

chap. v., reproves the oppressors of the industrious poor. They knew that they were doing wrong in oppressing the poor, and for this their wilful wrong the apostle justly blames them. It was their duty to do justly; they knew this. It is this principle of individual responsibility, founded in the moral government of God, which gave the apostle room, without interfering with the vital principles of the gospel, to reprove the ungodly at large, and to denounce their ungodly deeds. How far the reproof dealt out in this chapter (James v.) may apply to some even of those who are born of God, and who are no better to their servants than they should be, I will leave with their own consciences.

I am much inclined to think that the fourth chapter of James, down to the 10th verse, is founded in the moral government of God; and the apostle, on this ground, reproves and exhorts men in general. The apostle here exhorts men to resist the devil; to draw nigh to God; to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. Now, we know that a man dead in sin cannot resist the devil, draw nigh to God, and purify his heart spiritually, so as to become anything more than a natural man. Yet, resisting vicious propensities, submitting to the dictates of conscience, and imbibing principles of integrity, may, I think, in the mere natural, moral sense, be said to be resisting the devil, drawing nigh to God, cleansing their

hands, and purifying their hearts. Is not this the meaning of the prophet Ezekiel, (xviii. 31, 32,) “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore, turn yourselves and live?” This was spoken to those who had the written word, and therefore applies wherever the written word comes. Hence the apostle addressed the Athenians as rational creatures, and expostulated with them upon the absurdity of their worship, and reminded them, that the object of rightful and supreme regard, was not like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. (Acts xvii.) Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge; professing to be wise they become fools, and God suffered them to go on in their own folly; and the time of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.

Thus are men individually responsible to God for the use of the natural powers they possess. They are exhorted, as a matter of duty, to use them rightly, and are blamed for wilfully doing wrong. But this mere natural, moral use of their powers, this mere moral resisting of the devil, drawing nigh to God, purifying, or, as the prophet calls it, “making them a new heart,”—this, and resisting the devil by the blood of the Lamb,

being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, drawing nigh to God in new covenant relationship, are essentially different. One is, mere reformation, the duty of the creature, and good of the *kind*; but the other is regeneration, a coming out of the powers of darkness, coming vitally into the kingdom of God, being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and thus entering into the holy of holies. One is the religion of nature; the other is the religion of grace. The one is the duty of man; the other is the gift of God. The one betters the present moral and social state of man, and mitigates future punishment; the other gives present peace with God, and future glory by Christ Jesus.

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

If the reader will do himself the favour of looking through the 18th of Ezekiel, he will there see this principle of individual responsibility, as founded in the moral government of God, clearly

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

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

kind of favour, these ten verses seem then easily and naturally to apply in the mere moral sense to men in general.

There is another view which the spiritually-taught may be disposed to take of these ten verses; which is this. Here are persons professing to love Jesus Christ, and calling themselves christians, yet wrapt up in false doctrines, walking in the spirit of the world, which spirit is enmity against the truth. They were aiming at carnal aggrandisement, and were anything and everything but true spiritual worshippers of God. Unto these the apostle speaks denouncingly, and does not call them brethren, or for a moment admit that they were real children of God, but calls them adulterers and adulteresses, alluding, perhaps, more especially to their idolatries. Idolaters, worldlings, and sinners, are the characters in which the apostle viewed them. So that his knowledge of them, and their opinion of themselves, were very different. Viewing these ten verses in this light, the apostle's exhortation would amount to this, that before they had any authority to conclude that they were christians, they must be delivered from false doctrines, from the spirit of the world, from their devilish pride and self-importance. This is the sense in which some would view these ten verses; but for my part, I like the other in preference; because if it be taken spiritually, here are men dead in sin

exhorted to do what none but the Lord can do for them. Not but they may be *reprovingly* spoken to even in this way. Have we not an example of this in the 3rd chapter of Matthew, where John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, (mark! they came to his baptism, came professing to have repented; but John, knowing they were still carnal, called them “vipers,”) “*Who* has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” John knew that God had not warned them, and therefore reminded them that they must produce *evidence* of the reality of their profession, or else he would not baptize them. This John said to them *reprovingly*, not for a moment implying that they could do anything towards obtaining that immortal root from which alone spiritual fruit can arise. John treated them as every true minister will treat the same kind of professors in the present day, who may come forward wishing to go through the divinely-instituted ordinance of baptism. We say to them, “*If* thou believest with all thine heart, if thy faith lead thee to loathe thyself and thirst for God, if thy faith purify thy heart, endear the Saviour, overcome the world, and lead thee on in a holy war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, thou mayest; but if thy faith be a dead faith, having in it no life, no breathing after God, no handling the word of truth, no walking in paths of righteousness, no tasting that the Lord is gra-

cious, no recognition of the joyful sound, no experience of the emptiness, nothingness, and worse than nothingness of the creature; if thou dost not bear these fruits, thou mayest *not* be baptized. Bring forth, therefore, fruits to prove the spirituality of thy repentance; then, and not till then, the ministers and people of God can receive thee." Thus are the bond children expelled and cast out.

