

THE
MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD;

WHEREIN IT IS SHOWN THAT
THE GENERAL EXHORTATIONS OF THE BIBLE
ARE NOT FOUNDED IN THE
PRINCIPLE OF MAN BEING IN SAVEABLE STATE,
BUT IN THE PRINCIPLE OF
MORAL AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

BY JAMES WELLS,

MINISTBB. OF THE GOSPEL,
SURREY TABBRNACLB BOROUGH ROAD LONDON'•

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners and purify your hearts, ye double minded."
James iv. 8.
"Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."
Jude 1.

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and say, We have nothing to do with the claims of our Maker; we have nothing to do with his word; the word in no sense speaks to us; therefore, as it is not our duty to act according to the light given us, why, then, we commit no sin in doing what you call wrong, for if to hearken be not our duty, then to turn a deaf ear is no sin. But we leave the doctrine of irresponsibility to be advocated by fiends and Atheists; which doctrine, if carried out, would drive human society to destruction. All the real comforts of life stand upon this great principle of individual responsibility to God and to one another; and the more this responsibility is felt and acted upon, so much the more is the moral state of society bettered. All the calamities of the Jews proceeded, not on the ground of being in a fallen state, as a part of the posterity of Adam, nor on the ground of their not spiritually and savingly receiving the truths of God, but because they acted, in a moral sense, contrary to the light they had, because they acted contrary to this great principle of individual responsibility to God and to one another. In proportion as this principle was their rule, so did they prosper. It is upon this principle that the Lord appeals to them thus: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah! judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa. v. 3, 4.) He acted for them providentially, and by the prophets pointed out right from wrong. The Lord called, and they willfully refused to hearken; (Jer. vii. 13;) he showed them the right way, and they refused to walk therein. In a word, he gave them every possible advantage, as far as external matters go, yet they hardened their hearts, and were glad to forget and become ignorant of his ways. This was indeed rebelling against the light, and every one shall be rewarded according to his works. This position of man accounts for the meaning of many scriptures which, without this principle of individual responsibility, are ambiguous. It is on this principle that we get at the nature and design of the Savior's expostulation with the Jews; for the way in which he spoke to his disciples, and the way in which he spoke to the people at large were very different. He called some by omnipotent power, and spoke to them of the kingdom prepared for them; but to the people at large he speaketh on this wise, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." Here is the beginning of the New Testament dispensation; "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel;" turn from the now useless ceremonies, and regard your Maker; act according to the light that is now come unto you; listen to the voice of conscience and of God. But did they do this? If some of them did, it was only for a little while; and thus of some it is written, that although he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; of others it is written, that they went back, and walked no more with him. As they thus acted contrary to the light which they had, the Savior's

expostulation with them consisted chiefly in bearing testimony against them. But with his sheep he dealt very differently. These were treated as objects of eternal salvation; the others were treated as rational, accountable beings; and, willfully acting contrary to the light they had, they came under his cutting reproofs. If he had not visibly demonstrated the divinity of his mission, they could not be justly blamed for not hearkening to him; but as he did among them works which no other man did, they had no cloak for their sin. Their sin did not consist in not being regenerated, but in not regarding that supremacy of their Maker which so conspicuously shone forth in the ministry and miracles of Christ. Here the question may be put, how were they to regard this the supremacy of their Maker? The answer is clear; namely, by continuing to do that which some did do for a time, that is, to admit the truth of that which was made clear, namely, that Christ was of God; and, therefore, cease to reproach him, cease to oppose him, to have listened to his word, and to have acted up to it as far as they could; and thus they would have known the day of their visitation, and the things that belonged to their moral and social peace. They would have been gathered together under the wings of his ministry; but "they would not come unto him that they might have life," but chose those paths that led to their destruction. Hence the ancient interrogation, "O house of Israel! Why will ye die?" We have before observed, that divine supremacy is to bring about present reformation, and mitigation of future punishment.

Being thus far advanced with our subject, let us again look about, and see where we are, at what we have been aiming, and what has been proved. Let us again repeat the principles which we are endeavoring to make clear. Well, then, it is hoped that the following points are obvious: 1st That the spirit and import of the law are unalterable; "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" "He remaineth God over all, blessed for ever more." 2nd. That the law of God has a twofold relation to man, having passed judgment upon all men as fallen in Adam, and then, in addition to this, holding every man responsible for his personal works. 3rd. That this responsibility branches out into all the relations and associations of human life. 4th. That man being thus responsible, it is his duty to supremely regard his maker, so far as light is given him so to do. 5th. That the object of the voice of divine supremacy, whether coming by creation or the written word, is not regeneration, but reformation. Man possesses reason, and a sense, morally, of right and wrong; but his ability to use these powers is a point that belongs to another part of our subject.

The next point we come to is the doctrine of different degrees of punishment. The very declaration, 'Every one shall be judged according to his works,' carries with it the fact that there are

degrees in punishment; and when we find much is required—that the heathen cities had more excuse for their wrong doings than those that had the written word, we are again constrained to acknowledge that there are degrees of punishment; and so it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for some than for others. I see no room to question that there are degrees of punishment. Each will feel the burning and penetrating power of the sins he has committed, together with a dreadful sense of divine disapprobation. They will suffer with one another, but not for one another.

These different degrees of punishment by no means involve the idea of degrees in glory; because, those who are saved are saved by one work, one salvation; are one in Christ, and one with Christ. They are all to come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. There is to be no difference; they are all to be like him here. The infant shall overtake the ancient; the people shall overtake the pastors. All shall be kings and priests to God. Different degrees of punishment, but not different degrees of glory. The parable of the talents belongs to the old covenant, and not to the new; therefore, one possessing ten cities, and another five, and another none at all, are expressive of the old covenant promises, which were conditional. The people of God, being all conformed to one likeness, all brought to know even as they are known, leave no room for the doctrine of degrees in glory; but those who are lost being judged each according to his own works, clearly shows that there will be degrees of punishment. If it were possible for mortals to know who shall be lost, or for those who shall be lost to know their own destiny, the amount of punishment which they are to all eternity to undergo would outweigh, in their minds, all other things with which they stand connected, and thus unfit them for the present life. It would indeed be their greatest wisdom to harken to the voice of God and conscience. But it is clear some will be lost; yet we know not the identical persons who shall be lost; therefore, men are to be judged according to the position in which they manifestatively stand. Promises: exhortations, and commands, to those who are born of God, are special; promises, exhortations, and commands to men at large, are general and conditional. God giving space for repentance, and the voice of divine supremacy commanding all men to repent, are one thing; but Christ being exalted a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, is another thing. The duty of men; as creatures, and the privileges of believers, as Christians, are everlastingly distinct. The real Christian is approved in Christ, where all the promises are yea and amen; but to the unregenerate the Lord saith, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" that is, approved in that well doing. The reward of their well doing cannot amount to anything supernatural, for their well doing is

only natural, and cannot entitle them to anything spiritual.

