

This Section is taken from his book
A Manual of Faith and Practice.

BY

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1.—Duty-Faith.

The question which divides us from so many of our fellow Christians may be thus expressed.

Is the act of believing in Christ to the salvation of the soul, a duty naturally incumbent on all men.

Our answer is an emphatic “No,”—while “Yes” would be the reply of the majority of godly persons. This is the gist of the Duty-Faith controversy.

Let the reader understand it. It is not whether men as men are **able** spiritually to believe in Christ. Many to whom we are opposed deny this as emphatically as we do. We too admit with them that creature inability in no wise diminishes creature obligation—and we deplore that so many of our brethren have weakened our cause by seeking to defend it by arguments that were assailable.

Thus a writer says: “It is absurd to preach that it is a man’s duty to believe savingly in Christ. Can that be a duty which is out of the power of a natural man?”—*Earthen Vessel*, vol. 13. 203. To this the answerable reply might be made that inability does not destroy obligation. A debtor’s being without money does not cancel his obligation to meet his liabilities.

Again, in reviewing **Duty-Faith**, a Tract by W. Stokes, the late W. Palmer objecting to the course of the argument pursued observes, that “The question to be tried is not whether Faith has a Divine origin, or whether man is able to create it for himself. Many Duty-Faith advocates admit both. The question lies deeper, and the issue is joined at another point.”—*Voice of Truth*, 1864, page 185.

The question therefore concerns not what man **can do**, but what he **ought to do**—not ability or inability—but duty.

Yet again, the inquiry is limited to natural men. We admit that regenerated sinners are empowered and commanded to believe in Jesus, and that they ought so to do (Page. 205).

Remarkable unfairness has been shown by our opponents in evading the point at issue.

Thus the Rev. George Rogers, late professor of Theology at the Pastor’s College, charges us with holding (1) “that it is not the duty of man to believe the gospel, (2) that Faith is in no sense a duty to saint or sinner, and (3) that no man is responsible for its possession or exercise” [The author makes this reference to his beloved and honoured Tutor “With a stirring at his heart like pain.” Words could not express our obligations to his ability, assiduity and kindness. We instance him as an incomparable theologian to emphasize our remark that the Duty-faith controversy has not received adequate attention from those who differ from us.] He then proceeds to refute these propositions by eight long and labored arguments. *Sword and Trowel*, vol. 1, page 8. His charges, however, lack the foundation of fact, as the preceding chapter proves.

To misrepresent a doctrine is not to refute it.

II.—Duty-Faith—How Proved.

“Is it (asks the late **Dr. John Campbell** in his *Theology for Bible Classes and Christian Families*) the **duty of all** who hear the gospel to believe it?

Yes: every sinner who hears it is commanded, exhorted and invited to believe in Christ for Salvation (Mark 1:15, 5:36; Luke 8:50; Acts 16:31; 1 John 3:23).

Is Faith in Christ, even the Faith which is accompanied with salvation, constantly in Scripture held up as the **duty of all** to whom the gospel is preached?

Yes: this is clear beyond all reasonable contradiction. John 6:29, 12:36.

What is your view of John 6:20, “This is the work of God that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent?”

That the persons addressed were unregenerate sinners, that the Faith enjoined is saving, and that when

Faith is called “the work of God, it does not mean His act, but theirs, which could be pleasing in His sight.”

These proof texts will be examined in due course.

The reader will notice that Duty-Faith advocates assume one of two positions: either (2) that it is the duty of *all men* to believe savingly, or (2) that it is the duty of *all that hear the gospel* to believe to the saving of their souls.

Both are disproved in what is to follow.

III.—Duty-Faith Disproved.

If spiritual Faith is a natural duty—namely, if it is obligatory on account of the relation in which men stand to God as creatures to their Creator—it is commanded by the Moral Law (see page 20), and it was incumbent on Adam as much as on any of his posterity. That it is not commanded by the Moral Law is admitted—or if denied involves absurdity. Faith is the trust of a sinner *as such* in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. If, then, spiritual Faith is a creature duty, it was incumbent on Adam in a state of innocency to trust as a sinner in the redemptive work of Christ. For which none contend.

It has again been urged that man is responsible for any command that God may give; therefore Faith is his duty. This argument is what is in logic called an *enthymeme*. The conclusion is fully drawn from two propositions, one of which is understood. Fully expressed it would stand thus:

Man is responsible to obey any command which God may give.

He has commanded all men to believe in Christ and be saved.

Therefore Faith is his duty.

The suppressed proposition (or minor premise), which we have italicized, assumes the whole question. We meet the argument by denying this point until it is proved.

The following from the pen of the late George Wright, concisely summarizes all that need be said on the question.

If the Faith of God's elect be required by the Law, it must have been commanded by the Law originally, as an essential part of the duty of man to his Creator*. It must, therefore, have been required before the Fall, when man had no need of the salvation with which that Faith is inseparably connected, and of which it is an essential part. Nor would it have been more unreasonable to require Faith of one who needed no salvation, and who could not possibly partake of it, than to require Faith of those who are not ordained to eternal life, and who consequently cannot be saved.

But some maintain, that although the Law did not originally command men in innocence to believe with the Faith of God's elect, it now commands men so to believe. But if this were true, the Law would have an additional precept under the dispensation of grace; and the commandment, which was ever "exceeding broad," would have been extended and made broader. If this be grace, it appears difficult to reconcile it with the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

If Faith be a duty, it is a work; but according to the reasoning of the Apostle, the works of the Law are contradistinguished from Faith. Yet if Faith be a natural duty—though we are saved by grace—it is through the works of the law. The Covenant of Works is blended with the Covenant of Grace, and "grace is no more grace."

*—Adam was not as originally constituted a spiritual man (1 Cor. 15:45, 48)—that is, "the principle of holiness which he possessed before the Fall was not radically and essentially the same as that which the elect receive at Regeneration."—*John Stevens*. He was constituted to view and worship God through the medium of Nature, and to find satisfaction in the scenes and association with which Divine goodness originally surrounded him. This is proved by John Stevens, in his **Help for the True Disciples of Immanuel**, Third edition, pp. 88-96.

William Huntington is, we believe, the only adherent of the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace who ever denied it. See his letter to Mr. Britton, Works, Bensley's edition, vol. 19. Huntington, however, did not hold that the spirituality

of Adam (on which he insists) renders it the duty of all his posterity to believe. This he ably disproves in his letter to Ryland—Works, Bensley's edition, vol. 11.

The original constitution of Adam is no theological quibble—see page 19.

IV.—Is Salvation Contingent on the consent or refusal of Sinners?

It is generally believed that the consent or refusal of men to the saving proposals of God, determines their destiny. Were this true, however, we must banish the attribute of Omnipotence from our conceptions of God. What is stated on pages 86 and 93 is false, if God cannot accomplish His purposes without the previous concurrence of sinners.

The principal texts urged in its favour are the following:

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve,” Josh 24:15. These words were addressed by Joshua to the Jewish nation. The service referred to was the worship of Jehovah instead of idolatrous deities. On no fair principle can the verse be applied to the ungodly; for there is no analogy between the children of Israel as they were then circumstanced, and men and women who are “dead in trespasses and sins.” The latter are “condemned already” under the Law; the former were under God's favour as His nationally chosen people, and were able to respond to the exhortation.

Prov. 8:17, **“Those that seek me early shall find me.”** Commonly regarded as teaching that it is the duty of little children to give their hearts to Jesus, and that they do this far more easily in youth than in after years.

We are far from presumptuously limiting God, by denying that His saving work can be accomplished in a child's heart. “It is a mercy to be under the saving influence of religion when young—a special favour to be in Christ in one's youth. Christian parents feel inexpressible joy in seeing their children called in early life.”—*John Hazelton*. There were saved children in the early church (Eph. 6:1).

We however deny that a child is in a more salvable condition than an adult. His conscience is generally very susceptible to moral influence. His emotions are easily wrought upon by moral appeals. His transgressions are not in magnitude and multitude what those of aged sinners are—but sin is essentially the same in *all* hearts, and none can be saved apart from regenerating grace and the blood of Jesus. The most guileless child is incapable of spiritual acts, and has a mind which is enmity against God, without His grace.

It requires, therefore, the putting forth of “the exceeding greatness of God’s power” ere a child can savingly enter the Kingdom of God.

It is most uncertain whether the above text refers to children at all. It is rendered by W. Newman, D.D., “Those that seek me *earnestly* shall find me;” while it is generally admitted that “making the Lord the *first* object of research,” “seeking Him above all things else,” is the sense intended. It is a fact, that wherever person have grace to seek the Lord with all their heart they will assuredly find Him, whether they are old or young. “Moreover, it does not state that we are the *first* to love and find God, and *not He us*, which would contradict Isa. 65:1; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:10-19; but the object of the passage is to remove desponding doubts from the godly, and to assure them that God loves them, and presents Himself in the way, so as to be found by those that are led to seek Him (*cf.* Heb. 11:6).”—A.R. Faussett, A.M.

“**My son, give me thine heart,**” Prov. 23:26. The favourite verse of popular gospel preachers, who implore men to give their hearts to God as the one condition of salvation. But:

1. The words were addressed by a real human father to his son, and consist of a parental appeal for filial love and frankness. Well would it be, if the children of all worthy parents were to give them their hearts; have no secrets from them, and treat them with the confidence which their affection demands.

2. If spiritually applied, it may be referred to the Lord Jesus, who emphatically, when on earth gave His Heavenly Father His heart, and by whose devoted obedience our salvation was merited.

3. It cannot be regarded as a gospel appeal. Where is the propriety of exhorting men to give sinful and devil-possessed hearts to God?—But

4. It may be felicitously regarded as an exhortation to God’s regenerated people. The *request urged*, ‘Give me thine heart,’ would then appropriately be based on the *relationship* expressed “My son.” God demands love and obedience from His living people. Having brought them from death to life and put them among His children, He enjoins the conduct that is appropriate to their condition. Thus regarded, the verse would teach that truly saved sinners should give their love (Psa 31:23), their trust (Psa. 66:22), their confidence (Psa. 61:8), and the zeal of their renewed powers (Psa. 103:1) to their Heavenly Father (Rom. 12:10)

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,” Ecc. 12:1. Continually employed as an exhortation to children to become pious in their youth. But no spiritual act is contemplated. God, in the capacity of our Creator—not as our Saviour—is presented as the object of remembrance. The context concerns morality. “Remove sorrow from thine heart,”—i.e., the lusts which end in sorrow; and “put away evil from thy flesh”—i.e., avoid sensuality, and “remember thy Creator,” His government and laws “in the days of thy youth.” No spiritual blessing is conjoined with this remembrance. Nothing is found in the least analogous to the doctrine of obtaining spiritual life and favour for believing. The verse teaches the advantage of early and constant recollection of our relation to God as our Creator, Preserver, and Judge.

Isa. 1:18, 19. **“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”** Ordinarily regarded as an appeal to sinners in general, and as teaching that if they will respond to the Divine invitation they will be received and forgiven. But,

God’s ancient people are primarily addressed, on the ground of their (national) covenant relationship to Jehovah. God is represented as weary with their hypocrisy and evil; and they are exhorted to “wash and make themselves clean, and to put away the evil of their doings from before His eyes—to cease from evil, to learn to do well, etc. Then follows our exhortation: “Come *now*, and let us reason, etc.” “If ye be good and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.”

Obviously then, the text appeals to any of members of that guilty nation who might be penitentially conscious of his guilt, and wishful to obtain Divine pardon and favour.

No spiritual application is permissible except there is an analogy between the condition of the persons originally referred to in the passage, and the state of those to whom it is sought to apply it.

The above words can therefore be with propriety applied only to those who feel their guilt through the inwrought work of the Holy Ghost. Such are spiritually *reasonable* (Luke 15:17), and endowed with power to give heed to divine facts. Thus understood, “the ‘now’ is a note not merely of *time* but of *state*. The Lord addresses those who are not what they once were—careless, and unconcerned, but burdened and anxious. To the self-despairing soul, God says, ‘Come now, you are

willing to hear of my mercy and of the riches of my grace. I see what your fears and doubts are. Fear not; it is I that have shown you your condition. Come *now*, My Will will not be too Sovereign or My Mercy too free, or the Priesthood of My Son too perfect, or My Truth too sure for you now.”—*James Wells*.

It should be noticed also that the verse does not propose conditions, but states certainties. “Come—let us reason—your sins **shall** be white,” etc.

The “come,” moreover, is God’s “come,” not a preacher’s—and affords no warrant for one sinner on his own responsibility to exhort another “to take steps to get true religion and be saved.”

“**Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,**” Isa. 45:22; on which is founded the popular hymn:

“There is life **for** a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee.”

It implies, says A. Barnes the “*ease* of salvation”—simply looking to God: and that He, “if men *will not* **look** to Him in order that they may be saved,” will be “just” in “casting them off for ever.”

Note, however, (1) that these words are uttered by the Lord, speaking as a “just God and a Saviour,” and not by human lips. They are authoritative not expostulatory. They do not solicit and promise—but command and declare “*look*” and “*be saved*.” They therefore do not warrant one sinner’s promising spiritual life to other sinners **for** a look—but imply that God with all commanding might, directs favoured sinners to look unto Him.

But (2) who are addressed? Not all sinners, but “all the ends of the earth”—which if the passage is spiritualized at all, must be interpreted in harmony with its connection. It will then refer to persons at a great *conscious* distance from God—who though quickened, are in their fears and apprehensions far from Him. Such have spiritual life, and can consistently be commanded to perform a spiritual act.

Notice, moreover, that the injunction respects rather the *direction* of the look than the act itself, “Unto Me.” Not till this is done is salvation experimentally enjoyed.

“With long despair the spirit breaks,

Till we apply to Christ alone.”

“**Hear, and your soul shall live,**” Isa. 4:3. Adduced to show that a reception of Christ by Faith will procure spiritual life. This however, overlooks the fact that the whole passage is addressed to spiritually living persons: for if it is conceded that *any* of the terms describe spiritual acts, we must admit that that they *all* do. None will deny that those who “labour” must be endowed with life to enable them to do so; and if living, they also have power to “hear” not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear of the heart. Awakened sinners in the early consciousness of their lost condition are therefore referred to, and such are assured that there is in the covenant of grace a full supply for all their wants, and that all that “hear” with the reverent attention of Faith, need be under no apprehension of sin’s woeful desert—spiritual and eternal death.