The ten verses in James iv. I am inclined to take simply thus; Here are a people within the reach of the Word of God acting contrary to the light which they had, for which the apostle reproves them, and exhorts them, not to regeneration, but to reformation; and that as a matter of duty. Take which we may of the two views given, there is nothing in this chapter to justify the doctrine of man being in a salvable state; and, on the other hand, if we say the Word of God does not speak in a way of exhortation to the unregenerate, we shall err exceedingly.

It is on this principle of individual responsibility, founded in the moral government of God, that the apostle Peter addressed Simon Magus in the way he did. Here is Simon, anxious to get money, who went so far, through the covetousness of his heart, as to think that the gifts of the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money. Peter tells him of the wickedness of such an attempt, the state he is in, and exhorts him to repent and

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

I cannot but notice how very *ingeniously* the doctrine of Christ dying for the non-elect *neutralizes* the doctrine of absolute and eternal election. Let



it be, for the sake of clearness, illustrated thus : Let election be personified—let it be called a messenger, who comes proclaiming the majesty and sovereignty of the King of kings. Freewill against this messenger closes the door, saying, “I will not have this man to reign over me; he shall not come into my house.” Moderate Calvinism goes a more cunning way to work. It admits the messenger—it receives the doctrine of eternal election—but it is to *muzzle* him. There he is received into the house, but not allowed, hardly once in a month, or perhaps not in six months, to open his mouth, and then he is not allowed to speak very *loud*, nor yet to say *much*; for, having such a vast multitude of moral duties to attend to, there is not much time and less inclination to hear what this messenger has to say relative to the sovereign mind and will of the King; and besides, this messenger speaks so dictatorially, that it hurts the minds of the humble and the pious. Therefore, he is kept as quiet as possible; and, if ever admitted into the pulpit, he is allowed to be there only a very few minutes; for being from a far country, and his voice so very *strange* to the people, it is deemed prudent to get him to speak as softly and as seldom as possible. Well, who can but commend the *wisdom* of those unjust servants who so nicely suit the gospel to the *taste* of men?

But let us have a word more with the messenger, just to notice the different treatment with

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

But there is a faith called the faith of God's elect; what is the treatment this messenger meets with where this is? Why, it is this; here is a man sensible of his lost, ruined state, of the vile-ness of his nature, the nothingness, in matters of salvation, of all creature doings. To such an one this messenger comes, declaring to the poor man that he was blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the world was. The message is listened to, its power felt, its glory seen, its source acknowledged, its design appreciated, and its mysteries unfolded. In this message are found wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Is the messenger desired to be silent here? O no, says the sensibly saved sinner; go on. Pre-

cious truth! Tell out the glories of the King. Never cease, O never cease to tell me that my name is written in heaven; that all my sins are pardoned; that God hath from the beginning chosen me to salvation; that his purpose concerning me shall stand; not of works, but of him that called; that these his saving gifts, and this his holy calling, are without repentance; that towards me he is in his love and counsels the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that he will never leave me nor forsake me. What! says the sensibly saved sinner, shall this messenger be silent when there is nothing else worth hearing? Is not my conversation to be in heaven? Does not this messenger furnish me with heavenly language? Does he not bring the pure language which the Lord hath promised his people? This message is the law of life; and of this law says the spiritual believer, "when I go, let it lead me; when I sleep, let it keep me; when I awake, let it talk with me." (Prov. vi. 22.) Here the messenger is allowed to talk as loud and as long as he pleases; the louder and longer the better. To his message let all others be subservient; but let his be subservient to none. The king of this messenger is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and if he be not to speak, who is to speak? "Whether it be right to hearken unto men more than unto God, judge ye!"

How different is the treatment, then, with which

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

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

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

The scripture I allude to is in John vi. 27, where those who did not savingly know the Lord are exhorted to labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. Of these same people it is written, that "they went back and walked no more with him." In a word, there is no room to

question but that they were dead in sin, nor did they obey the exhortation. We have before shown that men are in salvation matters totally helpless, and that nothing can be done without the immediate and effectual operations of the power of God; therefore exhortations to anything spiritual must, without the power of God, prove useless.