We have yet farther to illustrate the principle, that unregenerate men are commanded to depart from evil, not on the ground of their being in a savable state, but on the ground of individual responsibility; we have yet farther to confirm this principle, yet it may perhaps be as well, in this place, to show that one part of the human race must be lost. The certainty of their being lost originates not in their personal works; the amount of their punishment will be determined by their personal works. The certainty of their being lost originates in their indissoluble union to Adam, in him they have lost their all; and, independent of any personal work of their own, they are in a state of eternal destitution. Their names are not in the book of life; they have no new covenant relation to God; for them there is no atonement in Christ, he laid down his life for the sheep only, his children, and his children alone, are to be savingly taught of God; the others are in a state of destitution; there is nothing by which their union to Adam can be dissolved, while Jehovah, in his supremacy and sovereignty, will still remain over them. They are thus held as fallen in Adam the judgment in this relation having already been passed upon them. Here they are forever fixed; the Lord has no salvation for them. He never intended to save them, therefore he nowhere calls upon them to accept salvation; for "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." They could not avoid being children of Adam; they could not avoid falling in Adam; therefore it is that the Lord does not blame them for falling in Adam. He does not blame them for being lost; nor is it their fault that they are lost; they were ordained to this end by the judgment that came upon them in Adam, thus, independent of their personal works, becoming vessels of dishonor. Every man being rewarded according to his works is a doctrine which easily falls in with our sense of right and wrong. It is clear, comprehensive justice that each should be treated as he deserves to be treated. Every man being judged according to his personal works, is the law of God's moral government- a law somewhat comprehensive, and which accords with the conscience of every man. This law gives scope for the use of those natural powers with which men are endued; but when we are told, that although in this moral government of God every man will be judged according to his works while matters stand thus in this moral government, yet that in his sovereign dominion he will have mercy on whom he will; when this solemn truth is brought before us, we are ready to say, is not this unjust? Now, how is this momentous matter to be settled? Indeed, there is no way, suited to the sentiments and feelings of men. To settle this matter, the Bible decides it by bringing in the infinite disproportion which exists between the Creator and the creature. It comes with, "Nay, 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? By what law (and where there is no law there is no transgression) can it be proved that God was not at liberty to permit the existence or evil—that he was not at liberty to choose some to salvation, and leave others in their fallen state? To whom is he to be responsible? Who shall call him to account, or who shall stand with him in judgment? For "his counsel must stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Thus the Scriptures draw a line of distinction between his natural dominion and moral government. He is self-existent, infinite, omnipotent, and the Creator of all worlds. Beings are not their own; they are the property of God; and he has ordained some things to one end and some to another end, just as he pleased. This may very well be called his natural dominion; that is to say, a dominion which he has by virtue of what he is by nature; and, as none is like him, none can share with him in this dominion. He has determined the bounds of all things, yet he has left room for the working of his moral government—for the working of that principle of individual responsibility in which every man stands; and each shall be judged according to his personal works. To blame the non-elect for being lost would be to blame God for placing them in that natural and federal union to Adam, by virtue of which, independent of their own personal works, they are in a state of eternal destitution. To blame them for not being saved would be to blame God for not saving them; yet not to blame them for their personal works, as far as they willfully do wrong, would be to deny the natural powers they possess to avoid (as far as natural right and wrong go) the evil and follow the good. Not to blame them for an ill use of these powers would be to deny the moral government of God, and justify all the atrocities that have ever been committed. Of course, there is no power independent of God. Hence Pilate spoke of his magisterial power, saying to the Savior, "Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and power to crucify thee?" But the Savior reminded him that it was by the providence of God he possessed that magisterial power of which he had spoken. Pilate knew that he ought to use this power as a terror to evil doers, and as a praise to those that did well. But, instead of using this power as he knew he ought to have used it, he abused this power in using it to forward the perpetration of the most awful deed ever committed, the putting to death the spotless Son of God.

Men under Jehovah's natural dominion men, considered in this position, can neither be praised nor blamed. No blame can be attached to the non-elect for being the offspring of Adam, or for being involved in the natural consequences of the fall and left in a state of eternal destitution. No one can justly bring a railing accusation against them because of their destiny. If God leave them in this state, none can take them out; and is it not, to say the

least of it, both unjust and ridiculous to blame them for that which came to pass independent of any works of theirs? as, on the other hand, would it not be unscriptural to praise the people who are saved-when they were chosen and blessed with all spiritual blessings from the foundation of the world- in a word, saved entirely by grace? Is any praise due to these because of their destiny, which destiny was fixed independent of any works of theirs? Thus we see, that there is in the natural dominion of Jehovah no room to blame or praise the creature. But when we come into the moral government of God, we find room for blame and praise. The language of this moral government is; "If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted (approved)? and if not, sin lieth at the door." God, in his moral government approves of moral consistency, as far as it goes; and although many of those who have acted as well as they could, and are, upon the whole, what we, in the mere natural sense, call upright men; although many of these have suffered in this world because of their integrity-supposing such to be lost, yet they will have a less amount of punishment. Every man shall be rewarded according to his works; but when men expect their works to help them to a place in heaven, they look for what never was, nor ever will be; for none can enter there but those whose names are in the book of life.

We see then, in Jehovah's natural dominion there is no room either to praise or blame the creature; but in his moral government, in which each creature acts with the powers with which he is endued, here it is that the conscience accuses or excuses-here it is that God approves or disapproves, praises or blames. The Ninevites were approved in humbling themselves, and so were the third fifty that came to Elijah, while the former two fifties were destroyed for their haughtiness; and those who escape in this world will meet their due in the next.

In addition to Jehovah's natural dominion and moral government, there is what may be called his new covenant kingdom. In this department is found the atonement of Christ, by which all evil is forever banished, the people perfected forever, and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. God alone can bring a man into this kingdom; no man can enter without being born from above. In this kingdom the people's needs- the needs of poor broken-hearted sinners are freely supplied, and the name of the Lord eternally praised.

Here, then, we see these three departments, viz., Jehovah's natural dominion, his moral government, and his new covenant kingdom. In the language of his natural dominion he speaketh thus; "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." In the language of his moral government he speaketh thus; "Every man shall be

rewarded according to his works" In the new covenant kingdom he speaketh thus; "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Founded, therefore, in his moral government, is that praise or blame to which men, according to their works, are entitled. While the Bible does not call upon men to do that which they are not capacitated to do, it does not call upon natural men to do anything spiritual. Where spiritual acts are called for, spiritual life and enablings are bestowed. The law does not require a perfect obedience of the non-elect. It holds them, in their fallen state, as its prisoners; yet these prisoners are not left lawless; for while they are held as fallen in Adam; while they are held here as fallen creatures in eternal life. God alone can bring a man into this kingdom; no man can enter without being born from above. In this kingdom the people's needs- the needs of poor broken-hearted sinners are freely supplied, and the name of the Lord eternally praised.

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therefore, because they did not do that which they had power to do, God gave them up to vile affections. We shall presently show what it is that the unregenerate are called upon to do. Suffice it here to observe, that whatever difficulties may appear to stand against the truth here stated, viz., that men possess power to avoid the wrong and follow the right; whatever difficulties may seem to stand against this doctrine, yet God, in his moral government, deals with men after this order, and every man will be condemned for acting contrary to the light which he has, while they are called upon to do nothing spiritual, but only that which is merely natural. Let us illustrate this doctrine thus: If a master engage a servant, he will tell him the rules he is to follow; he is to be attentive, diligent, honest, and sober. The servant replies that he fees that he ought to be all this, but somehow or other he must get intoxicated now and then, must rob his master now and then, and sometimes be very idle. What would the master say to such a man? Would he not feel justified in refusing to take such a man into his service? Would he write a petition for him, and present him to the world as an object of pity and of charity? Would not the people feel justified in abiding by the law laid down by the apostle that if any man will not, (not if he cannot,) but if any man will not work, neither shall he eat? But if the man were required to do impossibilities, and severely punished for his helplessness, he would at once become an object of just compassion and pity.

God foreknew all the evils which men would commit, while he has those evils under such restraint that his councils cannot be disturbed. Christ was ordained to bear the sin of his people. God foreknew the way in which the Jews and Gentiles would treat the Savior; consequently they fulfilled the Scriptures in doing what they did. Therefore, without multiplying words upon the question as to whether man may so use his natural powers as to avoid the evil and follow the good, it will be enough here to observe, that the Bible everywhere blames men for willfully doing that which they know to be wrong. They are thus dealt with as being each responsible for his own works.

Let us now see what men, while in a state of nature, are called upon to do. On looking into this matter, we shall find that they are called upon to believe in God, to repent, to love and fear God. But the faith, repentance, love, and fear, exercised by the powers of nature, are very different from that faith, repentance, love, and godly fear, which are from on high. Thus it is one thing for God to give men a space to repent, and another thing for him to give repentance itself.

When Moses was sent to the children of Israel, he was vested with power to demonstrate that he was sent of God. This being made

clear to the Israelites, they could have no excuse in not obeying him. He did not call upon them to regenerate their souls, or to exercise a living faith in Christ. Everything they were called upon to do was natural, and merely moral, not supernatural, or spiritual. They were to believe in the coming of "the great Prophet of which Moses spoke;" they were to abstain from certain kinds of food, wear certain kinds of clothes, bring certain sacrifices, reject the gods of the nations around, trust in the God of Israel, revere his name, love his ways, seek instruction from him, cleave to him, &c. &c. Their temporal prosperity depended in a great measure on their thus obeying the commandments of the Lord. To this obedience they were exhorted, and of this obedience they were capable, because it consisted in nothing beyond the light which was given them; therefore they were blamed for so constantly going back from that which they were commanded to do. They knew that changing away the service of the God of heaven and earth for the service of the gods of the nations was doing wrong; and for doing this wrong they were condemned. This was their condemnation, that "they loved darkness rather than light." They were not called upon to do that which cannot be done without possessing the Spirit of the Lord. No one, for instance, can feel his lost state in the first Adam, but by the Holy Spirit; for in this sense he alone can convince of sin; he alone can thoroughly wound, so as to make a man feel his need of the perfect atonement of Christ; he alone can give a true thirst for those blessings treasured up in Christ before the world began; he alone can take of the things of Christ, and bring them savingly into the soul. These are things the natural man is not commanded to do. These things are given to those for whom they are prepared. With these spiritual things the natural man has nothing to do. This new wine is not put into old bottles. To those who are called by grace is given a new heart, and God dwelleth in them, and they in God. Here, then, again, we see the importance of distinguishing between the moral government of God and his new covenant kingdom. Without admitting the doctrine of his moral government including the idea that men are endued with power to render that service which this moral government demands—a service which is natural and merely moral; a service not accepted as a condition of salvation, but accepted as that which it is their duty to render; and in proportion as they act contrary to this their duty will they be punished; without admitting this doctrine, how are we to account for the general exhortations and denunciations found in the Bible? Look, for instance, at the first chapter of Proverbs, from verse 24th, and following; "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded." Admit the principle we have laid down, and the matter becomes plain, which is this, that men willfully disregard the voice of divine supremacy, which voice soundeth throughout creation, the written word calling upon them

to act according to the light and dictates of conscience. They are called upon to do nothing supernatural. It does not say, I have offered salvation, and they refused it; I have tried to quicken their souls, but they regarded not. This would be quite another language. This language would suit neither the moral government of God nor yet his new covenant kingdom; for in his moral government there is no salvation to offer, and in his saving government the election hath obtained it. It is therefore one thing for men at large to be exhorted to their duty, and another thing to be called and saved by grace.