The words “shall live,” therefore refer to the experimental *enjoyment* of a life at present possessed, and not to future investment with a life not yet granted. For a parallel passage, see Psa. 119:144 and 175, where a spiritually *living* sinner prays, “Give me understanding, and I shall *live*.” “Let my soul *live* and it shall praise Thee.”

John 5:25, “**They that hear shall live.**” Adduced to prove that if sinners who are “dead in trespasses and sins” will but hear the gospel with reverent and earnest belief as rational and immortal creatures, and will trust in Christ—spiritual life will be imparted to them for so doing: that is to say, that an act performed in the energy of Nature will entitle them to the blessings of eternal salvation.

That this interpretation is false, is, whoever, apparent. The hearing in the preceding verse is evidently a spiritual action; for “he that hearth My word hath (not *shall have*) everlasting life,” and “is passed from death unto life.” Here, hearing is mentioned as manifesting a life previously possessed, and the statement of our verse must be an amplification and explanation of the preceding one. *That* stated that Faith manifests life; *this* states, whence this life proceeds. The Son of God speaks dead souls (by the Holy Ghost) into spiritual existence. In the energy of the life then received, they hear, not with the outward ear, or the rational attention of the mind even, but they give heed in their hearts. Such *heart-heed* demonstrates the possession of life in the largest sense of the word. They that so hear, shall live spiritually for ever, and be happy, when sinners are consigned to the doom of the death that can never die. That the word hear, has often this force, see John 8:47 and 10:3, 27. The verse therefore, simply enforces a spiritual fact—and by no means states that eternal life is bestowed for believing.

Ezek. 36:25, “**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.**” Ezek. 18:31, “**Make you a new heart and a new spirit.**” Alleged to prove that the Bible teaches both Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility—since in the first verse God is said to give sinners a new heart, and in the second, they are commanded to make their own hearts new. But—

This interpretation supposes that the two portions refer to the same persons under the same characters, which is not the case.

Ezek. 18:31, is addressed to the Jews of *Ezekiel's day*, and they are enjoined to avert their national death by national repentance and reformation. This necessitates our interpreting the “making of a new heart” to mean—not a spiritual change, but a change in the *moral tone* of the nation (see page 245).

Ezek. 36:25, like chap. 11:19, refers (1) to the Jews in a far *distant day*, when the nation will be brought to spiritual Repentance, and (2) to the election of grace, the Israel of God—on whom the Lord confers the spiritual blessings of a change of heart and spirit. Jer. 31:31, 34, as interpreted in Heb. 8:8, 12, afford a satisfactory precedent for this interpretation. Thus the baselessness of the Fullerite view is apparent.

Amos 4:12, “**Prepare to meet thy God.**” Quote to prove that men can and ought to make their peace with God, and so prepare themselves for death and Judgment.

Amos, however, is here reproving national Israel for their idolatry and their indifference to former warnings and punishments. In spite of what had already befallen them, they had not returned unto their God, who was about to visit them with sorer forms of evil for their crimes. “God is about to inflict the last and worst judgment on thee, the extinction of thy nationality. Consider, then, what preparation thou canst make for meeting Him as thy foe, (Jer. 46:14; Luke 14:31, 32); see what can be done towards mitigating the severity of the coming judgment by penitence.”—*A.R. Faussett, A.M.*

Our view of the above by no means precludes our preaching the way in which God the Spirit prepares God's elect for death and heaven, and hailing with joy saved sinners as trophies of His grace and power. But the words afford no warrant for the believe that such preparation is a natural human duty.

Matt. 13:58, “**And he did not many might works there, because of their unbelief.**” Mark 6:5, “**And he could there do no might work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.**” Often quoted to prove *either* that the unbelief of sinners prevents Christ from saving them, or that the unbelief of Christians hinders the Holy Ghost from saving sinners in their congregations. But—

1. The *persons* mentioned were Jews, who in the face of the plainest evidence, refused to acknowledge the Messiahship of Jesus. That was the unbelief referred to, the obstinacy and stupidity of which excited the wonder of the human mind of the Lord (Mark 6:6).

2. The ‘could not’ of Mark 6:5, is explained by the ‘did not’ of Matt. 13:58. It does not mean that Christ’s power was restricted—since it required as much Divine energy to work one miracle as many—but that it was not becoming for such characters to be indulged with the sight of works of great moment.

3. There is no parallel between these men who “were offended,” i.e., “caused to stumble” at Jesus, and a sinner who, not possessing the principle of Faith, cannot exercise it—or between them and true believers, whose faint and feeble Faith does not rise to fuller and stronger acts of belief. We may blame weak Christians—but such do not stumble at Christ, deny Him His just honour as the Messiah, or seek to impede His sovereign operations of grace. He fulfills the good pleasure of His will, and nothing hinders the progress of His work.

Mark 5:36. “**Be not afraid: only believe.**” On which is founded the irrational hymn, “Only believe, and you shall be saved.” The passage however has reference to the forebodings which arose in the heart of Jairus when informed that his daughter was dead. The subject in question was not the salvation of the soul, but the Lord’s ability to restore her when life had fled. And Jesus said, “*Be not afraid: only believe;*” i.e., that I can do all you desire. This is confirmed by the parallel passage, Luke 8:50, “*Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*”

Luke 13:24, “**Strive to enter in at the strait gate.**” Cited to prove that a duty—here styled “striving”—is incumbent on all men, and that apart from its discharge none can be saved. This, however, is not the meaning of the passage, as will appear if we consider:

1. The **persons** addressed. An individual had inquired of Jesus whether such as are to be saved are few in number? Instead of answering this question directly (He had already done so elsewhere, Matt. 7:14), the Lord made it the occasion of a

discourse, not to the inquirer only, but to all within the sound of His voice, whom he addressed *collectively*, as a religious gathering, on the ground of the interest in sacred themes which they then manifested. His subject was the possibility of being deluded upon the solemn matters which concern the soul and eternity. Thus our text is not a command to the unregenerate to do something, but a warning to religious professors to be diligent in seeing that they are right.

2. The **injunction** given. **Strive with earnestness** (literally **agonize**) to enter **(into the kingdom of God) through the narrow gate** (or **door**, the approved reading being the same word as in John 10:1); for **many, I say unto you will seek** (without agonizing earnestness, for a contrast is evidently intended between the full-hearted “striving” and the mere “seeking”) **to enter in** (that is to obtain admission to the kingdom of God by some other entrance) and **will not be able**.

This is Dean Alford’s interpretation. He observes, that we should supply the words, “the kingdom of God”—that the *emphasis* of the injunction lies at the phrase, *the strait door*—and that the words do not mean that some will seek to enter *by this* and not be able—but that they will attempt to enter elsewhere—“to climb up some other way.” John 10:1. [A thief and robber—“thief,” one who steals by *fraud*; “robber,” one who steals by *violence*. Such are liars and imposters in *heart*, and act in the *energy* of the flesh to deprive the Lord of His honour as the only Saviour. To set aside Jesus as needless and superfluous is to rob Him of His declarative glory.]

This disposes of the Arminian idea (often thrust on sinners to frighten them into becoming pious) that many men will come to Christ for salvation, and really seek Him in Faith, when it is too late.

Professedly religious persons should therefore be told that—There is but one way of entrance into salvation (Acts 4:12)—All who pass this portal—i.e., who come to Jesus in the energy of the Spirit-born life, and receive Jesus by Faith, do so with the deepest and most solemn feelings—Many attempt to obtain Salvation apart from Christ—not Unitarians only, but all are included to whom he is not absolutely essential and all sufficient—but such attempts prove failures.—We should strive with earnestness to know that our religion is of God.

The **admonition**, too long to transcribe here—but teaching that—Many will continue in a false profession until their death or the Second Advent.—Mere outward association with the Lord, in the days of His flesh, or with His followers now, will be no plea for His eternal approval.—Unless Christ knows us—by whatever means we have come by our religion—we shall be lost.—_Persons who

enter upon a profession of religion without receiving Christ are **workers of iniquity**, an unusual expression (Alford) designating them as sinners of a very deep dye, who will be doomed to punishment of the heaviest character. *Now* they may receive compliments for their piety and liberality. *Then* their damnation will be of unspeakable severity.

Thus the passage does not teach Duty-Faith.

John 1:12, “**As many as received Him, to them gave He power (or the right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.**” Often employed to prove that Faith precedes and is the cause of sinners, being adopted as dear children into the family of God. ‘If they will believe, then they shall become the sons of God.’ Faith, therefore, it is urged from these words, is the condition of relationship.

It will, however, be observed that the text does not state that filial relationship is bestowed on the condition of Faith; but that *power* to become the sons of God is given to those that believe in the name of Jesus Christ. The interpretation, therefore, hinges on the phrase “power to become.” Does this refer to the *fact* or the *experience* of sonship?

It cannot, however, refer to the *fact* of Adoption, for many reasons. In Gal. 4:6, the Spirit, (who is the Author of Faith) is expressly said to be sent forth into our hearts “because we are sons.” Moreover, our sonship is, in 1 John 3:1, ascribed to the love of God (which from its very nature must be sovereign, free, everlasting, immutable and uninfluenced by what goes on in the mind of a creature); and the New birth, in the verse following our text, is described as the act of God Himself. If, then, it is made to teach that Faith is the condition upon which sonship is bestowed, it will contradict other important Scriptures, and its very context. It cannot, therefore, relate to the fact of Adoption; but

On examination, it evidently refers to an *experimental acquaintance* with and enjoyment of the high relationship of divine sonship. For (1) the succeeding verse states of the persons mentioned that they were previously “born of God,” and thereby admitted into vital relationship with Him. (2) The word “power” or “privilege” necessarily indicates something different from the fact of being God’s sons, and to what can it refer, but to the glad and confident consciousness of the fact.

The verse therefore means, that those that are born of God, receive Jesus Christ and believe in His name, and thus become acquainted with their relationship, and are empowered to take with boldness the place of sons. Thus grace puts a sinner “among the children” (Jer. 3:19), and Faith cries, “my Father.” By Christ “we have access by Faith into the grace (of Adoption) wherein we stand,” Rom. 5:2.

Gal. 3:26, “**For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**” “A sinner,” says Thomas Boston, is instated into the covenant of grace by *Faith*, or believing on Jesus Christ. Faith is the hand wherewith one taketh hold of the covenant, signs it for himself and closeth the bargain for his own salvation. Believing on Christ is the appointed means of entering sinners into the covenant of grace.” Words could not be plainer. Faith (so we are here told) originates the peculiar relationship to God, which is the distinguishing privilege of those who are interested in the Covenant of Grace. In support of this the above text is often advanced. We reply,

Israel Atkinson contends that by Faith we are to understand, not the act of believing, but that divine arrangement in which favour is accorded to sinners on the principle of Faith as opposed to works; in other words that the term Faith is here (as in verses 23, 24, and 25) used objectively. This suits the context, in which the apostle is contending that salvation is wholly through sovereign grace, irrespective of human merit.

It is, however, more generally held, that by our being God’s children by Faith is meant, that by Faith we obtain an experimental acquaintance with the fact. “Not that Faith makes any the children of God, or puts them into such a relation; for that is the act and deed of God who has predestinated us to the adoption of children, and secured the blessing for us in the covenant of grace: Christ, by redemption, has made way for our reception and our enjoyment of it; and the Spirit, as a consequence of our ancient adoption bears witness to it. Faith, however, receives it, as it does all the blessings of grace made ready to its hand; and so we become evidently and manifestly the children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.”—*Dr. Gill.*

Thus Faith does not *make*, but *manifest* our relation to God as His children, and hence the rich promise of the gospel, i.e., that we shall share the filial love of God—is “given to those that believe” (verse 22).

“Though we are sons and heirs of God

Before our souls believe;
'Tis only Faith that can of this
An evidence receive.

“Thus we are called His children, by
Believing in His Son;
And more than this, are justified,
By what His hands have done.”

John 3:14, 15, 16, “**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.**” Etc. Words often on the lips of preachers who hold that Faith in Christ must precede Regeneration, and that sinners *obtain* spiritual life by believing in Jesus. Jesus had told Nicodemus of the necessity of Regeneration. Now, “He directs him to the brazen serpent, teaching him that he must go there in order, as it were, to gather up *the seeds of this needed new life.*”—*J.G. Bellett.*

It is, however, overlooked that the design of the serpent in the wilderness was not to impart life to the dead, but restoration to the dying. Those who benefited by it, looked in the last energy of their almost expiring life. The serpent-bitten Israelite does not therefore represent an unregenerate person dead in trespasses and sins, and spiritually unconscious; but a sinner, “poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore.” In other words, the text applies to those who have received life from Christ, or been born again, but who are in their guilty and miserable apprehensions ready to perish. Such should be assured, that “Jesus ready stands to save them, full of pity joined with power.” Whosoever looketh to Him—and all that have life in Christ will look to Christ—will find relief and rest in so doing. The serpent of brass is, therefore, not a type of Jesus as a “quickening spirit,” 1 Cor 15:45, giving “eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him;” but as the great and gracious Physician, imparting health of soul to all that are led to apply to Him, however desperate and deadly their conditions may be.

