wilful misinterpretation of the fact: to argue that a man may not be a pious, humble, and

led me to pursue these quotations farther than I had intended: and I will take the opportunity of reminding the reader, that they apply as strongly to the evil of *controverting* the points in question, from the pulpit, as to that of maintaining them.

active Christian, who believes himself irrevocably elect, and, therefore, inevitably secure of salvation, would show a very limited acquaintance with the human mind: to argue that a strict Calvinist cannot be attached to our Establishment, would prove a very slight research into ecclesiastical history.* But without touching on these points, it appears from the practical authority of St. Paul, that, as far as concerns the Christian preacher or teacher, these doctrines are as if they were not true. It may be believed, that the benefits of Christ's death are limited, from eternity, to particular individuals; but St. Paul teaches, that "he died for all:" it may be believed, that the influence of grace is irresistible; but St. Paul teaches, that it may be "received in vain:" it may be believed, that those who have once been justified are sure of final perseverance and

* "I know not what should hinder but that the highest supralapsarian Calvinist may be as good a churchman as an Arminian: and if the Church of England in her moderation opens her arms to both, neither can with a very good grace desire that the other should be excluded." Bp. Horsley's Charges, p. 174.

salvation ; but St. Paul teaches, that we “ may sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth,” and “ draw back to perdition.” Whether or not these positive declarations are enough to overthrow the premises which lead to an inference contrary to them, those who maintain the premises must consider with themselves : but surely, they are bound in conscience not to teach for revealed truth any such inferences from their own tenets, as are opposed to the distinct language of the chief Apostle.

II. There is another very different character of preaching, which deviates no less widely from the example of St. Paul, though erring on the opposite side of *generality*. Those who practise it, forget that, “ without question, *great is the mystery of godliness, of which they are stewards.*” They do not act upon the conviction, that the Gospel is a peculiar system, unfolding to mankind certain terms and means of entering into everlasting life, which their natural reason would never have

discovered, and against which their prejudices and their passions are raising obstacles, which cannot be overcome without the continued assistance of the Spirit of God. They do not, perhaps, affirm, but they do not controvert, the favourite errors, that to sanction morality by the distinct revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments, was the principal purpose of the appearance of Christ in the flesh ; and that it is comparatively immaterial whether we study or believe the doctrinal Articles of our faith, as long as we approve ourselves to God by the discharge of our social duties. They represent the Messiah, indeed, under the general title of the Saviour of the world ; but lose and sink in this universal designation the personal interest which every Christian has in the atonement ; not leading the heart to Christ, as the sole author of salvation to each individual ; as the Redeemer who first places him in a state of acceptance with God, from which his natural character would have excluded him ; as the Mediator, through whose merits his imperfect services

are received ; and as the Intercessor, who, throughout their pilgrimage on earth, watches over the flock he has redeemed, supplying them with the means whereby they may be enabled to please their Creator by obedience to his revealed commands. Instead of this, the value of the atonement is lost in the general representation of a religion superior in authority and purity to every other ; and the mercy of God towards man, displayed in the mystery of the incarnation, is kept in the background, to make room for the benevolence of man towards his fellow-men, enjoined in the Gospel. *

* “ To improve your people effectually to their future happiness, as well as to silence false accusers, you must be assiduous in teaching the principles not only of virtue and natural religion, but *of the Gospel*: and of the Gospel, not as almost explained away by modern refiners, but as the truth is in Jesus ; as it is taught in the Church of which you are members, as you have engaged, by your subscriptions and declarations, that you will teach it yourselves. You must preach to them faith in the ever-blessed Trinity ; you must set forth the original corruption of our nature : our redemption, “ according to God’s eternal purpose in Christ,” by the sacrifice of the cross : our sancti-

This practice, as it must have been largely seen, is in direct contradiction to St. Paul. His converts had been all instructed in the faith, as the custom was, catechetically, and must have been, from the circumstances, better acquainted with the principles of it than the majority of modern Christians; having generally attained a certain age, and received their religion on mature consideration. Yet he does not reckon it superfluous to keep them continually reminded of all its peculiar doctrines; and notwithstanding the temporary occasions which led to the writing of many of the Epistles, it would be difficult to select a single chapter in which no allusion is made either to the sacrifice of Christ, or the corruption of the human heart, or the necessity of the Holy Spirit to the inward renewal of the

fication by the influences of the Divine Spirit; the insufficiency of our own good works, and the efficacy of faith to salvation. The truth, I fear, is, that many, if not most of us, have dwelt too little on these doctrines in our sermons." Archbishop Secker's First Charge. See also to the same purpose Bishop Horsley's First Charge.

Christian, and to his security from the dangers by which he is encompassed in the world.

The conclusions to which we are thus led, received powerful confirmation from the several sermons which are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. These all agree in the invitation they convey to every hearer to repentance; in the mode they declare by which that repentance becomes available; and in the means they suggest by which it may be performed.

“ Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts ii. 38.

“ God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” iii. 26.

“ To him give all the Prophets witness, that through his name, whoever believeth in him, shall have remission of sins ; x. 43.

“ Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness sins ; and by him all that be-

“ lieve are justified from all things, by which
“ they could not be justified by the law of
Moses.” xiii. 38.