How conspicuously do these two principles, viz., the moral and the saving government of God, shine forth in the ministry of Christ. How differently he dealt with those whom he called by his almighty power, to those whom he rebuked for not believing. Those who knew he was a teacher come from God, as the chief priests and rulers did, ought to have dropped their vain traditions, to have left the ceremonial dispensation and to have come into the gospel dispensation. This would have been acting according to the light which they had; this would have been doing that which was their duty to do. This doing of their duty would have been bettering their present moral state, and mitigating their future punishment; but as they refused to do that which was their duty to do, it should be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for these; for in rejecting the gospel dispensation they violated the first commandment, which saith, "Thou shall have no other gods before me." The gospel dispensation was of God. This the Savior proved to their eyes, ears, and consciences; for if Christ had made the claims which he did make, without doing among them those works which showed his right to their homage, then they would have had an excuse, they would have had a cloak for their sin; but as they knew by his works that he was of God, they had no just excuse for not obeying him. Their sin, therefore, consisted in acting contrary to the light which they had. This is the condemnation of every man, that light is come into the world, and they oppose that light, loving darkness rather than light. In Matthew xxii the gospel dispensation is likened unto a marriage, which a certain king made for his son. This king commanded certain persons to come to this marriage; it was therefore their duty to come. But instead of doing what they knew was their duty, they went their own way, "one to his farm, another to his merchandise," not forgetting to persecute and slay the tenants of the king; therefore the king sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers. To feast, in the moral sense of the word, is to be instructed in that which is morally right. To feast spiritually is to be savingly led into the mysteries of the kingdom. "Many are called," even all within the reach of the written word morally, to that which, as responsible creatures, is their duty, "but

few are chosen;" few are called, by grace, to enter into the privileges of salvation. Those who are called morally may, and do refuse to obey, but this shall not make void the faith of God's elect; and therefore it is that the Lord sends his servants out into the highways and hedges, accompanies their message with power, makes his people willing, and thus compels them to come in, so that his house shall be filled with guests; and those who profess to be his friends, yet hate his eternal righteousness, shall be cast out.

Hence, then, it appears there is a coming to Christ morally, and a coming to him spiritually; that there are faith, love, repentance, and reverential fear which are natural, differing from the faith, love, repentance, and godly fear which are spiritual, which are the special gifts of God, and which accompany salvation. That which is spiritual cannot be turned into that which is natural, nor vice versa. We read of disciples who went back and walked no more with him. The end of their faith was apostasy; but the end of the faith of God's elect is salvation. We read of love that waxeth cold; but many waters cannot quench the love of God, which is in those who are born of God. We read of repentance which needs to be repented of; but Jesus bestows repentance unto life eternal. The natural man may cease to fear the Lord; but in the heart of the spiritual man the Lord himself puts his fear. There is, then, a moral consistency to which all men, as their duty, are commanded; and there is a spiritual dignity to which partakers of special grace are exalted; "He that believeth shall be saved." But then, it depends upon the nature of that believing; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;" "Except a man be born from above, he cannot enter the kingdom;" "To as many as received him gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." But then, the faith of these was not merely natural, but was spiritual, and was wrought in them by the Lord himself. Hence, the very next verse, (John i.12, 13,) assures us that they were born; mark, that they were born. Here is the work of God, for they were bone, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. He that thus believeth, shall be saved. It is one thing to believe through natural light of the conscience, and another thing to believe through grace. If, then, all men, wherever the written word comes, be called upon to act according to the light afforded them, yet no one, except born from above, can enter the kingdom, it follows that the Bible does not speak to all as objects of salvation, for all the objects of salvation shall be "made willing in the day of his power;" and "every plant which the Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Thousands of these are not rooted up until death; they lie and die in a profession, and like sheep they are laid in the grave. Yes, they are buried as sheep; funeral orations and funeral sermons are produced, to assure the survivors of the excellences of the

departed; and, of course, it is concluded that a creature so pious, benevolent, and dutiful, is gone to that rest which remains to the people of God. The conclusion of these consists in substituting that which is merely natural for that which is spiritual.

Now let us compare the two opposing principles, the one for which we have pleaded, and the one against which we have pleaded. The one against which we have pleaded is this, that all men are in a savable state, and that all men are called upon to accept salvation; that Christ died savingly for his elect, and conditionally for all the rest. This, we are told, is the only way of accounting for the general exhortations of the Bible, and of making matters appear at all reasonable. Our object has been to show that the general exhortations of the Bible are not founded in the principle of men being in a savable state, and that those exhortations have not in view their salvation, but their moral reformation, mitigation of future punishment, together with many intermediate circumstances connected with the gospel. We think we have found out a more excellent way of accounting for the general exhortations of the Bible than that which supposes men to be in a salvable state—a way more scriptural and more reasonable, for there is nothing in truth contrary to right reason. Faith and right reason perfectly agree. But it so happens that in the majority of cases the most ingenious reasoners are the most fallacious; their reasoning powers are good, but are wrongly used. If a man reason upon the word of God, and shut out in his reasonings the absolute dominion and sovereignty of God, he is sure, in reality, to contend against God, while he is professedly contending for God. Some, indeed speak as though we were not to reason upon anything; whereas, there is not one thing in the whole Bible upon which we are not to reason. What is meditation but reasoning? Is not the invitation, "Come, and let us reason together?" Some tell us we are not for one moment to reason upon the doctrine of the Trinity. When we ask why we are not to reason upon it, we are told that it cannot be comprehended. Well, what sound Trinitarian ever thought it could? For my part, I have reasoned upon it, and do reason upon it, and hope to reason upon it forever. I reason upon it thus: Here are Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, and these Three are ONE. I find eternity, infinity and all the perfections of Deity ascribed to each person in the Godhead. Well then, how unreasonable would it be to suppose infinity can be comprehended? How unreason able to reject the doctrine because we cannot comprehend it. How three self-existent Persons can be One God, or how in One God there can be three coequal Persons, we cannot comprehend. The word of unerring truth says it is so, therefore it is unreasonable to reject this doctrine.

Well, then, let us bring forward the two principles, and see which

of the two accords with scripture and right reason. According to the principle of Christ dying conditionally for the non-elect, and their being condemned for not accepting salvation; according to this system, the matter stands thus; these being placed within reach of salvation, have no other rule by which to be justified or condemned than that of their accepting or rejecting salvation. Now the Lord foreknew that not one of these would accept salvation; for "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Well, then, it follows, that God did not place them in this salvable state, in order that he might bring them up into paradise, for he knew that not one would accept the offered salvation; and that, therefore, he placed them thus that they might be without excuse, and that he might appear just in sending them down to perdition. The whole object of God the Father in placing them here was, to aggravate their misery. The whole object of the Savior in suffering for them was to deepen their distress. The whole object of the Holy Spirit in moving prophets and apostles to call them, was, to augment their woe. This is the fair and unavoidable inference to be drawn from the doctrine of Christ dying conditionally for the non-elect, unless we admit (if possible) a still worse notion, viz., that God really placed them here for their salvation, that he really willed and wished them well. Now, if an earthly friend were to tell me that he wished me well, and were to place me within the reach of prosperity, at the same time seeing that I should be sure to neglect the means, the intermediate link, and so lose the prosperity he intended; he seeing this, and at the same time having it within his power to secure to me, beyond contingency, the prosperity he desired me to have, and still to go on telling me that he really wished, willed, and purposed that I should prosper, I should say to myself, Why, if he had it in his power, if he wished me to have a certain amount of prosperity, why did he not secure it to me? Nor could all the men in the world persuade me that this professed friend was sincere in his purpose? What! a parent leave his property to his children in a way that he saw they would be sure to lose it! Would not the conclusion be that he never really wished them to have the property? and would not those who should go about to boast of the sincere intention of such a parent towards his children be looked upon as either knaves or fools?