John 6:27, “**Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but of that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed.**” Ordinarily regarded as a declaration of the way in which salvation is to be obtained; earnest Faith being the condition on which it is bestowed. Hence, sinners are besought to make the required effort to possess themselves of the meat which endureth unto eternal life. Examine, however,

1. **The context.** Jesus on the previous day had miraculously fed five thousand persons in the wilderness. The impression made upon the people was profound. It was the popular expectation that the Messiah would repeat the miracles of Moses, who had given their fathers manna in the wilderness. A transient, impulsive conviction seized their minds that Jesus was none other than the prophet of whom Moses had spoken (Deut 18:15), and they would have taken Him by force and made Him a King (John 6:14, 15). To defeat their intention, He bade His apostles take ship, and cross over to Bethsaida, on the other side of the lake. Having dismissed the multitudes, He ascended a neighboring mountain. He there continued in prayer till near the fourth watch of the night, when He joined the apostles, quelled the storm that threatened their vessel, which He conveyed by an act of miraculous power to the other side of the lake. The fact of His presence on the western shore becoming known, many who had witnessed the marvelous multiplication of the loaves, took ship and followed Him to Capernaum. Their motive is stated. They sought Him not because they *saw* the miracles (John 6:26), not because they inferred who He was from His miracles—but because they had eaten of the food which He had furnished and been filled. A low desire to obtain satisfaction for their natural hunger brought them to Jesus. They wondered how He had crossed over—since He had not embarked with His disciples—and questioned Him on the subject. He did not satisfy their curiosity; but met their state of heart by the discourse, commencing with the verse under examination. It therefore was not addressed to men as men, or even to Jews as Jews. It applies only to these persons who had obtained a gratuitous meal on the previous night, and were now eagerly following Jesus with the hope that He would once more feed them.

2. **The terms** of the rebuke. *Labour not.* “Rather,” says Dean Alford, “‘Busy not yourselves about’—‘Do not weary yourselves for.’” What the Lord censured, again says Dean Alford, “was not a ‘working for’ or a ‘bringing about of,’ but a following Christ in order to obtain food which perisheth.”

“*But for the food which endureth, or remains, unto eternal life.*” It has been surmised that the Lord “is here merely exhorting those whom He addressed, to endeavour to obtain correct views respecting Himself, His testimony and His claims as the promised Messiah, who was ‘given’ to them by being sent and sealed to minister and suffer amongst them.”—*Gospel Herald*, vol. 19. 187. This is, however, in our judgment, an unfair toning down of the verse. The words “*eternal life*,” necessitate our regarding the food as something relating to spiritual salvation; and it may be, as Dr. Gill informs us, either the soul-sustaining truths which Jesus taught, or Himself as the antitypical pascal Lamb. The verse thus means: “If you

attach yourselves to Me at all, let it not be from motives so low as my ability to furnish you with perishable food; but because I can, as God's sealed and sent servant, give food for the never-dying soul."

If applied to men in the present day, the verse must be restricted to persons whose condition resembles that of those herein described—namely, that unhappy class of people who become religious from interested motives, to obtain money or position, under the idea that godliness is "a way of temporal gain."* Such should be warned that it is a high misdemeanor in God's sight, to make a religious profession from any lower motive than a felt need of Christ and a persuasion that He is our Saviour.

*—The above is the admitted force of 1 Tim. 6:5, "Supposing that godliness is a way of gain," *Rev. Translation*. "Holding gain to be the end of piety."—*J.N. Darby*. "Who suppose that godliness is gain."—*Dean Alford*, who further explains that these persons imagined that "religion was to be used as a means of worldly bettering themselves."

John 6:29, "**This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.**" Note that this verse does not read, "This is the **command** of God that ye believe," although such is the interpretation often given to it. It is not an exhortation. The Jews had asked what they should do in order to perform such works as would be pleasing to God. Jesus replies, that the truest way for them to work the work of God, would be to receive and obey Him whom He had sent. Primarily, Faith in Jesus as the Messiah—not believing to the salvation of the soul—is evidently intended.

Spiritual belief, however, is here contended for. If so, the verse will mean, that of all the acts of which the human mind is capable, Faith in Jesus is the most gratifying to God. The verse therefore does not touch the proposition which it is quoted to prove.

John 6:53, "**Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.**" Quoted by the Rev. John Stock in his handbook of Revealed Theology, to prove that "*until* a man by Faith receives the sacrifice of Christ he has no life, not even its first elements in his soul." The question here discussed by our Lord, however, is not how spiritual life is *obtained*, but how it is *maintained*. Jesus proclaims Himself as the only food of heaven-born souls. All living creatures are so constituted that their life is nourished by some appropriate form of food—and they are described by what they eat. Some are *carnivorous* or

flesh-eaters. Others *grainivorous*, and subsist on grass. A Christian lives on Christ by Faith. He that eateth (is an eater of) the flesh and blood of Christ has life eternal, verse 54. It will be seen that the word “until” in the sentence quoted above, perverts the passage. The Lord does not say that until a man believes he has no life, but that except he subsists on Christ’s flesh and blood—i.e., except Christ is as really a vital and daily necessity to his soul as food is to his body—he is spiritually lifeless.

“John 12:36, **“While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light.”** Must be studied in its connection. Jesus at Jerusalem had predicted “what death He should die,” and its results, verse 32, 33. His hearers, who were obstinately prejudiced in favour of their religion and determined to repudiate His teachings, rejoined by a question which was evidently intended to stagger the great Teacher. He does not answer their query, but rebukes the spirit which prompted it. “*Walk while ye have the light*”—while My ministry continues—“*lest darkness come upon you,*” which it did by the judicial blindness which was sent upon them. “*While ye have the light, believe in the light,*” receive my testimony concerning Myself and My mission. Ye assume great things. Ye pretend to great intelligence and uncommon knowledge—in a word, ye in effect arrogate to yourselves the title of *children of light*—but know this, that it is only by acknowledging Me, and becoming my disciples that ye can justly earn the appellation.

Where note. (1) Not men as men, but Jews as Jews were addressed, (2) A reception of Jesus as Israel’s Messiah (not as one’s personal Saviour) is contemplated and (3) The title “children of light,” does not as in Eph. 5:8 intend spiritually illuminated persons, but Jews whose minds were informed by the teaching of Jesus.

John 20:31, **“That ye might believe—and believing ye might have life through His name.”** Supposed to prove that spiritual life is granted to sinners for believing in Christ. The clue to its correct interpretation is, however, simple. St. John informs us that his object in writing his Gospel was, that the credence of Faith might be given to his testimony, and that confidence might be directed to and reposed in the Saviour, whose biography he had written—“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” What he had advanced was sufficient ground for the belief of a heaven-born Faith.

[The object of St. John’s Gospel was (as above), that men might believe in the person called Jesus as the Incarnate Word, and so enter into the enjoyment of

spiritual life through His name. The object of his First Epistle was that his brethren might be led into the full assurance of Faith, and so into deeper fellowship with God and fullness of joy.]

The result of their thus believing is added, “**That believing, ye might have life.**” Not “if ye will believe, ye shall obtain life,” but “that, believing, ye might have life.” The meaning of the words “living,” or “having life,” in Scripture has before been explained. Their force often is to have the consciousness of a life previously imparted (Page 215). A man in a swoon has life, but is altogether unconscious of the fact, since his senses which are the only channels of intercommunication with the outer world, are in a state of inaction. Now faith is the organ of spiritual perception and intelligence, and till it is in operation, a regenerated sinner must remain ignorant of the existence of spiritual life in his soul. Without Faith there can be no spiritual consciousness. But Faith can only act by means of the Gospel, and thus by believing we awake to the perception of our relation to spiritual realities, and know that we are alive to God. So St. John had presented to his spiritual readers the great Object of Faith, that they might believe, and by believing become conscious of the fact that they had life through His name.

That Faith is not the procuring cause of spiritual life, is evident from the expression, “through His name.” His name, evidently means His person, and the power and authority that are associated with it. “Believers have their spiritual and eternal life through Christ; their life of Justification depends on Him; their life of Sanctification flows from Him; and their life of Glory will be maintained through their connection with Him. Their life centers in His person; comes to them from Him as its procuring cause; and is bestowed for His sake. Yea, it is in His hands to give, and is imparted by Him (not to those who consent to receive it from Him, and apply to Him for it), but to all whom His Father gave Him before the foundation of the world.”—Abridged from *Dr. Gill*.

Acts 13:46, “**Ye put (or thrust) it, (i.e., the word of God, not salvation) from you, and judge yourselves not worthy of eternal life.**” Quoted to prove that men can thrust salvation from them by unbelief, and so frustrate God’s gracious purpose in offering it to them.

But these words were addressed to the Jews at Antioch, in Pisidia, who were filled with envy at the sight of the multitudes who thronged to hear the apostle’s preaching and contradicted what he said, and blasphemed. On this, “Paul and Barnabas”—did what? Entreat them not to put salvation away from them? No. Without a single exhortation they said—“Seeing you put the word of God from

you, and *judge yourselves* unworthy of eternal life”—what then? You will be doubly damned for not receiving our message? No. They simply acted in accordance with their commission (Luke 24:47), and “turned to the Gentiles.”—*Charles Drawbridge*.

The phrase “**judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life**” is, however, difficult and demands further attention. A. Barnes’ explanation is indeed instructive. “It does not mean that they expressed the opinion in words, that they were unworthy of eternal life, or that they so regarded themselves—for they thought just the reverse—but that by their conduct they declared this and condemned themselves.”

The difficult connected with the word “worthy,” is however unremoved. Men are guilty sinners. None are worthy of any of God’s favours. It could not, therefore, have been wrong in these men to judge that they were unworthy of eternal life. This were but to admit an undisputed truth. Nor does it mean that they “had rejected the gospel, and so shown that they were unfit to enter into life.” It is playing with the words to extort this sense from them. It remains to ascertain the true interpretation of the term “worthy.”

It here stands for the word *axios* an adjective derived from the verb *ago*, “I weigh.” Its meaning is, “of like weight” or “value,” “commensurate with,” or “worth as much as,” “deserving of,” “entitled to on the ground of merit.” In this latter sense it occurs in Matt. 10:10; Luke 7:4; John 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:15; Rev. 4:11. In Matt. 3:8, and 2 Thess. 1:3, it is rendered “meet,” i.e., in the former sense. In Matt. 22:8, it is found in the first sense, though with a slightly different shade of meaning. Those that were invited to the wedding feast, but had made light of it, and would not come (page 243) are said not to have been “worthy.” Here the thought of merit cannot be implied, for the entertainment was as free as the invitation was spontaneous and gracious. The wrong-heartedness of the invited guests, their unwillingness to accept the royal hospitality, their independency, the disloyalty which they manifested—constituted their unworthiness. “Not worthy,” then, there means “unsuited” to be guests at so free an entertainment. Now what this parable predicts in symbolic language, Acts 13:40-48, describes as actual history, and the occurrence of the term *axios* in both is significant, and supplies the clue to the interpretation we are seeking. Not worthy here means “unsuited” or “not fit,” as a man of wealth would be unfit for a dole of bread. Hence the sense is, “As ye thrust from you and reject the gospel of the risen Saviour, and in your pride and creature sufficiency judge that ye do not require the grace of Regeneration, and imagine that ye are not in a condition to need the gift of eternal life of which that gospel testifies, we turn from you,” etc.

[The above verse has been cited in support of the modern doctrine that an eternity of conscious existence awaits those persons only who are united to Christ, and that those who die unsaved will not live for ever, but be annihilated and cease to be. Such only as are here “worthy of eternal life” (it has been sought to show from these words) will live for ever. Correctly viewed, however, the text has not the remotest relation to this subject.]

Man may close his ears to the outward testimony of the gospel, and proudly dream that he requires not its promised mercy; but the words do not teach that sinners can, by unbelief impede the invincible Spirit when he pleases to impart spiritual life unto them.

Acts 16:31, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**” Addressed by Paul and Silas, not to a promiscuous audience, but to a trembling and convinced sinner, in whose heart they perceived that the Spirit had wrought a saving change. They therefore pointed him, and any of his household who might be in a similar condition, and perhaps all were, to Jesus, and directed them to apply to Him for salvation.

Rom. 4:23, 24; 5:1, “**Now it was not written for [Abraham’s] sake alone that [righteousness] was imputed unto him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Attention is claimed to the phrases “if we believe” and “being justified by faith,” which are often quoted to prove that, by believing, sinners pass from a state of condemnation to one of justification—that on this condition the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them—and that then, and not till then, they stand free from guilt in God’s sight. That this is the apparent teaching of the words on a superficial examination is not denied. Further, it is honest to admit that they present some difficulty to those who hold the views advocated in these pages.

To meet this difficulty, two very different explanations have been proposed.

The first suggests the transposing of the common in Rom. 5:1, and making the verse read “Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God.” Thus the words are supposed to teach nothing more than the indisputable fact that peace comes to justified sinners through believing.

To this, however, there is a weighty objection. An alteration so important should not be made without authority. This it lacks. The emendation would not be sanctioned by any competent scholar whose judgment was unbiased. On this account the suggestion must be abandoned.

Again, Israel Atkinson denies that “Faith” here means believing, and contends that the term is employed *objectively* to describe the method of salvation revealed to and received by faith.

To this it may be objected, that Rom. 5:1 evidently relates to chap. 4:24, which must rule its meaning. Thus: “For us, also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace.” This necessitates our giving to the term “faith” in chap. 5:1 the force of “believing.”

We, nevertheless, contend that the popular interpretation is incorrect, for the following reasons. The original reads thus:

“Now, it was not written on account of him (Abraham) only, that [righteousness] was imputed (or reckoned) unto him; but also on account of us, to whom it is about to be (or shall most certainly be) imputed (or reckoned) [namely] to us that believe on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered on account of our offences, and was raised on account of our justification. Having, therefore, been justified out of (or in the way, or on the principle of) faith* we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*—Rom. 5:1, Justified “*out of faith*,” Rev. Version, alternative reading, which is a literal translation of the Greek preposition *ek*. “*On the principle of faith*,” J.N. Darby; “*in the way of faith*,” G.V. Wigram; “Neither *by* nor *through* at all represents the preposition *ek* here employed; but both were evidently employed to sustain the mistaken sense of the passage so commonly adopted.”—*Israel Atkinson*.

It may be thus explained—God was the object of Abraham’s faith, as He is of ours, but God is always to be trusted according to the fullest revelation of Himself that He has deigned to make. Abraham trusted in Him as promising, and being able to keep His promise. We trust in the same God, but as more fully revealed in connection with His crowning act of faithfulness and power—the raising of Jesus from the dead. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned (or

imputed) unto him for righteousness—i.e., unto him as a believer righteousness was imputed, for his justification: and righteousness is imputed also to us, who believe in God as raising Jesus from the dead. He that thus believes in God is designated as one to whom righteousness is imputed. This, we submit, is the apostle's meaning. There is no "if" in the original, nor is there the shadow of authority for its introduction.* The question, therefore, of the way in which sinners originally become interested in the righteousness of Christ is not here discussed.