“ Paul, as *his mannner was*, went in unto
“ them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned
“ with them out of the Scriptures, opening and
“ alleging, that *Christ must needs have suffered*,
“ and risen again from the dead.” xvii. 3.

Lastly, in his farewell discourse to the elders
of the Ephesian church, St. Paul appeals to
them as witnesses of his faithfulness in the
ministry: “ I take you to record this day,
“ that I am pure from the blood of all men ;
“ for I have not shunned to declare unto you
“ *all the counsel of God.*” xx. 27. This he says,
after having previously reminded them, that
the subjects of his *public and private teaching*
“ had been *repentance* toward God, and *faith*
“ toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ver. 24.

This appears to me to furnish a decisive cor-
roboration of what I had collected from the
Epistles as the characteristic topics of aposto-
lical preaching. The total silence maintained

in these discourses on every tenet connected with the doctrine of election proves either that all, "whom the Lord our God shall call" to hear the gracious offers of the Gospel, are endowed with power to repent and be converted, unless they forfeit it by wilful obduracy; or that, since it is impossible for the preacher, even the preacher under immediate inspiration, to distinguish the objects of divine mercy, all are to be addressed as if they had such power, and left in the full belief of it. Again, the stress laid universally upon the remission of sins through faith in Christ, proves the necessity incumbent upon the preacher to consider all men as naturally under the guilt and condemnation of sin, and Christ as the author of their deliverance from both: to teach this plainly and decisively as the purpose of his incarnation, and the effect of his death, and the mystery of the Gospel. Habitual conformity to this example of the Apostles, can alone preserve Christian faith or practice in their purity. The principles of the Gospel can alone support the moral duties of the Gospel,

by converting the heart to God, fixing obedience on an unshaken basis, appointing it its right place, and giving it its due estimation and just direction. Without the constant enforcement of those principles, what ought to be lively faith degenerates into a cold observance of outward forms; and what ought to be Christian practice is merged in a blind deference to the customs of society.

Indeed, the neglect or omission of these principles as the groundwork of all Christian instruction, is a far more pernicious error than that to which it is opposed. A system of preaching which maintains the lost state of the human race, which refers to Christ alone as the author of salvation, and enforces the necessity of habitual dependence upon divine grace, is frequently accompanied with very happy results, even though many unscriptural doctrines are superadded. Notwithstanding the mischiefs with which high Calvinism is pregnant, when inculcated from the pulpit, experience proves that the labours of many

zealous Calvinists have been blessed with great utility, and have produced a marked improvement in the parishes intrusted to their care : whereas the testimony of all ages asserts that no similar effect ever attended the minister who did not make Christ, Christ crucified for our sins and risen for our justification, i. e. who did not make the GOSPEL, the alpha and omega of his public instruction. To leave men in a cold and heartless state towards “ the Author “ and Finisher” of their faith ; not to press home upon them the relation in which their redemption through Christ has placed them, and the peculiar duties it imposes on them, is not merely an error, but an error which cannot be otherwise than fatal to spiritual utility. The doctrine of predestination, on the other hand, though particularly liable to abuse, is not *necessarily* pernicious, if it only occupies the place given it in the Articles of our church, and is made subservient to the plain offers, promises, and threats of the Gospel. In this way, I believe, notwithstanding the severity of their confession of faith, it is generally preached

by the Scottish clergy ; in this way we find it preached by the leaders of our English reformation ; who would have started at the idea that any of their followers should be led by principles which they profess to hold in common with themselves, to contradict the plain terms of Scripture, to deny the obligation of the moral law, to teach salvation by predestination instead of by faith, and to deny all concern in the last judgment with respect to the elect. While I combat these results of Calvinism with earnest zeal, I am far from believing that all who embrace the doctrine of personal election acknowledge them : I am still farther from insinuating that all such preach them ; and I have only endeavoured to show that, if they imitate the Apostles, they cannot preach them.

It is the habit, I imagine, of most ministers who enter upon their office with a due sense of its importance, to set before themselves some standard of orthodoxy or model of imitation. With this view, let them give their days

and nights to the study of the Apostles; not with the design of obtaining from detached passages support for any preconceived opinion, but for the purpose of imbibing, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, their mode of argument, of precept, of illustration, of exhortation; in a word, the general tone of their preaching. A fixed deference to any other examples leads insensibly to a partial representation of the Gospel, if not to absolute error. What is the source of that superiority, which almost all parties agree in ascribing to the writings of our Reformers? The circumstances in which they found the Gospel, obliged them to turn aside altogether from all received interpretation and fallible authority, and to seek the materials of their doctrine from the Scriptures alone. To us, however, though they come as powerful auxiliaries to the study of the Apostles, they must not be made substitutes for it; or be thought to supersede the necessity of drawing from that fountain of living water, which is ever pure and clear itself, but always suffers some loss of its original salubrity in its passage

through human channels. To the Scripture we must perpetually recur, as alike the origin and the criterion of all real excellence. As what we call human virtue, is worthless unless it abides that test, and will prove unstable unless it possesses that support; so is it also with doctrine; which has a constant tendency to degenerate from purity and decline into error, unless it be frequently referred to its original standard, and proved by its resemblance to bear the real impress of that Spirit which is the source of all truth and holiness.

THE END.



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