Christ died conditionally for the non-elect, yet he knew that they could never accept his salvation. Now, then, reader, here are two alternatives; which do you choose of the two; to ascribe folly, vain pretensions, and hypocrisy to the Most High, or admit that he never intended salvation for them that are lost? The kingdom shall be given to those for whom it is prepared. Well, then, if the kingdom were prepared for those who are lost, then it cannot be true that it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared. Now

mind, it is not said it shall be offered to those for whom it is prepared, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared. One evil, then, of the doctrine of conditional salvation is, that it charges God with folly; that is to say, it does this if we admit the doctrine that God willed the salvation of the non-elect, and to this end put them into a salvable state, at the same time knowing that this would not contribute one iota towards their salvation. To tell us that God wished the non-elect well, yet, though possessing infinite power, did not secure to them that well-being, is really too bad; to impose upon us a sentiment which drives us to the conclusion that the Most High pretends to wish those well whom he in reality intends to condemn, from such deadly heresy, mercy deliver us.

But let us take the other supposition, that God never intended that the non-elect should be saved, but that he placed them within the reach of salvation to the end that they may be condemned for not receiving what he never intended they should receive; so that the only use of their being in this position is that it secures to them eternal condemnation. Either God did will their salvation or he did not; if he did, how is it that their salvation is not secured to them, for with God there is no want of wisdom, wealth, or power? and if he did not will their salvation, how monstrous and delusive the notion that he condemns them for not accepting salvation. Is there one scripture in the whole book of God that condemns a man for not being an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ? NOT ONE. What, then; are we to charge God with pretending that he wishes to save those whom he in reality intends to condemn? or are we to conclude that Christ suffered for the non-elect to the end that they might have a more dreadful hell to endure? Perhaps the reader may say that it is their own fault, they ought to have accepted salvation. But this has nothing to do with it; for God foreknew that they would not accept salvation; therefore we are led unavoidably to the conclusion that Christ suffered for them in order to augment their sufferings. It is indeed written, that with his own arm he wrought salvation; but according to the doctrine of Christ dying conditionally for the non-elect, he not only wrought salvation, but also secured damnation; so that not only were his sufferings, as far as he suffered for the non-elect, in vain, but they are unto them an absolute curse. Thus, according to the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect, we must either believe that God pretends that he wishes to save those whom he in reality intends to condemn, or else we must prostitute the sufferings of the Savior to the worst of purposes, Namely that of securing the damnation of men. I tremble as I follow this principle out, and think of the lost bitterly cursing those sufferings of the Savior, which secured to them their eternal damnation. How dreadful the thought, that the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect brings the atonement of Christ into

this position! Here is Christ suffering for the non-elect in order that there may be a more feasible ground on which more deeply to condemn immortal souls! So that, according to the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect, those in perdition may say that Christ died for us that we might be lost, while those in heaven are saying he died for us that we might be saved. Thus the howlings of hell and the hallelujahs of heaven are, according to this doctrine, founded in the one great atonement of Christ. This doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect, thus stripped of its feasibility, proves to be awful blasphemy, and a delusion in which God will never let one of his own children die. These matters may be trivial in the minds of men, but with God they are weighty.

Now let us clearly understand the sentiment against which we are bearing testimony. The sentiment against which we are pleading says, that Christ died conditionally for the non-elect, that they have power to accept this salvation that God foreknew that not one of them would receive salvation, that being placed in this salvable state they are left without excuse, that it is their own fault if they are not saved. This is the sentiment against which we plead. It is written, that "Christ laid down his life for the sheep;" and as to man having power to accept salvation, it is written, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them;" and as to its being their own fault that they are not saved, as well might we say that it is the vessel of dishonor's own fault that it was not appointed unto honor; nor do the Scriptures once blame men for being lost.

The evil of the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect is twofold. 1st, It awfully, as before shown, misrepresents the ever-blessed God; 2nd, It deludes immortal souls; and among the abounding evils of the world these cannot be reckoned among the least. Having clearly understood, and, it is hoped, pretty clearly shown the fallaciousness of the sentiment against which we plead, we shall now again bring the sentiment for which we plead, which sentiment is, that it is the duty of all men to act according to the light which they have. This duty is founded on the moral government of God, and the natural relation in which all men stand to him as his creatures. Now mind, no man can do anything towards altering his state by nature. All are under sentence of death. Viewed thus in their union to Adam, they have lost their all, and can no more do anything towards helping themselves out of this state than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots. Nothing spiritual can precede the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. He begins the good work, which beginning consists in his bringing the life of God into the soul, and Christ is that life. He is the incorruptible seed; not one particle of gospel fruit can be without him. The Father quickeneth whom he will; the

Son quickeneth whom he will. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh in this vital matter profiteth nothing. The work lies entirely with God; and to blame the creature for not doing anything towards salvation is as absurd as it would be to blame a dead body for not rising from the dead; for man, by nature, is as destitute of spiritual life as is the dead body of natural life; therefore the Word of God nowhere blames men for not being saved. Yet they are blamed, but not because they are not saved; they are blamed for the wrong use they make of their natural powers. They are not dead physically, or bodily; they are not dead rationally, nor yet morally. Now look close here after the meaning. My meaning then is, that they have bodily powers, reasoning powers; and a consciousness of right and wrong, as far as natural right and wrong go; but the things of God knoweth no man, only by the Spirit of God. Now, then, they are accountable to God for the use they make of these natural powers with which they are endued. Thus it is their duty to act according to the light afforded them. The voice of Divine supremacy calls upon men through creation and through the written word to hearken to the voice of God and conscience. It is their duty to do so; they feel that they ought to do so; and as far as any of them do so, their works are acceptable to God, not as the service of sons, but as the duty of servants. Now, as it is in Christ Jesus that the supremacy and sovereignty of God shine forth, and as he is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit-God over all, blessed for evermore and as by him kings reign and princes decree justice, it follows that it is the duty of all, wherever the written word comes, to revere his name. Hence kings and rulers are commanded to do homage unto him. (Ps. ii.) That which Christ, as God over all, demands of men as their duty is, (as far as mere natural light goes,) the right use of their natural powers. This is their duty; and thus, if their quietly submitting to him be not their duty, then their opposing him can be no sin. Their sin consists in a violation of this their rule of duty. Their sin does not consist in not making him their salvation; for no man can take this honor unto himself but he that is called by grace. The hearts, affections, and service of his own people he has secured. All the service which God required of the Jews, (mind I speak here purely in the natural and mere moral sense of the word, leaving out the idea of that spiritual worship into which those entered who were born of God,) all the service he required of them was the right use merely of their natural powers, to fear the Lord, to love him, to serve him, and to walk in his ways.

Let us ever draw a line of distinction between that mere natural service of which the natural man is capable, and which it is his duty to render, and that spiritual worship which none can render but such as are partakers of the Spirit of God. There is indeed a mighty difference between the voice of divine supremacy calling

upon men to follow that which they know to be right, and the voice of quickening grace entering the soul, opening up its lost and ruined state, and then leading it into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

It was the duty of the Jews to hearken to the Savior, and come into the gospel dispensation; but this was one thing, and it was another thing to come in by regeneration. When grace comes to a man, it finds him utterly destitute of any one thing that can in the least contribute towards salvation; for though, like the young man in the gospel, he had acted conscientiously all his days, yet this is nothing more than was his duty to do; and is he to be thanked for doing that which was his duty to do? I think not; and, if he is not to be thanked for it, it is not very likely he can obtain eternal life by it; for if there could have been a law given that could bring life, verily, justifying righteousness should have been by the law; but all are fallen in Adam, and all have sinned personally. Therefore, when we come to salvation matters, man has in this matter nothing but sin that he can call his own; consequently, those who are saved are sinners saved by grace.

Thus we see that man's natural powers, and that duty of which man is capable, in no wise interfere with the truth that men, in matters pertaining to eternal salvation, are utterly helpless, and can be saved only according to the purpose of eternal election; neither does the helplessness of man interfere with the moral government of God, so as either to neutralize the voice of Divine supremacy, or to paralyze the natural powers of men. Neither does the moral government of God in any way clash with his natural dominion. In his natural dominion, just notice these two things; foreknowledge, and decree. He foresaw the fall, and the consequences which would follow. He saw to what end everything tended; but at the same time, while he permitted evil to abound, yet he determined that it should not go beyond certain bounds. In this way room is left for the working of his moral government; at the same time, "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."