*—See various translations: "*Who believe on Him,*" Rev. Version; "*To whom, believing on Him, etc., it will be reckoned,*" J.N. Darby; "*To us, also, who have faith in Him, etc.,*" W.J. Conybeare, M.A.; "*Seeing we believe on Him,*" etc., Dr. Gill, who adds, "which is descriptive of the faith of New Testament believers," "*Namely, us who believe,*" Dean Alford, who adds, "this specifies the **us**."

The future "shall be imputed" demands attention. Is not righteousness now imputed to all that believe?

In reply, we observe, that in the original there are two ways of expressing what is yet to be. The common and less emphatic way is by the use of the ordinary future tense. The less ordinary but more forcible is by using an additional verb, *mello* "to be about to." When this is the case (as in Matt. 16:27, 17:12, 22; Acts 24:15; Rom. 8:13, 18; Rev. 1:19), the "shall" should be regarded as if printed in italics, to indicate that it is emphatic. Such is the "shall" in this passage.

Two explanations of its peculiar force here are suggested.

That the future is employed as in chap. 3:30 and 5:10, because it refers to the conduct of God throughout the whole of this dispensation. Wherever and whenever a spiritual believer is found, it will be a fact that righteousness is imputed to him. Again it is supposed—

"That the reference is to the Day of Judgment (Compare 1 John 2:28, and 4:17), and that the apostle's meaning is, that as God has already vindicated in His Word the righteousness of Abraham, so He will assuredly vindicate the characters of those who now by Faith are enabled to count human righteousness as dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:7, 11)"—*Arthur Pridham*.

The former opinion commends itself to the writer.

It is, therefore, clear (whatever view be adopted) that this passage does not teach that believing is a condition of salvation.

This leads us to a correct interpretation of Rom. 5:1, which is evidently but a reiteration of the statement we have just examined. **“Having, therefore, been justified in the way or on the principle of faith.”**

This does not refer to our secret Justification in the sight of God, which, as we have shown (page 65), was merited by the obedience unto death of Jesus, who, as the context states, was “delivered on account of our sins (because He was charged with our sins) and was raised again on account of our Justification (because our Justification was an accomplished fact).

[Compare page 71. This passage does not mean that Christ was raised again to accomplish our Justification by pleading the merits of His death on our behalf, but that our Justification led to His Resurrection. Had not the elect church been justified by His death, He could not have been raised from the dead. “The original words are without ambiguity, and clearly represent our Lord’s resurrection as an event which took place *in consequence* of our justification, and in the same manner as His death took place in consequence of our sins.”—Bishop Horsley’s “Sermon on Rom. 4:25.” See also, “Thoughts on Scriptural Subjects,” by B.W. Newton, page 133. Bunyan evidently took the same view of the text. See Offor’s Edition, vol. 1, page 305. “A full discharge was in and by Christ received of God of all our sins *before He rose from the dead*, as His resurrection truly declared; for ‘He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification’ (Rom 4:25).”]

It refers, whoever, to Justification as realized by us. “The implantation of the habit of Faith gives me a right to believe myself justified; and the drawing forth of Faith into exercise gives a knowledge of that right.”—*John Ryland, D.D.* Thus a man is justified by Faith, who heartily renounces his own creature righteousness, and humbly presents the righteousness of Jesus as his only plea for his acceptance with God. He is not justified **for** Faith, nor does the phrase “by faith” accurately represent the original. But he is justified on the *principle* of faith as opposed to works; or, *in the way* of faith as a distinct method of approach to God in reliance on the merits of Jesus Christ. *Out of* his Faith his knowledge of his Justification arises, for “though an elect person is clear in the sight of God, he cannot know it, nor has he any right to believe himself justified before the implantation of this heaven-born grace.”—*John Ryland, D.D.*

The passages under review, therefore, teach that those that believe had righteousness imputed to them, and are justified; and that Faith conveys an experimental enjoyment of this fact to the mind. They, however, do not represent that believing is a human duty to be performed ere sinners can be saved.

2 Cor. 5:20 and 6:1, 2, **“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech (you) by us; we pray (you) in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God. We then, as workers together (with Him), beseech (you) also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; for He saith ‘I have heard Thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succoured Thee.’ Behold now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation.”**

*Attention is directed to the sentences, “Be ye reconciled to God,” and
“Now is the day of salvation.”*

“Be ye reconciled to God.” Generally regarded as an exhortation to unconverted persons to make their peace with God—i.e., to take such steps as shall lead Him to overlook their sins and receive them favourably for Christ’s sake. This sentiment is embodied in the following lines, evidently founded on this passage. “Our Own Hymnbook,” by C.H. Spurgeon, No. 519:

“Sinners, you are now addressed,
In the name of Christ our Lord;
He hath sent this message to you,
Pay attention to His word.

“Think what you have all been doing,
Think what rebels you have been;
You have spent your lives in nothing
But in adding sin to sin.

“Yet your long-abused Saviour,
Sends to you a message mild;
Loathe to execute His vengeance,
Prays you to be reconciled.
Hear Him woo you—
Sinners now be reconciled.”

[In the same volume may be found the fine verses given on pages 56 and 57 of this work, “Hail Mighty Jesus!”—“Our Own Hymn-Book,” Psalm 45, version 4.

May it not be inquired whether the Mighty Jesus, at whose “commanding word” “the stoutest rebel must resign,” is the same Saviour who stands loathe to execute His vengeance, and woos rebels to be reconciled? If He is, one of the hymns embodies a strange libel on His character.]

“**Now is the day of salvation,**” ordinarily employed as the basis of an exhortation to sinners to avail themselves of the present day (of twenty-four hours) to become religious and close with the Saviour’s offer of mercy.

“Sinner,” says C.H. Spurgeon, “*now* is thy time to think about eternity, and prepare to meet thy God. Seek Him in the days of thy youth; for the promise is, “They that seek me early shall find me.’ I charge thee, since there is only a ‘day of salvation,’ before the sun goes down, and the black night of ternal ruin shall come upon thee, lay hold upon the hope that is set before thee.”

Again Our Own Hymn Book, No. 516:

“Today a pard’ning God
Will hear the suppliant pray;
Today a Saviour’s cleansing blood
Will wash thy sins away.

“But grace so dearly bought,
If yet thou wilt despise,
Thy fearful doom, with vengeance fraught,
Will fill thee with surprise.”

Again in No. 519, we read—
“In Christ’s name you are entreated
To accept this act of grace,
This, the day of your acceptance,
Listen to the terms of peace.

“Having thus, then, heard the message,
All with heavenly mercy fraught;
Go and tell the gracious Saviour
If you will be saved or not.”

Our verses then are regarded as proving that salvation is contingent on the consent or refusal of sinners.

Consider, however, that St. Paul is addressing the Corinthian church. The texts, therefore, are not addressed to the unregenerate. Internal salvation comprises reconciliation to God, which is an essential branch of the Spirit's work. All saved sinners are reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10). "You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, *now* hath He reconciled" (Col. 1:21).

We may, however, cease to be enemies of God without being fully resigned to His will, and delighting in His character and conduct. Many true saints fail to "do all things without murmurings and reasonings, or disputings" (Phil. 2:14). Hence the propriety of exhorting them to be cordially reconciled as dear children, to their Heavenly Father. In two senses—

1. **Doctrinally.** From the many Jewish allusions in these Epistles it is evident that no small proportion of the Corinthian saints were of the seed of Israel. St. Paul's desire may, therefore, have been to exhort them to abide by the truth of Justification by Christ, without the deeds of the Law. See Israel Atkinson, in *Gospel Herald* for 1873.

Thus a Christian who opposes the doctrines of sovereign grace on the ground of certain *intellectual* and *sentimental* objections, may well in the present day be exhorted to be reconciled to God's way of salvation, because it is God's.

2. **Experimentally.** It is more generally held that the Apostle meant "Wherever you have thought that God has dealt hardly with you in Providence, be satisfied that all is for your good; be resigned to His will in all things, and view every thing that proceedeth from Him in Providence and Grace as consistent and just, and obey Him, accordingly."—*Charles Drawbridge*.

It has been urged that it is irrational to suppose that the Apostle would thus appeal to persons who *were* already reconciled to God. It is, however, common in Scriptures for possessors of a certain grace to be exhorted to exert it to the utmost extent of their spiritual ability. Thus St. John writes to those "*that believe*" that they "may *believe*" 1 John 5:13.

The special reason for the Corinthians' fully acquiescing in the will and ways of the God of their salvation is given in verse 21: "Be ye reconciled; for He hath made," etc. The great love of God that was manifested in the gift of His Son, and the transference of our sin to Him, is an argument for our depending on Him in all other things, and bowing to His will.

He then exhorts them not to receive God's grace in vain (explained on page 117—Compare 1 Cor. 15:10, "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but *I laboured more abundantly* than they all."), and as a motive for their seeking to avoid doing so, he urges the consideration of chap. 6, verse 2, where notice—

1. THE PASSAGE QUOTED—Isa. 49:8. In this chapter Christ is introduced as claiming the attention of the Gentiles (verse 1) to the fact that Jehovah the Father had called Him from the womb of the Virgin Mary, His mother, and invested Him with authority and power (verse 2). His ill success amongst His own people is then referred to—for He did not succeed in bringing (national) Jacob again to God, or in raising again the tribes of Jacob to national supremacy. Of this He complains, expressing the pitying love and sorrow of His human heart. The Lord, however, replies that though Israel be not gathered—i.e., though the Jews did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and were not gathered (Matt. 23:27), yet should Emmanuel be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and His God should be His strength (verse 5). It is further predicted that in an acceptable time He would be heard, and helped in a day of salvation—the verbs in verse 8 being in the prophetic *past* tense, which bears a *future* signification. Thus 770 years before the advent of Jesus it was foretold that though He should be rejected by the Jews, the time of His acceptance would come—the day of His salvation would arrive—i.e., the time when He would be accepted and received into Heaven, as the Representative, Priest, and Forerunner of His people, and that He should *then* successfully prosecute the work of salvation. Notice—

2. ST. PAUL'S EXPLANATION of the passage cited, "Behold *now* IS the accepted time,"—i.e., the time predicted by Isaiah, the time of Christ's acceptance in the upper temple. "Behold *now* IS the day of salvation," i.e., we are actually living in the period foretold by the prophet.

The day referred to is, then, not a period of twenty-four hours, but the term is used metaphorically, in contradistinction to night. "When Adam fell, darkness covered the earth. God placed, if I may so speak, a star in the heavens, over this dark world—the first promise. Then, one by one, He caused others to shine; then thousands appeared. In Solomon's time, the moon shone brightly; but it was the night, not the day of salvation; and God took His saints home by the glimmering light of the stars of promise. At length Jesus came—the Sun of Righteousness arose, and the presence and sacrifice of the Saviour put an end to night, and brought in the Gospel day—not a day of twenty-four hours; but the day that

extends from the death of Christ to His second coming. ‘The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth’ (1 John 2:8)”—*John Hazelton*.

Thus the Corinthians were exhorted not to receive their grace to no purpose, so far as the world and their fellow Christians were concerned, inasmuch as they were going to their eternal home by daylight, and possessed an abiding interest in the *accepted* and glorified Redeemer.

The great and godly Archibald McLean objects to the above interpretation on the ground that “the pronoun ‘you’ is not in the Greek. The Apostle,” he therefore judges, “is not here urging the *believing Corinthians* to be reconciled to God, for He considered them as already reconciled; but he is setting before them the Apostolic message to the *world* at large, as appears from the foregoing verse; and therefore the supplement out to be *men* or the *world*.”

In reply, we admit that the two “yous” are not in the original, and concede that we may, and perhaps should, read “As though God were entreating by us, we beseech on behalf of Christ—Be ye reconciled to God.”

John Stevens, however, clearly shows that the introduction of the word “men,” in the place of “you,” would interfere with the evident scope of the passage which consists of an address to the Corinthian Church.

Moreover, this interpretation would flatly contradict verse 18. There it is distinctly stated that the Reconciliation is a Divine operation in which, God works alone. “But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” This interpretation makes reconciliation a possible human duty. It is incredible that such contrary teaching should occur in the same paragraph.

Moreover, competent authorities retain the second “you.” See the Revised Version. Alford says, “**We beseech** (‘you,’ but not uttered as an integral part of the present text.)

Eph. 5:14, “**Wherefore He saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.**” A mischievous application of this text is common. The unregenerate are addressed as sleepers, and they are besought to awake, and come to Christ for light. The natural condition of sinners is not, however, that of *sleep* but *death*—a death from which no earnest appeal can awake them, until the Spirit quicken them. To evade this fact is to lie to lost sinners

in God's name. In addressing the unregenerated we should not say, "What meanest thou, O sleeper" (Jonah 1:6); but "Ye must be born again."

The above text, perhaps a fragment of an ancient hymn, is addressed to Christians who are not awake to the responsibilities of their condition as saved sinners, and who are living carnal and worldly lives. A sleeper and a corpse are much alike, and many Christians fearfully resemble worldly men. The faint health of spiritual life, which distinguishes them is hard to perceive. Such are exhorted to awake, and arise from among the (spiritually) dead, with whom they are so mixed up, and Christ will give them light.

Heb. 2:3, "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**" Commonly quoted to prove that men decide their destiny by accepting or rejecting salvation; and therefore employed as the basis of appeals to the unregenerate to avoid the consequences of sin, by at once receiving Christ. But—

The people addressed were Jews who had professed to be saved by Christ. They were exposed to continual temptation to relax the boldness of their Christian profession, and even to renounce the Saviour, and return to Judaism. The text is not, therefore, a warning to sinners as sinners, but an exhortation to converted Jews, and must not be employed as if it referred to the careless disregard of ordinary persons when salvation is presented to their notice in the preaching of the gospel.

The peril from which no escape is possible is popularly stated to be eternal punishment. This erroneous interpretation arises from the supposition that "neglecting"* here is tantamount to "rejecting" or "abandoning", and that "neglecting so great salvation" is similar to "drawing back unto perdition" (chap. 10:39).