I would observe, that the words meat, bread, drink, when used figuratively relative to the mind, signify instruction. Hence we read of being fed with knowledge and understanding. Now it is one thing to be instructed morally, and another thing to be instructed spiritually and savingly. It has been shown in the course of this work, that moral instruction thrown into the mind, and followed out in practice, will meet its reward, if not in the present world, it will in the mitigation of future punishment. Now the Word of God is the means of instruction, both moral and spiritual. The Word of God is given unto many providentially where it is not given savingly. Now the question is this. Did the Saviour exhort the people to seek instruction merely of a moral kind, or to seek a saving knowledge of God? It must be either one or the other. If he exhorted them to labour spiritually, and gave them no power to do so, how can they be blamed for not doing what the Word of God declares the natural man cannot do? He cannot receive the things of the Spirit, and there

is none that seeketh after God. Because they do not, they cannot *feel* their need of spiritual things. Admit that the Saviour exhorted them to seek that instruction which should show them right from wrong, and that it was their duty so to do—admit this to be the meaning, it then stands in accordance with the whole tenor of scripture. Not but the language is certainly very strong; “Labour for the meat which *endureth to everlasting life*, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.” The sealing, as here mentioned, signifies authorised. This is explained thus; “For thou hast *given him power over all flesh*, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” The difficulty of the above passage is in the words, *endureth to everlasting life*, so that it appears on the face of it that the people were exhorted to do what none without the Holy Spirit can do. We are told in this same chapter, that none can come unto Christ except it were given them of God, except he draw them; and, saith the Saviour, “*every one* that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.” But the people, instead of going to him, went away from him. Therefore, if we conclude that he exhorted the people to labour spiritually to obtain eternal salvation, we shall have still greater difficulties to encounter, than if we came to the opposite conclusion. For, in the first place, Christ hath said,

“All that the Father giveth me *shall* come unto me.” Would he exhort those to come to him *savingly* who were never given to him by the Father? Again, he tells us that no man can come except he is drawn by the Father. Would he exhort them to come in the sense that they had no capacity to come? Would he mock them, and trifle with them, tauntingly, and, with apparent sincerity, tell them to do impossibilities? Who can entertain such a thought? Well, then, what is the conclusion to which we must come? Is it not that he exhorted them to labour for that instruction which should better their present moral and social condition, and likewise mitigate future punishment? The instruction thus obtained and followed out would be to them of everlasting use, and in this sense endure to everlasting life.

There is another view that may be taken of this scripture, viz., that as these people followed him because they did eat and were filled, being thus mere carnal followers of Christ, he, in order to bring to light the carnality of their motive in following him, and that his thus exhorting them for that purpose, is an exception to the general rule, that carnal men are not exhorted to spiritual acts; he, in thus exhorting them, brought to light the carnality of their motive. When he began to speak of the things pertaining to the *mind* they murmured. The farther he went in, declaring the helplessness of the creature and

the sovereignty of God, the more they were offended, until they went back and walked no more with him. How many congregations at the present day would go back if their ministers were to tell out the whole truth ! But human helplessness is not felt, therefore eternal election is not prized.

I have given this second view of this scripture; and it is a truth that their carnality was, by what was said in their hearing, brought to light. But they were offended, not so much at the exhortation to labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, as at the doctrines advanced in the afterpart of the chapter ; therefore I am most inclined to the first view taken of this scripture, viz., that as Christ has power over all flesh, and demands of men a service (shall I call it a duty service?) for which their natural powers are suited, this service is their duty, and the neglect of it is their sin. It is therefore one thing to be instructed morally, and another thing to be taught spiritually. The instruction which Christ gave to the people at large, and that *special* knowledge which was communicated to those who were called by grace, were very different. The one called for that submission to him which it was their duty to render ; the other lets the soul into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. I therefore conclude, that while it is the duty of all men to hearken to the voice of divine supremacy, and



act conscientiously, yet to substitute this mere natural religion for spiritual religion is fatal delusion; and a more ingenious way of deluding the souls of men I believe the enemy never did, nor ever can devise. Only just look at it. Here are thousands upon thousands joining churches, and concluding that they are christians, when they are looking upon eternal election as a matter of minor importance. Rejoice that their names are written in heaven! How should they, if the book of life is never unrolled before them? They do not feel their need of God's own plan of eternal mercy. Besides, as their ministers tell them that Christ died savingly for the elect, and conditionally for the non-elect, here this question arises; How are they (supposing them for idea's sake to be true christians) to distinguish between those christians for whom Christ died savingly, and those for whom he died conditionally? Why, say they, he that believeth shall be saved, therefore we need not trouble ourselves about election; and thus they wrap it up. But this would not satisfy me. I should want to know if my faith was the faith of God's elect, or whether it was mere duty faith; whether its end would be the salvation of the soul, or whether it began in the flesh; whether I may or may not rejoice that my name is written in heaven; whether or not I was one that was exhorted to make my calling and election sure. These are weighty questions; but then in comes

another subterfuge, namely, that although Christ died conditionally for the non-elect, yet none of them will ever believe. But we do believe, therefore we are of those for whom he died savingly. Thus natural, mere natural faith, is substituted for that faith which is of the operation of God. So true it is that no man can receive anything except it be given him from above. The salvation of the soul is a matter infinitely beyond all the duties and morality of all this world.

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

As we must distinguish between the voice of