Admit, then, that the general commands, exhortations, and denunciations of the Bible, I mean as they relate to men in general; admit that these are founded, not on the principle that men are in a savable state, but on the ground of the moral government of God, then we have scripture and right reason on our side. We shall then find plenty wherewith to reprove the sinner, enter our protest against ungodliness, and encourage men to walk in the path of moral right, without uttering error against the Lord, making empty the soul of the hungry, or deluding poor benighted men.

We have seen that the doctrine of men being in a savable state charges God with pretending that he wishes to save those whom, in reality, he intends to condemn. This charges the Lord Jesus with suffering for them that they might be the more deeply damned. And then, to cover and gild the blasphemy, is brought in the bare-faced lie that man has it in his power to accept salvation, and that it is his own fault if he be not saved. And whereas the kingdom can be given to none but those for whom it is prepared. Not one instance occurs throughout the bible in which men are blamed for being lost; nor is it their own fault that they are lost. Their fault consists in acting contrary to the light they have.

One main object at which in this work I have aimed, has been to show that exhortations to men in general are better accounted for without the doctrine of men being in a salvable state than with it, and to my satisfaction I have gained my point. I feel conscious of the firmness of the ground on which I stand. I know, on the one hand, that man is a responsible being, that he is endowed with certain powers, and that he is accountable to God for the use he makes of these powers; and, on the other hand, I know that the Lord will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, that no man can keep alive his own soul, much less do anything while dead towards bringing life into it, and that as many (and no more) as are ordained to eternal life will believe with that faith which purifies the heart, endears the Savior, and is the faith of God's elect; and I also know, that to preach the gospel to every creature, consists in preaching the truth to every creature. Falsehood may be, and is, called gospel, but it is not the gospel of God.

As these two principles, viz., Divine supremacy and saving grace, shine forth in the ministry of Christ, we find the same in the preaching and writings of the apostles. The epistles were sent to the churches, and they unfold to the people of God the mercies and mysteries of salvation. Yet the epistles do not speak exclusively of and to those who are born of God. Children are exhorted, not as a condition of salvation, or as having anything vitally to do with salvation, but as a matter of natural duty; they are exhorted to obey their parents; that is, as far as the demands of the parents accord with the word of God and the dictates of conscience. The apostle James, chap. V., reproves the oppressors of the industrious poor. They knew that they were doing wrong in oppressing the poor, and for this their willful wrong the apostle justly blames them. It was their duty to do justly; they knew this. It is this principle of individual responsibility, founded in the moral government of God, which gave the apostle room, without interfering with the vital principles of the gospel, to reprove the ungodly at large, and to denounce their ungodly deeds. How far the reproof dealt out in this chapter (James v.) may apply to some

even of those who are born of God, and who are no better to their servants than they should be, I will leave with their own consciences.

I am much inclined to think that the fourth chapter of James, down to the 10th verse, is founded in the moral government of God; and the apostle, on this ground, reproveth and exhorts men in general. The apostle here exhorts men to resist the devil; to draw nigh to God; to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. Now, we know that a man dead in sin cannot resist the devil, draw nigh to God, and purify his heart spiritually, so as to become anything more than a natural man. Yet, resisting vicious propensities, submitting to the dictates of conscience, and imbibing principles of integrity, may, I think, in the mere natural, moral sense, be aid to be resisting the devil, drawing nigh to God, cleansing their hands, and purifying their hearts. Is not this the meaning of the prophet Ezekiel, (xviii. 31, 32,) "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore, turn yourselves and live?" This was spoken to those who had the written word, and therefore applies wherever the written word comes. Hence the apostle addressed the Athenians as rational creatures, and expostulated with them upon the absurdity of their worship, and reminded them, that the object of rightful and supreme regard, was not like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (Acts xvii.) Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge; professing to be wise they become fools, and God suffered them to go on in their own folly; and the time of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.

Thus are men individually responsible to God for the use of the natural powers they possess. They are exhorted, as a matter of duty, to use them rightly, and are blamed for willfully doing wrong. But this mere natural, moral use of their powers, this mere moral resisting of the devil, drawing nigh to God, purifying, or, as the prophet calls it, "making them a new heart," -this, and resisting the devil by the blood of the Lamb, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, drawing nigh to God in new covenant relationship, are essentially different. One is, mere reformation, the duty of the creature, and good of the kind; but the other is regeneration, a coming out of the powers of darkness, coming vitally into the kingdom of God, being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and thus entering into the holy of holies. One is the religion of nature; the other is the religion of grace. The one is the duty of man; the other is the gift of God. The one bettereth the present moral and social state of man, and mitigates

future punishment; the other gives present peace with God, and future glory by Christ Jesus.

The Lord hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; that is, it would be contrary to his nature to take pleasure in men acting contrary to the light they have, rushing in upon the thick bosses of his buckler, attempting to measure swords with their maker, and thus entailing upon themselves his utmost wrath. In these things he has no pleasure. His delight, his pleasure is in those that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. These are his people, whom he will beautify with salvation.

If the reader will do himself the favor of looking through the 18th of Ezekiel, he will there see this principle of individual responsibility, as founded in the moral government of God, clearly laid down. In this chapter we are told that "the soul that sinneth shall die," and that the proverb of the sour grapes eaten by the fathers, setting the children's teeth on edge, that this proverb should cease to be used, that each person must give account of himself; Now mind; here is nothing in this chapter concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart; nothing about acceptance in Christ; not a word concerning eternal love or eternal glory. The truth is, this chapter addresses men not as objects of eternal redemption, but as beings whose duty it is supremely to regard their Maker. And do not those who blend this moral government of God with his new covenant laws and saving grace darken counsel with words without knowledge? Do they not wrongly, instead of rightly, divide the word of truth?

Now let us have another word with the 4th chapter of James. I have said that I am much inclined to think that the first ten verses are addressed to men in their moral capacity. Now if we view these verses in this light, we must take them in the mere moral sense, even the tenth verse, which reads thus; "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Take the Ninevites as an illustration of this scripture. They humbled themselves, and the Lord lifted them up above the threatened overthrow of their city. This is the favor he granted to them. Taking the word grace in this place to mean this kind of favor, these ten verses seem then easily and naturally to apply in the mere moral sense to men in general.

There is another view which the spiritually- taught may be disposed to take of these ten verses; which is this. Here are persons professing to love Jesus Christ, and calling themselves Christians, yet wrapped up in false doctrines, walking in the spirit of the world, which spirit is enmity against the truth. They were aiming at carnal aggrandisement, and were anything and everything but

true spiritual worshippers of God. Unto these the apostle speaks denouncing, and does not call them brethren, or for a moment admit that they were real children of God, but calls them adulterers and adulteresses, alluding, perhaps, more especially to their idolatries. Idolaters, worldlings, and sinners, are the characters in which the apostle viewed them. So that his knowledge of them, and their opinion of themselves, were very different. Viewing these ten verses in this light, the apostle's exhortation would amount to this, that before they had any authority to conclude that they were Christians, they must be delivered from false doctrines, from the spirit of the world, from their devilish pride and self-importance. This is the sense in which some would view these ten verses; but for my part, I like the other in preference; because if it be taken spiritually, here are men dead in sin exhorted to do what none but the Lord can do for them. Not but they may be reprovably spoken to even in this way. Have we not an example of this in the 3rd chapter of Matthew, where John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, (mark! they came to his baptism, came professing to have repented; but John, knowing they were still carnal, called them "vipers,") "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" John knew that God had not warned them, and therefore reminded them that they must produce evidence of the reality of their profession, or else he would not baptize them. This John said to them reprovably, not for a moment implying that they could do anything towards obtaining that immortal root from which alone spiritual fruit can arise. John treated them as every true minister will treat the same kind of professors in the present day, who may come forward wishing to go through the divinely-instituted ordinance of baptism. We say to them, "If thou believe with all thine heart, if thy faith lead thee to loathe thyself and thirst for God, if thy faith purify thy heart, endear the Savior, overcome the world, and lead thee on in a holy war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, thou may; but if thy faith be a dead faith, having in it no life, no breathing after God, no handling the word of truth, no walking in paths of righteousness, no tasting that the Lord is gracious, no recognition of the joyful sound, no experience of the emptiness, nothingness, and worse than nothingness of the creature; if thou dost not bear these fruits, thou may not be baptized. Bring forth, therefore, fruits to prove the spirituality of thy repentance; then, and not till then, the ministers and people of God can receive thee. "Thus are the bond children expelled and cast out."