[The word in the original means to neglect or disregard what one has. (See Matt. 22:5). They *had* the invitation, but attached no value to it. (1 Tim. 4:14) He *had* the gift, and was not to be negligent in using it.]

The Apostle, however, is here not contemplating the results of apostatizing from Christ (this he does elsewhere); but the sorrowful consequences of neglecting by sloth, carelessness and inattention, the salvation in which the persons referred to—"we," himself and others—were eternally interested. That true Christians are in danger of thus "neglecting" salvation none will deny, and the propriety of the exhortation in its connection is obvious (see chap. 4:14).

The Apostle draws a parallel between the sins committed and the punishments endured by the Jews of old, and the sin and punishment he was contemplating.

“God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past to the fathers in the prophets, hath at the end of these days (the end of the Jewish dispensation) spoken unto us in [the person of] His Son. Therefore it behooves us to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should slip or drift away [Lest haply we should drift away *from them*.—Revised Version] (like a vessel carried away by the force of the current through the negligence of those who ought to manage it). For if the word spoken by angels (very possibly human and not divine messengers are intended, i.e., the prophets of chap. 1:1), proved steadfast (i.e., was confirmed by what followed), and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall we escape if we (suffer ourselves to drift away and) are negligent of so great salvation?

Observe that “the analogy is between that rest in the land of Canaan, of which the stiff-necked and rebellious Jews were deprived as a punishment for their sins, and the gospel rest into which believers enter by Christ (Heb. 4:3, 5, 11). Every transgression and disobedience on their parts received (not *shall* receive) its fitting retribution in this world. Aaron and Moses were eminent instances, who, though saved in the Lord, were not suffered to enter into Canaan’s rest on account of their dereliction of duty. Now if *they* suffered at the hands of a holy God, and lost so much through neglect of His claims, how shall *WE*—saved though we are—escape darkness, disappointment, vexation and chastisement, if, forgetful of our high calling we neglect *one* branch of salvation, slight *one* privilege, or omit *one* duty.” Slightly altered from Charles Drawbridge.

1 John 3:23. “**This is His commandment, That we** (i.e., the sons of God, verse 1,) **should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.**” This forms the text of a celebrated Sermon, in defense of Duty-Faith, by C.H. Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 9, No. 531. Read, however, in its connection it enforces the duty—not of all men to believe spiritually—but of God’s children, among whom the Apostle includes himself, to confide in the covenant character, fullness and grace of His beloved Son (see pages 83, 193, 203).

V.—The Absence of Spiritual Faith not the Ground of a Sinners’ Condemnation.

It is commonly asserted that the non-possession of Faith will be the ground of the future condemnation of sinners. “If sinners are damned, it will be unbelief that damns them; if lost, it will be because they believed not on Christ.”—*C.H. Spurgeon*. Such is current theology. How can such be reconciled with particular Redemption; and if irreconcilable, can it be true? Did the God of truth originate a contradictory gospel?

We have indeed already disproved it by showing (1) That spiritual Faith not being required by the Moral Law, its absence cannot bring men under increased legal condemnation (page 20), and (2) That its absence is never referred to as the ground of human condemnation in any of the scriptural predictions of the occurrences of the Judgment Day (page 23). The serious consequences which the doctrine involves are also shown on page 56. The texts cited in its proof, however, remain to be considered.

Psa. 2:12, “**Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way.**” (Or “Do obeisance to the Son.”—*B.W. Newton*. Compare Hos. 13:2.) Ordinarily regarded as an exhortation to sinners to yield to the gracious influence of the Spirit, and be reconciled to Christ, lest He be angry at their despising Him and rejecting His offers, and consign them to hell for their impenitence and unbelief.

An examination of the context shows that such an interpretation is incorrect. Christ is “King of kings,” and it is here demanded that kings and judges who receive their thrones under His authority should acknowledge His supremacy.” To kiss a monarch’s hand is a worldwide token of homage, and well would it be for mankind if all in high places were actuated by the principles of Christ’s book, and acted in the way which He commands. A reason is given for the wisdom commanded. “Be wise, **therefore**” (see Deut. 16:18-20) “**lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way**”—that is, be deposed, degraded, and end your now brilliant course in disgrace and sorrow. Zedekiah (2 Chorn. 36); and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24); and Herod (Acts 12:21-23) Louis XVI of France, and the Napoleon family, are cases in point.

The Psalm had special applicability immediately after the Ascension and Enthronement of Jesus, and before the dispersion of the Jewish nation (Acts 4:25, 26). Even then their rulers might have owned His royal rights, of which such convincing proofs had been given by the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit (pages 97 and 119). But they would not be wise. They were not instructed. His wrath was kindled, and they and their people perished from the way.

Thus by kissing the Son, serving and fearing the Lord, etc., spiritual actions are not intended. Natural and national homage only is enjoined, and temporal and providential blessings are promised.

Thus, then, the passage is addressed to kings and magistrates, and there is no analogy between their *official* standing, and the condition of a man dead in trespasses and sins, or even a regenerated and awakened inquirer seeking information concerning salvation. We are never enjoined to call upon unregenerate sinners as kings and judges.

The doctrine that Christ is enraged with sinners for not coming to Him, and that their damnation will be augmented on this account is therefore unsupported by this passage. The words run, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.” The Law says, “God is angry with the wicked”—that “the wrath of God *abideth*” on them. They are “condemned *already*,” and it is mischievous to evade the declaration of the Law when advancing the doctrines of the Gospel.

“Because I have called, and ye refused, I will laugh at your calamity,” etc. (Prov. 1:24-26). Supposed to refer to the sinner’s refusal to accept the Saviour’s offered grace. But this is an error. God is the moral governor of the world, and in the Book of Proverbs we have a divine code of earthly morality—“Laws from heaven for Life on Earth.”—*Wm. Armor*. We are there informed of the conduct of which He approves, and which therefore conduces to happiness, and ensures immunity from those forms of suffering which are the fruit of wrong doing. Our passage is designed to point out to thoughtless readers and wicked men the certain consequences of their folly, to counsel them to amend, and to warn them that if they do not do so they will be filled with remorse when it is too late to avert the results of their folly. Personal Wisdom, or the Lord Jesus, is the speaker. Those addressed are “simple ones,” “scorners,” and “fools” (Notice the descending degrees of moral degradation). The exhortation is not to “believe” or “become religious,” or any thing at all analogous to the evangelical construction which we dispute, but consists of “reproof” and “counsel,” emphasized by a promise. The *reproof* is for the folly specified. The *counsel* is to “turn” or abandon it. The *promise* (v. 33) is a peaceful life and immunity from forebodings of evil. Regarded thus the verses are pertinent, important, and in harmony with the scope of the book.

Some regard the words as especially applicable to the Jewish nation, who scorned the rebukes of God-sent prophets, and who, in the day of their calamity appealed in vain for deliverance from those who took them into captivity (Isa. 65:12; Jer. 7:13, 14).

“He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). “This is not to be regarded as a fierce and angry threatening, but as the solemn declaration of an inevitable fact.”—*Joseph Parker, D.D.* There is salvation for those only whom the Father chose, and the Son redeemed; and the possession and exercise of Faith evidence interest in these immutable facts. He that lives to the age of discretion, and dies unbelieving, manifests that he has no part in the saving scheme of God. He is, therefore, under the Law, for his breaches of which he will be judged and punished. The verse does not hint that he will be damned for unbelief.

“The word **‘judged’** rather than ‘damned’ would have better expressed the original. He that believeth not, must be judged by what he is in himself, and by what he has been in his works—that is a sinner.”—*James Wells.*

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Quoted to prove that man’s believing is the cause of God’s mercy, and man’s unbelief is the cause of condemnation. The interpretation hinges on the word “because.” This conjunction is employed in two sense—*causal* (when it denotes the relation of cause and effect), and *illative* (when it marks a conclusion logically flowing from an admitted fact). Thus “the trees flourish *because* the ground is rich.” Here it denotes a cause. “We assert that the ground is rich, *because* the trees flourish.” Here it denotes not a cause (for the vigour of the trees does not cause the soil’s richness), but a conclusion. We infer the goodness of the soil from the vigour of the trees. In other words, the character of the trees proves, demonstrates or evidences the quality of the soil. The “because” in our passage, must be regarded in the second sense. “It does not imply that the *ground* or *reason* of their condemnation was that they had not believe, or that they will be condemned *because* they do not accept the Saviour.” So candidly admits A. Barnes, though he held Duty-Faith. “It, therefore, intends neither a *moving* nor a *procuring* cause, but denotes what is *evidential* of the unbeliever’s state. Faith in Christ is the evidential sign of the soul’s interest in salvation—unbelief, of the sinner’s condition, who is without Christ, and under the condemnation of the Law.”—*John Foreman.* “We are here taught, not the cause of men’s *coming into* condemnation, but the evidence of their *remaining under* it.”—*John Stevens.*

“If the conjunction *oti* ‘because’ as it is here employed, causes a difficulty, let the reader compare this occurrence of the word in its relation to the verb ‘believe’ here, with that which is found in John 16:27. Nothing further can be needed to set any understanding at rest.”—*Israel Atkinson.*

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come unto the world, and men loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). This does not assert that unbelief will be the cause of the condemnation of sinners. Its meaning is that the *proof* of men’s being in such a state as to deserve condemnation, is that they love darkness rather than light. “This love of darkness and the condemnation entailed upon it are not created, but proved and confirmed by the light that is come; the light being not the cause, but the test of character. This is true, whether the child of light, who cometh to the light for a manifestation of his real state; or of the child of darkness, who evades the light because he loves darkness, and hates the detection of his evil deeds, by the light of truth.

This may be thus illustrated. A family man, taking a light, goes round the house to see how things are as a last thing at night. Into the room where his boys are in bed, all wakeful, he holds up the light and reads with pleasure in their eyes his own dear children. They too, with pleasure, behold their loving parent, and all is well. But hearing a noise he proceeds to another room, where some thieves are at work. They at first try to put out the light, but failing in the attempt, retreat by the window to escape the light, loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Now the light in the man’s hand makes neither children nor thieves, but shows up both in true character. From this illustration the Lord’s meaning is plain.”—*John Foreman*.

“And when He (the Holy Spirit) is come, He will reprove the world of sin...of sin because they believe not in Me.” (John 16:8, 9). It must be conceded that if unbelief is a sin, Faith is a duty. We, however, deny that Spiritual Faith is here intended. See page 119. “The Holy Spirit is here spoken of as reproofing the Jewish world of sin in their treatment of the Messiah. This conviction did not, however, include conversion.”—*James Griffiths*.

James Wells, indeed, held the old and almost universal view that “the elect world” is here referred to “for which Christ died.” He, however, supposed the belief intended to be that kind of Faith which is the duty of all men—and understood the text to mean that the Holy Spirit will take care that the people of God shall have that Faith in God’s word which it is the duty of all men to render to God.

“We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.” (2 Cor. 2:15).

These words are often quoted as teaching that the gospel is the occasion of deepening the condemnation of those that hear and reject it, and of sinking them into lower ruin. On examination, however, this interpretation proves untenable.

St. Paul alludes to the triumph of a Roman Conqueror, leading home his captives. As the procession moved along, sweet spices were burnt in honour of the victor, and the perfume thus diffused, while delightful to his own troops, would be intolerably painful to the captives. The one it would remind of victory, joy, reward, and rest. To the others, it would recall loss, degradation, and doom. Thus what was fragrant to the first, would, to the second, be associated with all that was painful.

So with the Gospel. Some that hear it are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and its message to them is most sad. It tells them of a Saviour they neither know nor desire. It tells them of the necessity of a change which they have never experienced. It tells them of the power of atoning blood to cleanse from sin; but sin is no burden to them, nor do they wish for its removal. It tells them of a heaven which they have no capacity for enjoying. How, then, can it be like fragrant perfume to them? They may be stoical and unconcerned, or they may wince and tremble—but they cannot love the Gospel till they feel what it is to be lost.

Again. Some hear the Gospel with sacred pleasure. It describes their characters. It breathes hope to their distressed souls. It depicts a Saviour perfectly adapted to meet their requirements. It tells of precious blood which can remove their weightiest burdens. Its message is mercy to the guilty, and they stand self-condemned. Its consolations are addressed to the “poor and needy;” to those “that labour and are heavy laden;” to the hungry and thirsty, the weary and the lost; and such they feel themselves to be. It portrays a great change—a change from death unto life, which they hope they have known. It is therefore a welcome report to them. It is grateful as sweet perfume—“a savour of life unto (those that possess spiritual) life” (Compare Isa. 52 and 61:1, 3).

But whether sinners are saved or remain in sin under the preaching of the Gospel, those that faithfully proclaim it are **equally pleasing to God**. The results accord with His design—nor does He frown on those who are made instrumental in winning but few souls. “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.”

VI.—Repentance not a Natural Duty.

This is a branch of the same question as Duty-Faith. We those prove our position:

Spiritual Repentance is an effect of a supernatural birth of the Spirit. The saving operations of the Spirit are confined to the elect, p. 104; “The grace of Repentance is, therefore, the grace of Election, though the act of Repentance is not the act of Election. It follows, that unless it is the duty of man to have the grace of Election, or a sovereign interest in Christ, it cannot be his duty to have the grace of Regeneration, which again is the root of active Repentance. Repentance is the act of a sinner who has received spiritual life; and to prove Repentance to be a natural duty, you must prove that all men are naturally bound to have that life which was never given to any man but in Christ, the chosen Head of the elect world, and which is sovereignly withheld in the counsels of God from all the non-elect.”—*John Stevens.*

Moreover, the Bible never represents spiritual Repentance as the duty of natural men.

The **Law** neither commands nor permits it. The **Gospel** never enforces it upon the unregenerate. The texts *supposed* to have this bearing are the following:

Matt. 3:2, “**In those days came John the Baptist, saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**”

These words enforce national Repentance, which the near approach of the Kingdom of Heaven rendered peculiarly imperative: “Repent ye, **for,**” etc. They have no reference to the mediation of Jesus and the pardon of sin through His name. The whole testimony of John was to rebuke the moral condition into which the nation had sunk, and to demand the abandonment of sin, and the reformation of life.

Mark 1:15, “**Jesus came, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.**”

This formed the burden of Christ’s earlier public ministrations. (1) The words were addressed to Jews, whose moral and religious condition at that period were most corrupt. (2) “The time” for the Messiah’s appearance and “of reformation” (Heb. 9:10) was fulfilled: the new dispensation was about to dawn, “the Kingdom of God was at hand.” (3) This the Baptist had declared; and Jesus continues the message that His imprisoned forerunner could no longer deliver. He

bids His hearers abandon their erroneous notions and corrupt practices, and receive His testimony concerning Himself and His mission. His theme, therefore, was the attitude of mind and heart which the impending change of dispensation demanded. Spiritual Faith and Repentance are not contemplated.

Luke 13:3, “**Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**” Here the word “likewise” determines the character of the Repentance referred to. A temporal calamity is distinctly referred to, which would have been averted by turning from moral evil. Surely none would tell sinners that if they do not *spiritually* repent a calamity answerable to the accident at the Tower of Siloam will befall them.

Matt. 11:20, **Jesus “upbraided the cities,”—“because they repented not.”** Here the Lord speaks of the Repentance He enforced as the act of cities collectively, which clearly shows that it was not *individual*, as is that which is unto life eternal. Isa. 27:12.

“If we say that the Repentance contemplated by our Lord in addressing Capernaum, etc. (Matt. 11:23) was unto *eternal* salvation, we must add that it is an *eternal pity* that the works of Christ were not done in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, for ‘they would have repented long ago,’ and *gone to heaven for ever!* It is, however, evident that our Lord meant such moral Repentance as would have stayed impending judgments, and so the offending cities ‘would have remained unto this day.’”—*John Foreman.*

Mark 6:12. “**They preached that men should repent.**”

The testimony of the twelve was of a similar nature. They insisted on national and moral Repentance, and credence for the Messiahship of their Master.

Acts 2:38-40. “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you,**” etc. Observe that Peter’s sermon (verse 14-36) consists solely of quotations from the Old Testament, and statements of facts concerning Christ. Not a syllable of exhortation occurs in the whole of it, nor is Repentance mentioned. When, however (verse 37), many were “pricked in their heart”—i.e., smitten with compunction especially on account of their crowning sin in crucifying the Lord of Glory, and gave evidence of the Divine change by appealing to the apostles for further instruction, “What shall we do?”—then, and not before, did Peter say, “Repent”—i.e., change your views and purposes respecting the Crucified One. No longer regard Him as a malefactor justly put to death, but recognize Him as the Messiah, and trust Him for the salvation of your souls. Declare yourself on His side by following Him in the

waters of baptism, “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”—i.e., His miraculous gifts; for they had already received Him as a new Creator. “For the promise is unto you”—i.e., the generation of the Jews then living—“and to your children,” all Jews to the end of time; “and to all that are far off,” the Gentile nations, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call” by His almighty power and grace, through the preached Word, out of all nations, kindred, people, and tongues.—*J. Walker.*

Acts 3:19. “**Repent and be converted,**” etc. Ordinarily conceived to be a command to unregenerate sinners to repent spiritually. There is, however, solid foundation for Dr. Gill’s opinion that no other Repentance and Conversion may be here meant than an external one, and that the blotting out of sin may intend the removal of the calamities that were impending over the Jewish nation, which would be averted by their repentance. Ex. 32:32, 1 Kings 8:33-39.

This is evident—

1. From the nature of the preceding discourse. It was addressed to certain men of Israel, who expressed wonder at the power with which the name of Jesus was invested, and to explain the fact at which they marveled.

2. This arose from the exaltation by God of Jesus, whom they had ignorantly delivered up to Pilate.

3. Since they had made so fatal a mistake in relation to Jesus, it was *now* incumbent on them to change their purpose, and admit His Messiahship, “Repent yet *therefore.*”

The sermons in Acts 2:14-36, and 3:12, 26, are by no means similar in scope and purpose. *That* was an address on individual salvation, chap. 2:21. *This* on the exaltation of Jesus, and nothing is said about personal salvation.

The two exhortations to Repentance of chap. 2:38, and 3:19, are likewise different. The former was addressed to sinners who were pricked in the heart. The latter to Jews, whom Peter addressed on the ground of their share in the murder of his Master, but who expressed no contrition of any kind.

The former was addressed to men as individuals: “Repent *every one of you.*” The latter is to the men of Israel as such, see verse 12.

For these considerations we submit that not spiritual, but national Repentance is here enjoined.

James Wells, however, was of opinion that persons who had been brought to concern about their lost estate by what is related in the previous verses, are here intended, and that the apostle, discerning that concern, directs them to spiritual Repentance.—“*Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit*,” vol. 6. No. 316. No proof of this view is given, but the author’s high authority demands consideration for it.

To substantiate it, what Dr. Gill alleges should be disproved, and it should also be shown in what way our personal Repentance as the redeemed of God stands connected with the coming of seasons of refreshing, and the Second Advent of Jesus (See page 246).

“**Repent therefore of this thy wickedness.**” Acts 8:22. See pages 125 and 177. The Repentance enjoined is not *spiritual* but moral—and for the flagrant sin Simon had just committed.

Acts 17:30. “**God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.**” Often cited to prove that Spiritual Repentance is a natural duty. This assumption is founded in error. Most of St. Paul’s hearers were heathen philosophers, who had no just conception of the true God, the knowledge of whom had been hitherto restricted to the divinely chosen nation, and the few isolated Gentiles, like Ruth and others who came into contact with them. The days of their ignorance God had not *sanctioned*, but “winked at,” that is, overlooked, or suffered to pass without protest. But that state of things had come to an end, and He **now** commanded all men everywhere to repent. The time had arrived for God’s servants, in His name, to denounce and forbid the false and degrading religions of the Grecian and Roman nations, with which in the former dispensation the Jews were never authorized to interfere. The Repentance here meant is, therefore, the abandonment of idolatry.

Acts 26:20, “**I,**” Paul, “**showed unto them at Jerusalem and to the Gentiles—that they should repent and turn to God,**” etc. From this it is sought to prove that it was St. Paul’s practice to exhort men everywhere to repent spiritually as a natural duty.

It is conceded that “neither a national nor a legal Repentance (as some have averred) is here intended, but an evangelical one.”—*Dr. Gill, in loco*. It is, whoever, denied that St. Paul states that he preached evangelical Repentance as the duty of all men. He is describing the character of his ministry to King Agrippa, and

informs him that the necessity for and the nature of Repentance were insisted on by him wherever he went. To regard his words here as a dogmatic statement would be to misapply them. He is speaking in the most popular and general way. It cannot be doubted that his method of enforcing Repentance was similar to that of the other apostles (whose way of preaching Repentance has been considered). The text before us may be regarded as parallel with Acts 20:21—“**Testifying**, or bearing witness to **the Jews and also to the Greeks, concerning**” the origin, nature, and necessity of “**Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**” To testify to Repentance is one thing. To command natural men to perform a spiritual act is another.

VII.—The Mission of Jesus Christ to the Jewish Nation.

“Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,” Rom. 15:8. Christ came to the Jews in virtue of a long-sealed compact, to the fulfillment of which God’s truth was pledged. He came to them as “the circumcision”—the nation which stood in peculiar relationship to God (Psa. 148:14). He came as their Messiah, and endeavoured to gather them in Faith and Loyalty to Himself. He came to be their national Deliverer, and would have restored them to supremacy among the nations.

This is often overlooked, and it is supposed that every allusion made to believing in Jesus, refers to spiritual and personal Faith in Him as the Saviour of sinners. Some passages may be considered.

John 11:48, “**if we let Him alone, all men will believe in Him.**” This was the language of jealousy. Christ’s enemies dreaded lest universal credence should be given to His mission and Messiahship. Spiritual Faith is not referred to, and the verse is valuable as defining the meaning of the term “believe” when thus employed.

John 2:23, “**Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did.**” Belief in His Messiahship, to which the sight of His miracles gave rise, is all that is intended. Spiritual Faith is not thus originated (Matt. 16:17; Eph. 2:8), and is essentially different. The one was rational, and demanded of the Jews as candid and unbiased men. The other is heaven-born, and imparted in grace to the elect.

John 15:42, “**I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another come in his own name, him ye will receive.**” This explains the reception that Jesus endeavoured to gain as the Messiah of the Jewish nation. He sought to

be received in *natural* Faith, and not *spiritual* Faith. This is obvious, from the words “another” “ye *will* receive.” He could not mean that they would receive an imposter with spiritual Faith, but with natural credence and trust, such as He sought to induce them to repose in Himself.

John 8:46, “**Which of you convinceth** (convicted, see page 119) **Me of sin?** (i.e., of the sin of lying) **And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?**” Often employed as the basis of an appeal to the unregenerate. They are not skeptics. They believe that Christ is the Saviour, and that His gospel is true. Why, then do they not (as they *can* and *should*) at once accept offered grace, and believe and be saved. It would be more consistent, it is urged, to give Christ the lie openly, than to believe in His mission and to continue to reject Him.

The text, however, is not addressed by Christ to sinners as sinners, but was spoken to the Jews as Jews. Jesus told them the truth. He would have liberated them from bondage. But they hated Him for His outspokenness, and rejected His Messiahship. Hence the challenge of the text. “Do not content yourselves with vulgar abuse—charging me with being a Samaritan and having a devil—but either prove that I lie, or admit my claims and receive Me.”

Christ, however, did often refer to true Faith. It is not contended that no allusions to a heaven-born and spiritual Faith are to be found in His words, but His manner of referring to this is wholly different from the way in which He demands natural Faith of the Jews as such. He never asks for it as if it were in the power of nature. He expressly says that it is found in none but His sheep (John 10:26). That it is exercised only by those that possess eternal life (John 6:47), and have been taught of the Father (John 6:45). That it is in the power of none who are not drawn by God—i.e., first quickened, and then led on as spiritually living persons to Christ (John 6:44); and that it will certainly be exercised by all that were given in covenant to Him (John 6:37).

One utterance only of Jesus on the subject can cause difficulty. **Ye believe** (or, believe ye) **in God: believe** (or ye believe) **also in Me.** John 14:1. The Revised Version wisely retains the old rendering. How are these words to be understood?

Some with Israel Atkins (“Faith,” p. 114) regard them as meaning, “Ye believe in God (respecting earthly things): believe also in me (respecting heavenly things).” “Divine promises of good have been made to fallen man under a dispensation of favour wholly apart from the mediatorial headship of Christ. For

such good God, through His promises, entirely apart from Christ, has been in all ages, with much advantage, man's object of Faith." To such *natural* Faith he conceives the first clause to refer—while the second he regards as referring to *spiritual* Faith in Christ as one with His Father.

Does not the word "also," however, oppose this idea—and necessitate the conclusion that though the objects are different, the Faiths are one.

John Hazelton evidently is of this opinion, and regards the word "believe" in both clauses as referring to spiritual Faith.

"'Ye believe in God.' This Jesus knew, for He is the searcher of the hearts of men." He beheld the principle and operation of a heaven-born Faith in their bosoms. 'I know that ye believe in God, for I am the great Author and Finisher of your Faith.'"

"He added, 'Believe also in Me.' In different respects, but with the same Faith. 'Ye believe in God', believe also in Me, as the only Mediator between you and God." Sermons, vol. 2, page 42.

Thus the text is not a command to unregenerate Jews to believe, but an injunction to those who already believed in God through grace, to extend their trust to Jesus as the divine, and altogether reliable object of their confidence. *It may be regarded as specially referring to the Apostles.* Much was about to transpire which would cause them perplexity and sorrow, and shake their Faith. But, "Let not your heart be troubled;" continue to confide in Me. *It may be regarded as striking the key-note of the Gospel dispensation.* Hitherto God had been the exclusive object of the Faith of His saints. Now Jesus was to be included in all acts of spiritual confidence. He here, then, claims His Divine rights and mediatorial honours. Henceforth Faith's eye must be directed to Me, and all approaches to God must be by Me.. (See "The Name of Christ our Plea in Prayer," page 83; and pages 193, 203.)

The mission of Jesus to the Jews as a nation affords a clue to the **meaning of many of His parables.** Thus "The two Sons" (Matt. 21:28-32), and "The Wicked Husbandmen" (Mark 12:1-9), barely admit of any other interpretation than the wickedness of the Jews in rejecting Christ as their Messiah.

Matt. 22:5, "**But they made light of it.**" Quoted as if it meant that sinners who do not forthwith give their hearts to God, make light of the Gospel Feast and

refuse the offered provisions of salvation, and hence that men may and can reject Christ, and frustrate His grace if they will. But, like “The Barren Fig Tree” (explained on p. 114), the Marriage of the King’s Son is a parabolic account of the latter part of Israel’s national history. They made light of the temporal salvation, offered by Jesus and the disciples, and were visited with the awful doom referred to in verse 7. The latter part refers to the “common salvation,” and the language suits the case of those who are sovereignly called by the Gospel.

Luke 13:6, 9, “**Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?**” See page 114.

Luke 14:18, “**And they all began with one accord to make excuse.**” Quoted in proof of the doctrine that a free salvation is offered to all men, but that many excuse themselves from accepting it and so perish; thereby increasing the anger of God at their rejection of His grace. But this parable of the Great Feast, like that of the Marriage of the King’s Son (Matt. 22:5), refers to the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and the subsequent calling of the Gentiles. The invitation of the servant (verse 17) answers to the ministrations of Jesus and His Apostles among them. These were disregarded by them. Hence their national downfall.

See also the notes on Isa. 49:8, page 230; Matt. 23:37, page 113; Luke 19:41, page 114; and Acts 7:51, page 116.

VIII.-The National Life and Death of God’s Ancient People.

It is common to assume that the words “live,” and “life”—“die,” and “death,” are in the word of God invariably to be understood as referring to spiritual life and death; and passages in which they are prominent are freely used in support of the views to which this treatise is opposed.

It is forgotten that the national existence and prosperity of the people whom God favoured is often called *their life*. The following are examples:

Ezek. 16:6, “**I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, ‘Live.’**” These words form part of an allegory setting forth the history of the Jewish people. God is here represented as speaking them into national being. In their degradation and misery He constituted Himself their Deliverer and King, and gave them a unique

place among the nations. The word “live,” therefore, describes the commencement of their national history.