The ten verses in James iv. I am inclined to take simply thus; Here are a people within the reach of the Word of God acting contrary to the light which they had, for which the apostle reproves them, and exhorts them, not to regeneration, but to reformation; and that as a matter of duty. Take which we may of the two views given,

there is nothing in this chapter to justify the doctrine of man being in a salvable state; and, on the other hand, if we say the Word of God does not speak in a way of exhortation to the unregenerate, we shall err exceedingly.

It is on this principle of individual responsibility, founded in the moral government of God, that the apostle Peter addressed Simon Magus in the way he did. Here is Simon, anxious to get money, who went so far, through the covetousness of his heart, as to think that the gifts of the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money. Peter tells him of the wickedness of such an attempt, the state he is in, and exhorts him to repent and pray, if perhaps such a vile thought, which he had indulged in through covetousness, might be forgiven him. Then Simon answered and said, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Now notice the object of Simon's fear. It was not that he should not be found in Christ, it was not that he should be finally lost. No; these things were out of his mind. Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, for acting from the same motive as did Simon, viz., covetousness, were struck dead; and it is evident that immediate punishment was that which Simon dreaded; and Peter exhorted Simon, as a responsible being, to repent of such an act of wickedness, and pray that he might not be immediately cut off. This is the repentance of reformation, but not of regeneration; the prayer of nature, but not of grace. He is addressed, not as an object of salvation, but as a creature endued with natural powers, and responsible to God for the use of these powers; and thus may the possessors and lovers of free grace account for the exhortations of the bible to the unregenerate, without uttering error against the Lord, beclouding the Savior's finished work, or interfering with one of the vital principles and self-acting laws of the new covenant kingdom of God.

I cannot but notice how very ingeniously the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect neutralizes the doctrine of absolute and eternal election. Let it be, for the sake of clearness, illustrated thus: Let election be personified-let it be called a messenger, who comes proclaiming the majesty and sovereignty of the King of kings. Freewill against this messenger closes the door, saying, "I will not have this man to reign over me; he shall not come into my house." Moderate Calvinism goes a more cunning way to work. It admits the messenger-it receives the doctrine of eternal election-but it is to muzzle him. There he is received into the house, but not allowed, hardly once in a month, or perhaps not in six months, to open his mouth, and then he is not allowed to speak very loud, nor yet to say much; for, having such a vast multitude of moral duties to attend to, there is not much time and less inclination to hear what this messenger has to say relative to the sovereign mind

and will of the King; and besides, this messenger speaks so dictatorially, that it hurts the minds of the humble and the pious. Therefore, he is kept as quiet as possible; and, if ever admitted into the pulpit, he is allowed to be there only a very few minutes; for being from a far country, and his voice so very strange to the people, it is deemed prudent to get him to speak as softly and as seldom as possible. Well, who can but commend the wisdom of those unjust servants who so nicely suit the gospel to the taste of men?

But let us have a word more with the messenger, just to notice the different treatment with which he meets. First, here is free will closing its door altogether against him; and though this messenger be an angel from heaven, yet free will cannot receive him. Moderate Calvinism receives him into its house, but keeps him in a very humble position, for of course he is allowed to make no disturbance in the family. There may be three in one house, but there is no such thing as their being divided one against two, and two against one; no, for all agree that the messenger must speak only when he is spoken to; he must rise only when he is permitted, and sit down and be quiet when he is told so to do. Thus, while free will closes its door against him, moderate Calvinism turns him into a bond servant.

But there is a faith called the faith of God's elect; what is the treatment this messenger meets with where this is? Why, it is this; here is a man sensible of his lost, ruined state, of the vileness of his nature, the nothingness, in matters of salvation, of all creature doings. To such a one this messenger comes, declaring to the poor man that he was blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the world was. The message is listened to, its power felt, its glory seen, its source acknowledged, its design appreciated, and its mysteries unfolded. In this message are found wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Is the messenger desired to be silent here? O no, says the sensibly saved sinner; go on. Precious truth! Tell out the glories of the King. Never cease, O never cease to tell me that my name is written in heaven; that all my sins are pardoned; that God hath from the beginning chosen me to salvation; that his purpose concerning me shall stand; not of works, but of him that called; that these his saving gifts, and this his holy calling, are without repentance; that towards me he is in his love and counsels the same yesterday, today, and forever; that he will never leave me nor forsake me. What! says the sensibly saved sinner, shall this messenger be silent when there is nothing else worth hearing? Is not my conversation to be in heaven? Does not this messenger furnish me with heavenly language? Does he not bring the pure language which the Lord hath promised his people? This message is the law of life; and of this law says the

spiritual believer, "when I go, let it lead me; when I sleep, let it keep me; when I awake, let it talk with me." (Prov. vi. 22.) Here the messenger is allowed to talk as loud and as long as he pleases; the louder and longer the better. To his message let all others be subservient; but let his be subservient to none. The king of this messenger is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and if he be not to speak, who is to speak? "Whether it be right to hearken unto men more than unto God, judge ye!"

How different is the treatment, then, with which this messenger meets. Free will, of course, closes its door against him; moderate Calvinism turns him into a bond servant; but the faith of God's elect receives him as an angel of God, and rejoices that he is flying, as it were, in the open firmament of heaven, preaching the everlasting gospel of the living God. It is the truth that makes free.

Thus the system of moderate Calvinism charges God with hypocrisy, charges the Savior with suffering in order to secure condemnation to men, and neutralizes, while it professes to receive, the great doctrine of eternal election. This is one of the great and popular delusions of the present day.

Before I leave the subject of the moral government of God, I would just notice one scripture, and it is the only one in the whole bible that presents any apparent difficulty to the principle before laid down, namely, that men are called upon by the voice of divine supremacy to act according to the light afforded them, and that they are not called upon to do that for which their natural powers are not suited.

The scripture I allude to is in John vi. 27, where those who did not savingly know the Lord are exhorted to labor for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. Of these same people it is written, that "they went back and walked no more with him." In a word, there is no room to question but that they were dead in sin, nor did they obey the exhortation. We have before shown that men are in salvation matters totally helpless, and that nothing can be done without the immediate and effectual operations of the power of God; therefore exhortations to anything spiritual must, without the power of God, prove useless.

I would observe, that the words meat, bread, drink, when used figuratively relative to the mind, signify instruction. Hence we read of being fed with knowledge and understanding. Now it is one thing to be instructed morally, and another thing to be instructed spiritually and savingly. It has been shown in the course of this work, that moral instruction thrown into the mind, and followed out in practice, will meet its reward, if not in the present

world, it will in the mitigation of future punishment. Now the Word of God is the means of instruction, both moral and spiritual. The Word of God is given unto many providentially where it is not given savingly. Now the question is this. Did the Savior exhort the people to seek instruction merely of a moral kind, or to seek a saving knowledge of God? It must be either one or the other. If he exhorted them to labor spiritually, and gave them no power to do so, how can they be blamed for not doing what the Word of God declares the natural man cannot do? He cannot receive the things of the Spirit, and there is none that seeks after God. Because they do not, they cannot feel their need of spiritual things. Admit that the Savior exhorted them to seek that instruction which should show them right from wrong, and that it was their duty so to do—admit this to be the meaning, it then stands in accordance with the whole tenor of scripture. Not but the language is certainly very strong; "Labor for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." The sealing, as here mentioned, signifies authorized. This is explained thus; "For thou hast given him, power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The difficulty of the above passage is in the words, endureth to everlasting life, so that it appears on the face of it that the people were exhorted to do what none without the Holy Spirit can do. We are told in this same chapter, that none can come unto Christ except it were given them of God, except he draw them; and, saith the Savior, "every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." But the people, instead of going to him, went away from him. Therefore, if we conclude that he exhorted the people to labor spiritually to obtain eternal salvation, we shall have still greater difficulties to encounter, than if we came to the opposite conclusion. For, in the first place, Christ hath said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." Would he exhort those to come to him savingly who were never given to him by the Father? Again, he tells us that no man can come except he is drawn by the Father. Would he exhort them to come in the sense that they had no capacity to come? Would he mock them, and trifle with them, tauntingly, and, with apparent sincerity, tell them to do impossibilities? Who can entertain such a thought? Well, then, what is the conclusion to which we must come? Is it not that he exhorted them to labor for that instruction which should better their present moral and social condition, and likewise mitigate future punishment? The instruction thus obtained and followed out would be to them of everlasting use, and in this sense endure to everlasting life.