That the passage may be regarded as illustrative of the free, sovereign and invincible grace of God in quickening His elect when dead in trespasses and sins is not denied. The above, however, is its primary meaning (see page 130).

Deut. 30:15, 20, “**See,**” said Moses, “**I have set before thee** (the Jewish nation) **this day, life and good, and death and evil; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God and obey His voice, for He is thy life.**” Spiritual and eternal matters are not here contemplated. They are reminded that their national welfare and happiness would be perpetuated by God if they chose *life*, that “both they and their seed might *live*” (5:19). Living here evidently means the perpetuation of their national existence and blessing.

Deut. 32:46, 47, “**Observe all the words of this law, for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life; and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.**” Here obviously “*life*” means a prolonged residence in the Land of Promise.

Ezek. 20:21, “**The children rebelled against Me; they walked not in My statutes, neither kept My judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even life in them.**” “natural life is not here intended, neither is that eternal life which Christ gives to His sheep. The life intended is of a civil and figurative character, by the terms of the covenant made with Israel by God when He brought them out of Egypt and organized them into a nation (Exod. 24:7; Heb. 8:9). The obedient observance of the statutes and judgments of this covenant was the tenure upon which they were to hold possession of their land, and which should be their *covenant life* thereon as a nation (Lev. 18:4, 5; Neh. 9:29).”—*John Foreman*.

Ezek. 18:31, “**Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?**” As the national prosperity of God’s ancient people depended on their obedience to His laws, so they were warned that their national death would be the certain consequence of disobedience and sin. Here they are enjoined to “repent”—to “turn themselves from all their transgressions” (verse 30). “So iniquity should not be your ruin.” “For why will ye die?” It is indeed common to make these words the basis of an appeal to the unregenerate; but there is no authority for so doing. The words were spoken to God’s ancient people, and to them only; and there is no analogy between their position as responsible to God

under their national covenant, and sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins and condemned already under the broken covenant of works. (Compare page 215.)

“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Hosea 13:9. When Ephraim spake tremblingly, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died” (verse 1). The favoured nation, however, still went on, regardless of warnings and heedless of consequences, till, as above stated, they destroyed themselves, and died “from off the goodly land.” “The Lord *rooted* them out of their land in anger (Deut. 29:28). They were *plucked* from off the land (Deut. 28:63) and *slung* from it, as a stone from a sling (Jer. 10:18). This was their *death*, as everywhere signified by that covenant. Babylon, moreover, was their grave, and the victorious army of the Chaldeans was made their bearers, who carried them to their burial, and they remained nationally entombed for seventy years.”—*from John Foreman.*

In Ezek. 37 the Prophet was favoured with a vision of the defunct nation, and was bidden to predict its resurrection. This, in due course, happened, and the nation lived again, in accordance with the promise of verse 5.

In time they again lapsed into a condition that was most dishonouring to God, but Christ came as the “Minister of the circumcision” (Rom. 15:8) to effect their national salvation if they were willing to receive Him. To this the following verses refer:

John 5:34, **“These things I say, that ye might be saved.”** Personal and eternal salvation is not here alluded to, but the providential and national salvation of Israel. Their future hung on their acceptance of the Messiah, and Him they were rejecting. “According to the tenor of their covenant by which they were God’s nation and people above the rest of the nations, they had an offer of temporal life and continuance in their land on the ground of their believing the testimony of Christ and coming to Him as their Lawgiver and King; and, on the contrary, they were told that if they hearkened not to this Prophet nor received Him as sent from God, they should be cut off by the judgment of God, and become a scattered people” (Deut. 18:15).—*John Stevens.*

John 5:39, **“Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.”** A contrast is, in this important passage, presented between the national life to which we are referring, and the spiritual and eternal life which is the gift of God to His people. The Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, were under

no apprehension concerning their spiritual safety. They thought that, as the possessors of the Scriptures, they had *eternal* life; although they were rejecting Christ who alone could give them *national* life.

The Lord, however, points out their delusion, and makes them a public offer of safety under the term “life,” in the sense with which they were familiar, which *national* “life” (and He drops the term “eternal” in referring to it) they might have on receiving Him.

It is to be observed that He never represented spiritual and eternal life as obtainable in this manner. Verse 40, “Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life,” does not, therefore, refer to sinners, but to Jews as Jews—the coming was a reception of Christ as the Messiah in the days of His flesh, and does not intend the approach of a lost sinner to Christ for salvation; and the life is not that spiritual life which is the gift of God through Christ, but the life of the Jewish nation as such.

Rom. 11:15, “**What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?**” Here the same phraseology is employed. Israel are nationally defunct, but they *have a future*. They are yet to enjoy national existence and favour, which are here predicted. Their restoration and reorganization are to be their *life* from the *dead*.

Their future national regeneration is alluded to by St. Peter in Acts 3:19, “Repent,” he says to the Jews, “and turn again that your sins (as a nation) may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ, who was before proclaimed unto you, *even* Jesus.” Revised Version. This to our own day the Jews are far from doing. When Moses is read, the veil is still upon their heart. 2 Cor. 2:14. “But when it (i.e., their national heart) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” This explains Peter’s “Repent and be converted;” for when the Jewish heart shall turn to the Lord, the times of refreshing, seasons of rest from persecution and national distress shall come from the presence of the Lord.”—*Charles Drawbridge*.

Thus the term “life” and “death” have frequent reference to Israel’s national existence. To forget this involves much serious misapplication of the Word of God.

An objection—more noticeable for its *craft* than its cogency—has been urged against our usage in restricting such appeals, warnings, threatenings, and promises to the Jewish nation.

A writer having quoted a passage addressed to God's ancient people, thus anticipates an objection:

“‘But,’ you may say, ‘this is spoken to the Jews.’ Truly, but to the Jews as sinners.

“‘But does it not refer to their national dispersion, which is called their *death*’? Possibly—but the principle is far broader; for if God is too merciful willingly to see a nation scattered, how much less can He willingly see a soul perish for ever!”

To this the unanswerable reply is, that Jehovah stood in peculiar relationship to the Jews on the ground of the covenant that He had made with them, and that His unwillingness to visit them with temporal and national calamities affords to ground for determining His intentions concerning sinners and their eternal punishment.

The will of God in relation to the eternal punishment of sin can only be known from His express revelations on the point.

Again, it has been urged that in exhorting with and promising temporal mercy to the Jews, God really tenders grace to all men.

Hence, when He said, “Why will ye die?” He indeed addressed the Jewish nation; but the nation consisted of individuals, and thus, men as men, were entreated not to despise offered grace and perish.

This, again, fails to distinguish things that differ. Every individual Jew was indeed responsible for his personal share in the nation's wrong-doing; and, by idolatry and godlessness, contributed to bring down judgment on his nation, and calamity on himself and his household. Hence Jews, as individuals, are sometimes exhorted to personal reformation, and assured of God's good will (See Ezek. 18:21). But God's mercy in sparing, and His severity in punishing them cannot on fair grounds be cited as identical with His grace to His elect, and His judgment on the ungodly (See note on Amos 4:12, page 215).

IX.—Neonomianism.

A scheme of Divinity propounded by Daniel Williams, D.D., which held that God has receded from the demands of the Moral Law, and given up its original obligations—and that the Gospel is a New Law, but of milder requirements, in which Faith, Repentance, and sincere though imperfect Obedience, are substituted in the room of the perfect and perpetual Obedience required by the original Law.

Much of the Gospel of the present day so closely resembles this as to be all but identical with it.

Godly men were wont fiercely to oppose it, as “a scheme which darkens and disgraces both Law and Gospel.”—*John Ryland, M.A.*, see pages 16-23.

X.—The Will.

We have been accused of denying the freedom of the Will, and so of reducing man to the level of a machine or unaccountable agent. The charge is untrue.

The **Will is in its nature free**. This is self-evident. It is the deciding power of the soul—the faculty by which it chooses or refuses what is presented to it. The Will, then, *as such*, must be free, or no such faculty exists.

Being a faculty of a finite being, it has, however, **by a natural necessity**, bounds which confine its action, because it cannot go beyond them.

No man, for example, can *will* to act beyond the limits of his *knowledge*. He can form no purpose concerning things of the existence of which he is ignorant.

He cannot, again, *will* to act beyond the limits of his conscious *capacities*. He cannot, for example, will to fly; for he knows he has no wings. A blind man cannot will to see—nor one without hands to grasp an object. Conscious inability prevents their purposing to do these things.

He cannot, again, *will beyond his nature*. He may know what are the capabilities of an angel, but he cannot *will* to act like one.

The **will has limits as a controlling power** in the soul. It cannot command the exercise of feeling. No man can, by an effort of his Will, love an odious object. It cannot, again, silence the verdict of Conscience. By no effort of my Will can I regard what I know to be wrong as right. Nor can it impede the operation of the

Judgment, or banish remembered facts from the mind. I cannot *will* to believe a lie, I cannot *will* to forget.

These are the natural limitations to the action of the Will in man.

It follows, therefore, that the Will of man, considered as creatures, is limited by their capacities as rational and moral beings, and the objects with which *as such* they have to do, and that in its own province its actions are circumscribed by its natural relation to the other powers of the mind.

In the nature of things, it cannot act in relation to matters of which we have no rational cognizance and for the apprehension of which we have no natural capacity.

This accords with Scripture: “The natural man (see the phrase explained on page 165) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” They lie beyond the sphere of his observation, and must be “*spiritually* discerned,” apprehended, that is, by a higher faculty than he possesses. “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” While he remains a natural man, he has no power to perceive spiritual realities.

It follows, then, from what we have advanced, that he cannot *will* concerning them. The limits which Nature assigns to the Will prevent his forming any purpose in relation to the things of God.

But, further: a sinner is not merely a *natural*—he is a **carnal** man.

His mental vision is dimmed. “The god of this world has,” moreover, “blinded his eyes.” Thus the range of his knowledge is limited; while sin, which has brought death into his soul, has also dwarfed and impaired all his active mental and moral capacities.

This being understood, it is easy to see that the Will of a sinner can only act within a very limited range. It is circumscribed by the area of the facts which come within the diminished sphere of his observation, and by the enfeeblement which sin has brought upon his natural capacities.

The Will of a sinner may be likened to a manacled and fettered prisoner within a cell. His movements are hampered by his chains and circumscribed by the walls that confine him. He is indeed free to move, but in a manner so constrained, and within an area so bounded, that his freedom is—*bondage*.

So with the Will of man as a sinful creature. Though his volitions flow freely within the assigned bounds, he cannot possibly overpass them. As a **creature** he cannot extend his volitions to spiritual things; while, **as a sinner**, through his apostasy, his Will is continually and invariably evil, without power to extend its bounds into the regions of spiritual goodness, purity and truth. Otherwise he would **Will** contrary to his nature and situation, which is as impossible in itself as it is contrary to the revelation of God. It must, moreover, be remembered that the Will of sinners is in a mysterious but most real manner subject to Satan. They are “led captive by the devil at his Will.” He induces them to practice evil, not only by presenting enticements to wrong-doing to their minds, but by actually constraining the inner springs of their volition.

How great, then, the absurdity of representing that a natural man can, by an act of his Will,, change his nature and do that which none but a spiritual man can perform.

Before a sinner’s Will can decide for God in the way which the Gospel requires, three things are needful, each of which is beyond his power. *First*, it must be delivered from the dominion of Satan. *Second*, it must, by a revelation of spiritual facts, be capacitated to act beyond the range of those objects which Reason, unaided by Grace, can apprehend. *Third*, it must be renewed and recovered from the effects of sin, which have so dwarfed and perverted it.

Hence while we *admit* that the Will is essentially free, we deny that a natural man can *will* himself into a *spiritual* man; that a sinner can *will* himself into a *saint*; that he can *will* to be born again; *that he can will to trust and love God, of whose character he is ignorant and who is unlovely and repellant to his corrupt nature*; or that he can will to perform any of the spiritual acts which characterize a living child of God.

His Will is absolutely inoperative in relation to the things of God. Hence the Divine Will must act *first*, and impart spiritual impetus and motion to a sinner’s Will, or he will continue in league with hell, and determined to act contrary to God to the very extent of his capacities as a sinner.

Grace, however, illuminates the mind, and reveals spiritual facts and circumstance to it. The new birth elevates a man to a higher stage in the scale of being and invests him with faculties of which, as a creature, he was absolutely

devoid. He sees what was before invisible (Heb. 11:27), and lives in actual relation to facts of which he was before profoundly ignorant.

The range of the operations of his Will is accordingly enlarged; and he forms spiritual purposes in relation to the spiritual objects which have been revealed to his mind.

Satan is, moreover, driven from his heart (Luke 11:21); and no longer tyrannizes over his mental powers. Thus the Will is unshackled and liberated from its former bonds.

The Will—no longer stunted and circumscribed—is free to act in accordance with God’s pleasure, and this branch of salvation is consummated in the prayer, grateful, sincere and heart-deep—“Thy will be done.”

XI.—The Warrant and Ground of Faith.

By a **warrant** is meant something which warrants or authorizes, or enables a person to act in virtue of a right.

By a sinner is meant a transgressor against God’s holy law, who is where the Fall left him, and his sins have brought him to, and who has no inward assurance that he is interested in the salvation of God.

The question is—What warrants or authorizes a sinner to make application to God for the salvation proclaimed in the Gospel?

The **Arminian** would tell a lost sinner that Christ died for all men absolutely and equally, and that, therefore, any one who chooses may avail himself of the provided and freely offered salvation. Thus:

Christ died for all men.

Therefore, He died for you.

God promises salvation to all that believe this.

Believe it, therefore, on the warrant of fact and right, and you are saved.

But this is substantially untrue. Christ did not die for all men absolutely and equally (see chapter 9), and a warrant based on a fabrication is worthless.

The **modern Calvinist** holds that God has indeed an elect people, for whom, and none others, Christ died; but that sinners have nothing to do with God's decrees, nor should they concern themselves about them. He would, therefore, advise a sinner to dismiss from his mind all consideration of what may be the eternal and unchanging pleasure of God concerning him, and bid him believe in Jesus on the warrant of the command of God to do so.