There is another view that may be taken of this scripture, viz., that as these people followed him because they did eat and were filled, being thus mere carnal followers of Christ, he, in order to bring to

light the carnality of their motive in following him, and that his thus exhorting them for that purpose, is an exception to the general rule, that carnal men are not exhorted to spiritual acts; he, in thus exhorting them, brought to light the carnality of their motive. When he began to speak of the things pertaining to the mind they murmured. The farther he went in, declaring the helplessness of the creature and the sovereignty of God, the more they were offended, until they went back and walked no more with him. How many congregations at the present day would go back if their ministers were to tell out the whole truth! But human helplessness is not felt, therefore eternal election is not prized,

I have given this second view of this scripture; and it is a truth that their carnality was: by what was said in their hearing, brought to light. But they were offended, not so much at the exhortation to labor for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, as at the doctrines advanced in the after part of the chapter; therefore I am most inclined to the first view taken of this scripture, viz., that as Christ has power over all flesh, and demands of men a service (shall I call it a duty service?) for which their natural powers are suited, this service is their duty, and the neglect of it is their sin. It is therefore one thing to be instructed morally, and another thing to be taught spiritually. The instruction which Christ gave to the people at large, and that special knowledge which was communicated to those who were called by grace, were very different. The one called for that submission to him which it was their duty to render; the other lets the soul into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. I therefore conclude, that while it is the duty of all men to hearken to the voice of divine supremacy, and act conscientiously, yet to substitute this mere natural religion for spiritual religion is fatal delusion; and a more ingenious way of deluding the souls of men I believe the enemy never did, nor ever can devise. Only just look at it. Here are thousands upon thousands joining churches, and concluding that they are Christians, when they are looking upon eternal election as a matter of minor importance. Rejoice that their names are written in heaven! How should they, if the book of life is never unrolled before them? They do not feel their need of God's own plan of eternal mercy. Beside, as their ministers tell them that Christ died savingly for the elect, and conditionally for the non-elect, here this question arises; How are they (supposing them for idea's sake to be true Christians) to distinguish between those Christians for whom Christ died savingly, and those for whom he died conditionally? Why, say they, he that believes shall be saved, therefore we need not trouble ourselves about election; and thus they wrap it up. But this would not satisfy me. I should want to know if my faith was the faith of God's elect, or whether it was mere duty faith; whether its end would be the salvation of the soul,

or whether it began in the flesh; whether I may or may not rejoice that my name is written in heaven; whether or not I was one that was exhorted to make my calling and election sure. These are weighty questions; but then in comes another subterfuge, namely, that although Christ died conditionally for the non-elect, yet none of them will ever believe. But we do believe, therefore we are of those for whom he died savingly. Thus natural, mere natural faith, is substituted for that faith which is of the operation of God. So true it is that no man can receive anything except it be given him from above. The salvation of the soul is a matter infinitely beyond all the duties and morality of all this world.

Let us therefore be careful to distinguish between the two voices—the, voice of divine supremacy calling upon men to act as a matter of duty, according to the light which they have; let us distinguish between this and that voice of saving grace which quickens the dead, and tells out to the quickened soul the mysteries of eternal redemption. This voice must as surely be obeyed as was that, voice that called into being and order the whole creation of God. Hence, as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, so, after the same independent, sovereign, effectual manner he hath commanded that light which is above the brightness of the sun to shine into the hearts of his people. The result is certain; they come out of darkness into light. By the voice of divine supremacy many are called, and by the voice of quickening grace few are regenerated, and find the narrow way that leads to life.

As we must distinguish between the voice of divine supremacy calling upon men in general to act, as a matter of duty, according to the light they possess— as we must distinguish between this call and the call of saving grace, so we must distinguish between the sense in which man is helpless, and the sense in which man is not helpless. In salvation matters man is entirely helpless. He is in the kingdom of darkness, held by the powers of darkness, led captive by the devil at his will, and his will is to keep them ignorant of their real state as sinners, and blind their eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of God should shine into their hearts. They can come out of this kingdom and out of the hands of this enemy only by the transforming power of God. He alone who is stronger than the old dragon can deliver them, and beat Satan down under their feet. Their state, as fallen creatures in Adam, is as unalterable by anything they can do as is the skin of the Ethiopian, and as are the spots of the leopard. Not only in providence is it not in man to direct his steps, but also in grace; for "the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." A natural man is a natural man still, and he can be nothing else until God is pleased to make him something else. Nothing but being born from above can constitute a man anything more than a natural man; and thus, "if any man

have not the Spirit of Christ is none of his." These saving mercies stand above, are independent of, and are not regulated, in whole nor in part, by anything in or done by the creature; "He hath mercy on whom he will."

Yet notwithstanding this divine sovereignty and human helplessness, there is room left for the moral government of God in which men are responsible to him for the use of those natural powers with which they are endued. Here we come to the state in which man is not helpless, for he is endued with natural powers; but possesses not a particle above that which is natural. Therefore we might as well expect to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, as to find any real spiritual fruit brought forth by the powers of nature. All spiritual, real gospel fruits, are the fruits of the Spirit of God. Christ is the root which the Holy Spirit brings into the heart; and from this root, and not from the creature, the fruit comes. "From me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found." No good treasure is found in them until the Holy Spirit puts it there; then, and not till then, the man can bring out of the good treasure of his heart good things.

Men, by the natural powers they possess, are capable of knowing God as God, as their Creator and Preserver; and it is their duty to glorify him as God; not glorify him as their God and Father in Christ, for in this sense they cannot know him without regeneration; not glorify Christ as their Redeemer, for the song of redemption can be learned by none but the redeemed themselves; not glorify the Holy Spirit as the testifier of Jesus to their souls, for they are natural, having not the Spirit; but speak and act according to the natural light which they have, and thus use their powers to the acknowledgment of their Maker. It is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now there is a sense in which a man, while in a state of nature, is capable of doing all things written in the book of the law; and there is a sense in which he cannot do one thing written in the book of the law. Now, first, as to the sense in which a natural man is capable of continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Just look at the Ten Commandments, and observe, that under the Jewish dispensation, anyone who practically violated any one of these commandments was punished. Therefore they were punished not for omitting what was not possible for them to do; they were called upon to walk in the commandments of the Lord; not beyond their strength, but with all the strength of their natural powers; they were to serve him with all their strength. And this is the mere moral and natural sense of the word; and this, their service, was to be accepted, not as a condition of salvation; no; nor yet as an evidence of interest in salvation; but accepted merely as a duty they owe to God. For

this natural righteousness, and true gospel righteousness are essentially different; the one is by the power of nature, the other is by the power of God. Just contrast the 18th of Ezekiel with the 5th of Romans. In the 18th of Ezekiel we have that mere natural creature righteousness of which the creature is capable; in the 5th of Romans we have that righteousness which alone can justify us before God; one particle of which man, by nature, does not possess, nor can by any works of his own obtain. Man, then, is capable of continuing in all things written in the book of the law to them, in the mere natural, moral sense, as far as human duty is concerned; and in proportion as they go on in the personal practical violation of the law, so in proportion will they be punished; every man shall be rewarded according to his works.

Now let us look at the sense in which an unregenerate man cannot do one thing written in the book of the law. Now, be it remembered that the law of God can admit nothing into the paradise above but that which is perfectly holy and righteous; nothing can enter there that defileth or maketh a lie; therefore, in order for us to enter heaven, we must be holy, just, and good, even as the law is holy, just, and good. Now, as heaven is a place and state surpassing the earthly paradise which we lost, so we must be constituted accordingly; we must have qualities superior to those in which Adam was created. This the law demands in order to our entering heaven. The law does not demand of men, as their natural and moral duty, anything beyond their natural powers, but its demands, in order to our coming out of our fallen, lost state in Adam- in order to our entering heaven-its demands to this end are very different, and no one can enter heaven contrary to the law, for not one of the jots or tittles of its import can fail. Now, then what one thing can the natural man do towards so fulfilling the law as to be holy, righteous, and good enough to enter into the immediate presence of God? So far from man being able to obey in this sense and to this end, his mind in this matter is enmity against God; it is not in this sense subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be, because it possesses nothing in this sense where with to come before God. His natural and moral duties brought before God as conditions of salvation, would be an awful insult to God, because it would be a practical contempt of the finished work of Christ, of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, and, in short, it would be practically pouring contempt upon the whole truth of God. Yet this is the position in which the majority of professors stand. The word of God having had at the first a laudable moral influence upon their minds, the wicked one, and their own treacherous hearts, have hurried them on until they have become practical and bitter enemies to the truth of God, and have turned out to be the greatest persecutors of the real children of God. Had they stopped in their own province of

moral right and wrong they would have done well, as far as natural well-doing goes; but their willful and practical opposition to truths which they do not understand this, their rushing in "where angels fear to tread," is the greatest of all their sins. Unto such we say, Forbear thee meddling with God!

We again ask, what one thing can the creature do towards so conforming himself to and obeying the law, as to enter the realms of bliss? Where, how, and in what way can a fallen creature obtain holiness, righteousness, and goodness superhuman? Here it is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." All have sinned, all are sinful, all are unprofitable and abominable. The Lord brings his people to feel this, and to know that no holiness, righteousness, or goodness, but that of the Mediator of the new covenant, can bring salvation-that none but the Holy Spirit can bring these things into the soul. This is the only religion that brings that conformity to the law of God which makes meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus, then, we see the sense in which man's natural powers are suited to the demands of the law, and the sense in which he cannot do anything-the sense in which man has no power; "And so while we were without strength Christ died for us." Salvation is a matter entirely of grace; therefore in this matter whatsoever is not of faith is sin; for in spiritual things it is impossible, without the faith of God's elect, to please God.

Having shown what is and what is not the duty of man; having shown up the principle upon which the call of divine supremacy is founded; having shown that substituting natural for spiritual religion is fatally delusive; I here conclude my remarks upon the moral government of God. But I cannot lay down my pen without indulging in a few words concerning the blessedness of that people whose God is the Lord; the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. These are embraced in his everlasting love, chosen in his dear Son, redeemed by his blood, accepted in his righteousness, assimilated to his likeness, dealt with after the order of the covenant of salvation, apprehended, kept, and supplied as objects of sovereign mercy and eternal choice. God the Father introduced for them the finished work of Christ, and he will never, in any of his dealings with them, deviate from this great principle, the finished work of his dear Son. The Savior pursued his work through all the reproaches of men and devils, through all the privations of life, under the sin of the church and the wrath of God. Not all the conflicting powers of sin, death, and hell could, for one moment, divert his attention from the great object for which he came into the world. He travelled in the greatness of his strength. All worlds, beings, and things, past,

present, and to come, lay open unto him. All the depths of hell and heights of heaven, all the thoughts of angels and of men, he saw. He knew he had atoned for, yea, annihilated all the sins of his people; that he had borne and terminated the wrath of God; that he had swallowed up death in victory; yea, that all things relative to his satisfaction, to the glory of God, and to the final peace and prosperity of his brethren, were accomplished. Then, and not till then, would the mighty Savior say, "It is finished! the warfare is accomplished!"

The Holy Spirit bears testimony of the perfection of this great work. He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. The Holy Spirit goes on with his vital operations according to the will of God and work of Christ. The Holy Spirit looks to the will of the Father, and brings in for the saints the work of Christ, and by and with this he opposes all their sins and sorrows, their enemies and adversities. In this way he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. It is the Holy Spirit who alone can make intercession for the saints in their souls. He it is that brings into the heart the love of God, and brings home the word with power by which pardoning mercy and justifying righteousness are enjoyed. Without him there is no true, no real life in prayer; no true affection in exercise; no heavenly endearments realized; no communion, no fellowship with God; no effectual tidings from on high. Natural powers may do natural things, and perform the duties of a natural religion, but the blessings which are in Christ, the Holy Spirit alone can reach. Not one particle of life, faith, repentance, or anything that accompanies salvation, without him. The creature, in these matters, of himself, can possess nothing, can know nothing, can do nothing; the whole is of God.

Christ is God the Father's Alpha; he began to bestow mercy by him; and Christ is God the Father's Omega; for as he began by him, so he finished by him. He does not begin, nor go on, nor finish, with anything belonging to the creature. Christ is also the Holy Spirit's Alpha and Omega; and he is the first Savior we ever found, and the last we shall ever need. We found nothing that could, in salvation, be of any use until we found him, and when his fullness is exhausted we may look elsewhere for supply. When his enemies can, with truth, say of him, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish;" when they can say of him, "that he went to war, but instead of conquering was obliged to submit to the degrading conditions of an ignoble peace;" then, indeed, the top-stone of the building will not reach its destiny; the last enemy, namely, Death, will hold us fast. But, verily, the Lord of life and glory liveth and reigneth, and knoweth them that are his, and he will have them that are his; for this is the desire of his heart, and the request of his lips, "That those that are his should be with him,

and behold his glory."

His people will not be accepted, dealt with, and received to glory as children of men, but as children of God. By nature they are children of men, but by grace they are children of God. Judgment passed upon them as children of men in the first Adam, and they were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others;" therefore in the flesh they were judged as children of men. Their relation to the first Adam was twofold, natural and federal; now, by their union to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, their union with the first Adam is dissolved; so that the Lord does not look upon them in their likeness to the first Adam, but in their likeness to Christ. They have borne the image of the earthly, but this likeness is passing away, and they are to appear in the image of the heavenly; they were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the heavenly. This their likeness to Christ can never pass away or be tarnished; it is "incorruptible, undefiled, and passeth not away."

As their natural union to Adam is by their union to Christ dissolved, so is their federal union to the first Adam dissolved. By their natural union to Adam they are depraved in nature, and by their federal union to him they are in a state of eternal destitution; but they have a covenant union to Christ, by which their covenant union to the first Adam is dissolved, and, instead of being in a state of eternal destitution, they shall possess abundance, and everlasting joy shall be unto them; sorrow and sighing shall flee away, but their joy remaineth.

Again, as children of men they have sinned personally, and if left to be judged by their works in this sense of the word, nothing could be their portion but condemnation; but by the personal work of Christ they have not condemnation, but justification; by him they are justified from all things. It is in this their union to him that God is their father, and the Holy Spirit their teacher. They are thus held, received, and dealt with as children of God. In the first Adam they have a depraved nature; in Christ they are pure, even as he is pure; he is their sanctification. In the first Adam they are desolate; in the second Adam they have all, and abound. By their personal works they deserve condemnation; but by the work of Christ they are entitled to eternal glory. In the first Adam God sees nothing in them for which to bless them; in the second Adam God sees nothing in them for which to curse them. They pass out from the first Adam into fellowship with, and assimilation to, the second Adam, and thus there shall be no more curse; they will, at the last day, be judged as children of God. This it is that will enable them to stand in judgment. The account they will have to give will be a good account. The account they will give will be of

what God bestowed upon them, of what Christ wrought for them, and of what the Holy Spirit wrought in them. "Thou, O Lord, wilt ordain peace for us, for thou hast wrought all our works in us." Those who possess this religion shall suffer persecution and tribulation in the world, because they are not of the world; they are chosen out of the world. One particle of glory will outweigh all the adversities of time. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And unto them that love his appearing he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The fashion of the world is, to bestow its good wine first, and then that which is worse. Here is a youth fired with a love of the world and its treasures and pleasures, or attached to some delusive system of religion. He passes from youth to manhood; his good wine is passing away. He begins to enter the shades of old age; he begins to think more soberly, but his thoughts are vain. He goes on in years; his outward senses become dull; those things which have charmed heretofore have now lost their power, while he is exclaiming with Barzillai, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can I taste what I eat: or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women?" (2 Sam. xix. 35.) Even the best wine of this world turns out to be vanity and vexation of spirit, when thus brought to taste the infirmities of age. He is near to another cup worse still, which cup is death. This is a draught he dreads. He has nothing but false hopes with which to sweeten it; yet this cup cannot pass from him. His good wine is gone; he has now nothing but the dregs. But this is not all. There is for him a cup still more bitter, which he must take into his hand at the judgment day, and of which he must drink to eternity. This is the wine of the wrath of the Almighty. This is the portion of all who die in their sins. All their good things they had in this life have passed away-their best wine is departed from them. What then shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Thus, the world sets forth its best wine first, then that which is worse. But not so in the kingdom of God. Here the worst is set forth first. Here is a man brought into soul trouble. He feels the bitterness of sin, the nauseousness of the world, the rottenness of all creature doings. Here he is in a pit of horror, and in the miry clay, forlorn and helpless; and here he remains and must remain, until he finds a ransom. He hears of Jesus; and when brought to taste that he is gracious, he, in comparing this wine of the kingdom with the pleasures of this world, readily acknowledges that the Lord of life and glory hath kept the best wine until now;" and although he may drink deeply of the cup of bitters, yet he shall go from taste to taste of the goodness and mercy of the Lord, still saying, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now;" not but that he will at times exclaim, "O that

it were with me as in months that are past!" &c.; yet there is abundance of good wine in reserve. The bitters are passing away. Sins and sorrows, old age and death, hell and the grave, are swallowed up by the atonement of an incarnate God. Jesus hath drank the cup of bitters. His people are indeed guilty, but he hath taken the cup of trembling out of their hands. Life, not death, is their portion; sweet, not bitter; not wrath to come, but joy to come; and when they meet at last, will they not then, to the glory of the Lord their God, say, "Thou hast indeed kept the best wine until now!" Then shall they enjoy all the fruit of the Promised Land.

May we be favored to partake increasingly of the fruits of this kingdom while on this side Jordan. This will take our thoughts and affections thither, where our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

FINIS.

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