Such a command, however, is nowhere to be found, as our examination of the texts supposed to embody it fully shows. A sinner, as such, in his guilty hardness and unconcern, has not one single word in the whole Bible which warrants him in making application to God for mercy and pardon.

A **second** modern Calvinist would inform him that, while Redemption secures the salvation of the elect, the Atonement is of infinite efficacy—and that he may safely draw nigh to God on the ground of its boundless provisions, and plead the general invitations that are based on them.

Here, again, the sinner would be misled. We have shown the baselessness of the idea of the infinite efficacy of the atonement (page 46); and a heaven-born Faith can never act on the warrant of a human fabrication. It must have a divine sanction.

The **warrant of Faith** we have stated to be **an inwrought persuasion** that the portions of the Gospel message which direct, invite, or command believing acts, **refer to such persons** as we know ourselves to be.

Carefully examined, every Gospel invitation will be seen to consist of two parts—a **description** of character and a **direction** to the person described.

The **description** will invariably be found to embody some characteristic of a new-born but dark and uninstructed soul. Thus “thirsting,” “labouring and being heavy laden,” “seeking and being willing” (Rev. 22:17)—that is to say, graciously willing to be saved in God's way—portray essential traits of a character which results from the operations of the Spirit in the heart.

A consciousness of possessing such a character as the promise **delineates** is, therefore, Faith's **warrant** for approaching God in the way the promise **directs**, for the blessing the promise holds out.

Thus Faith says:

“Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture night;
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,
And **such**, O Lord, am I.”*

“**Deep wounded** souls to Thee repair,
And, Saviour, we are **such**.”

*—With all respect to the memory of the sainted Charlotte Elliott, we have often been struck with the impropriety of directing a bewildered seeking sinner to sing, “Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was **shed for me**,” etc. This plea is never given in the Gospel, and if the sinner knew that Jesus’ blood had redeemed him, the doubts and conflicts of verse 3 would have ceased.

This not only accords with Scripture, but with true philosophy. Imagine two anxious sinners. One, under erroneous teaching, approaches God on the ground of the mercy manifested to sinners in Christ. He is told to be *grateful* that he was not damned long ago—to be *contrite* because he did not seek salvation before—to be *earnest*, lest the favoured opportunity slip by and he be damned after all—that God has free pardons to bestow—that Christ died to atone for sin—that the Holy Spirit will help him; and he tries to pray. But his mind requires guidance in this new and solemn exercise, and none has been given it.

Another sinner has been scripturally taught. He presents a Gospel invitation at the Throne of Grace. Say, “Let him that is athirst, come.” Here the mind at once is occupied with the description of character which warrants the application. “Lord Jesus,” he says, “I thank Thee that I am permitted to come to Thee as a *thirsting* sinner. My soul is in pain, but I bless Thee that it is no longer in a state of guilty unconcern. Thou biddest those that thirst come to Thee—and lo, I come. The Holy Spirit has shown me my need of Thee, and I wait on Thee for what Thou only canst give,” etc.

It has been asserted that such teaching imposes qualifications for coming to Christ upon sinners—that we insist on a measure or standard of contrition or soul agony before we point them to Jesus as the sole and all-sufficient Saviour—that we refrain from preaching Faith to any but those who already believe—that we

withhold the medicine of the Gospel from sinners until they are cured. All this is untrue.

We simply tell our fellow sinners that God has chosen, Christ has redeemed, and the Spirit has engaged to sanctify an innumerable company of sinners. That these are allowed to sin like other men until the time of their Regeneration and calling by grace. That they are then changed from a state of unconcern into a condition of solicitude about their souls. That for the guidance of such awakened or sensible sinners promises are written in God's Word to which in all cases are appended descriptions of the persons whom they concern. And that it is the instant and earnest business of every sinner whom a promise describes to make application—with all the light and spiritual ability vouchsafed to Him—to Jesus, who has said, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

By the **ground of Faith** is meant the fact or facts on which a sinner bases his reliance when approaching God, for the mercy, pardon and acceptance proclaimed in the gospel.

Faith is the most solemn and momentous act of which a penitent sinner is capable.

He is keenly alive to his danger. He knows that by nature and practice he is one whom God cannot but regard with disfavour. He is conscious that he is condemned by the Law. Nevertheless he abstains from all further inquiries as to other possible courses of action. He abandons all efforts at self-reformation. At once, as he is, in his deplored sinfulness and helplessness he applies to God for favours of immeasurable importance and worth.

No prudent person would rest his eternal salvation upon any foundation which did not appear to him absolutely sufficient and reliable.

What, then, renders the reliance of Faith justifiable/ what is the true **ground** of a **heaven-born** sinner's trust?

Answer: **Nothing in God**, absolutely or abstractly considered, furnishes a reply to this question. His mercy, love, goodness, etc., afford no sanction for the belief that He will remit the consequences of a sinner's transgression.

Again: No fact **within the sinner**—nothing that he is or experiences (either as a creature or a new creature) affords a valid reason for his acceptance with God, or is a ground for the expectation that he will be so accepted.

The ground of Faith is Jesus Christ. The worth of His Person; the preciousness of His blood; the prevalence of His intercession, furnish the only valid reason for the acceptance of a sinner in the way indicated in the Gospel. On the Atonement of Christ—on this only—can the trust of a heaven-born Faith be based.

Confusion has arisen from failing to distinguish between the **warrant** and the **ground** of Faith.

The **warrant** of Faith concerns my right to draw nigh to God as one for whom saving provisions have been made. The **ground** of Faith concerns the character and direction of my reliance as one who has so drawn nigh.

The warrant of Faith is **subjective**, and arises out of what I am, through the operation of God the Holy Spirit. The ground of Faith is **objective**, and arises from what Christ is both to God and to sinners, through the complexity of His person, and the completion of His work.

The Warrant of Faith is the work of the **Spirit** *in* the sinner. The Ground of Faith is the work of the **Saviour** *for* the sinner.

The Warrant of Faith is **God's testimony** concerning conscious sinners—that He will permit them to approach in Christ's name. The Ground of Faith is **God's testimony concerning His dear Son**, that He delights in His Person, is satisfied with His work, and freely justifies sinners for His sake.

Preachers have to proclaim both the **warrant** and the **ground** of Faith. They have to assure the conscious sinner of his welcome as one whose character is portrayed in the invitations of the Gospel. They have also to dwell on the greatness, grandeur and glory of Emmanuel as the meritorious reason for the salvation of the vilest transgressor.

If the **warrant** of Faith is not insisted on, the Gospel is presented as a vague generality in which there is no more comfort for the prostrate and penitent sinner than for the unconcerned and hardened worldling. ("There is Salvation for all who **want** it. Can I say more?"—*John Stevens.*)

If the **ground** of Faith is not fully presented to the anxious enquirer, there is danger of his intermixing his own penitent feelings with Christ's finished work in his plea for mercy, and so of landing him in sorrow and confusion.

XII.—Thy Faith hath saved thee.

Words which claim attention, because often quoted to prove that a sinner's salvation is effected by his believing.

Jesus said to the woman, whom He had healed of the issue of blood—**“Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole”**—literally, “hath saved thee” (Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48).

Jesus said to Bartimeus, after he had received his sight—**“Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole”**—literally, “hath saved thee” (Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42).

Jesus said to the Samaritan leper, whom He had cured—**“Thy faith hath made thee whole”**—literally, “hath saved thee” (Luke 17:19).

Three miracles of healing are here referred to. The Faith mentioned was the appeal of *physical* sufferers for relief. It was not *spiritual*, but *rational*, and based upon a persuasion of Christ's ability (as the Divine Messiah) to effect supernatural cures. The salvation, therefore, was not that of the immortal soul, but of the body.

“Thy faith hath”—in this sense—“saved thee.” Some consider that the Lord by “Faith” meant Himself—the *object* of their Faith, “I, Jesus, in whom thou believest have saved thee.”

This interpretation Israel Atkinson rejects: “Appendix to ‘Faith,’” page 29. It is, indeed, playing with the words thus to understand them.

Others consider that while the healing virtue proceeded from Christ, Faith was the *sine qua non*, or a necessary condition, without which it would have been impossible for Christ to heal them—and that *thus* Faith made them whole.

Answer.—Many of the miracles of Jesus were wrought upon people who had no Faith: Lazarus (John 11); the widow's son (Luke 7:12-15); and the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22-42) were dead when His power was exerted; and in many

other instances it is evident that the minds of those He healed were quiescent, and not in a state of expectant trust that He would benefit them. It was, therefore, no general rule that men must believe on Christ before He could work miracles on their diseased or disabled bodies.

Since, then, Christ was able to heal men at His pleasure, whether they believed in Him or not, the words “Thy Faith hath saved thee” did not mean that their Faith had contributed to their cure. It did not make them whole *instrumentally*, as a medicine administered by a physician is the *means* of the cure effected, without which his skill would be unavailing.

In fact, the miracles of Christ were wrought (as the bounties of His providence are dispensed) on the evil and the good—on men that were to be eternally saved—on men that had natural Faith in His Messiahship *only*—and on men who were destitute of Faith altogether.

In the cases of those whose belief in His Messiahship had brought them to Him for relief, Jesus viewed their motive with approbation, and eulogized the Faith which had thus honoured Him.

Just as belief in a physician’s ability induces a patient to apply to him, so *their* Faith had brought them to Jesus, and in this sense we understand the phrase under consideration. “Thy Faith” which led thee to Me “hath saved thee,” hath proved a link in the chain of events which hath brought about thy cure.

Why were the words uttered? 1. As an assurance of the reality of the cures. The persons were not only *relieved*, but “made whole.” The emphasis is on the word “hath **saved** thee.” 2. They expressed the freeness with which the cures were effected. The simple appeal of *conscious* need availed. “He will not despise the prayer of the destitute.” Psa. 102:17. 3. They conveyed the Lord’s high estimate, even of *natural* Faith. He could not behold its operation without noting his approval of it.

Jesus said to the woman that was [had been] a sinner, “**Thy Faith hath saved thee**” (Luke 7:50).

This, though similar to the above, is of widely different import, and should not be confounded with them. They referred to the salvation of the body; this to the salvation of the soul. They to natural Faith; this to spiritual Faith. Yet the fact that they are verbally the same, suggests the propriety of studying them together.

Thy Faith hath saved thee—whose? A fallen woman, who had previously seen and heard Jesus, and, constrained by His grace, had abandoned her depraved life. She *had* been (though now no longer) a sinner—a woman who lived on her shame (verse 37).

[Not “was” but “had been”. So baron bouchier, Valpy, and Wordsworth. Alford, on the other hand, insists—but without reason—that she was a prostitute even to this time.

“She had listened to the words of Jesus, perhaps to His invitation to those that laboured and were heavy laden to come to Him for rest. Lost, till now, to self-respect, an outcast for whom no one cared, she had found One who was the Friend of sinners; who beckoned even the most hopeless to take shelter by His side. She might yet be saved from her degradation; might yet retrace her steps from pollution and sorrow to a pure life and peace of mind. What could she do but express her lowly gratitude for the sympathy He alone had shown; the belief in the possibility of her restoration which had itself restored her.”—*Cunningham Geikie*.]

Moreover, some revelation of the pitiful and pardoning love of Christ had been vouchsafed her. A responsive sentiment had been begotten in her heart. “She loved (Him) much” verse 47.* All this was before the occurrence we are considering.

*—Not *loveth*. Her love was of earlier date than the incident in the Pharisee’s house. She loved Jesus before she thus sought Him. Note the force of the word “for.” It is here illative (see page 235), and marks not a cause but an effect. Her love was not the cause of her forgiveness, but a proof and evidence of it.

To manifest this love was now her desire. Probably she also longed to receive from the Lord’s own lips the assurance that would quell her fears.

Love like hers could not go empty-handed. She therefore took an alabaster casket of ointment—was it all he had in the world, the last remains of the luxurious proceeds of her sin?—and sought an interview with the Saviour in the Pharisee’s house.

What transpired the evangelist relates. No words were *spoken* on either side; but who can doubt that the grace which sanctioned the woman's actions also shed peace into her troubled heart.

Surprise and indignation filled the Pharisee's mind. But Jesus vindicated His conduct, and showed that she was no longer an abandoned, but a penitent (and, as her love proved) a pardoned, woman.

He then said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven."

This utterance was also resented by His fellow-guests; but Jesus was not deigning to reply to them, dismissed the woman with the coveted blessing, "Thy Faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Whence note:

1. Her Faith did not originate her salvation. The story is, indeed, a fragment. We know not how the work of grace began in her heart, but to assert that her religious life was commenced by this her act of trust—that she constituted herself a saved person by believing in Christ—would be to falsify the narrative. There is ample evidence of an inwrought work, ere she appears in the Evangelist's narrative.

2. The Faith referred to was the approach of a **conscious** or **sensible** (and therefore regenerated) sinner to Jesus. Her heart was evidently alive with spiritual feeling. She was one "who had heard and had learned of the Father," and so came to Jesus (John 6:45).

3. The **salvation** referred to was **experimental**. She was actually *saved* when grace first moved her to forsake her sinful ways; *saved* when her heart first glowed with shame, and tears of penitence fell from her eyes; *saved* during the anxious interval which preceded the above incident; *saved*—but without such assurance of the fact as could afford rest to her heart. Her Faith led her to Jesus, and obtained from His lips the words of peace for which she longed: words which saved her from the sting of shame; saved her from degradation; saved her from despair, by the hope and promise of a new and purer life.

4. This view harmonizes this text with the others.

In the first group of texts, physically living but diseased and disabled persons appealed to Jesus, in natural Faith, and physical relief was accorded them.

In the second text, a spiritually living, but burdened and sad-hearted sinner, appealed to Jesus in spiritual Faith, and spiritual relief was accorded her.

Natural Faith did not obtain life for dead *bodies* (the idea is an absurdity) but healing for living ones.

So spiritual Faith does not obtain the grace of regeneration for *souls* dead in trespasses and sins (the idea is an absurdity), but healing and peace for the souls of men who have passed from death unto life.

Hence we still say to a trembling and anxious sinner who enquires “What **must** I do to be saved”—not “*shall*” as often quoted: the language implies the urgency of intense anguish of soul, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou **shalt** be saved” Acts 16:31).