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actual, seems to be made use of by some in such a way, as, in a great measure, destroys the true notion of a public head and representative. Whatever is done by a public head, as so considered, is reckoned as done by those whom he represents; or, what he acts, as such, is looked upon as acted by them. This was the case with all mankind, who sinned in *Adam*, their public head; they were accounted really guilty of his transgression, tho' not in actual being, which is the cause why they are conceived in sin. And the elect were as really justified in *Christ* their public head, when he was justified from all their sins: As he, in God's account, was discharged from all guilt, so were they also: For he was not acquitted without respect had to them, as the persons whom he represented. To talk of being virtually justified, in opposition to a real or actual discharge from sin in God's account, is directly contrary to all just notions of *Christ* being the representative of his people. To conclude: How *Christ* could be virtually slain, in the common acceptation of the word, which is taken to signify the being, action, or suffering of a person *in another*, I can by no means understand: I know of none who could represent *Christ*, and in whom he might be said to do or suffer any thing. It must therefore be understood as that which certainly should be, according to the divine decree; and that his sufferings and satisfaction was

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then in the eye of God, as if he had already suffered, and atoned for our sins, as was before observed. But because Christ did not actually suffer from everlasting, it follows not that the elect were not justified from everlasting; because the same is not to be concluded of God's immanent, as is of his transient acts. Justification is an immanent act, and is eternal; the punishing of Christ was a transient act, and could not be eternal.

I shall now observe some things concerning the use of the word *actual* in Justification, as it is said to be so upon believing, and not before. And if it is intended, when it is said that the elect were not actually justified from everlasting, that God did not acquit them of their sins in his mind, it is a mistake, as appears by what has been already observed; or if it is designed that they are not declaratively discharged from them before they believe, it is not true, for that they are by the gospel in general, though that declaration cannot be received till faith is wrought in their souls. But if the meaning is, that they have no evidence of the remission of their sins, and the Justification of their persons, till they believe, that is readily granted: But it is denied that this is Justification it self, for it is only the manifestation of Justification. This seems to be all which is intended by some, who say that the elect are actually justified when they believe. Dr. *Twisse* takes actual Justification  
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in no other sense ; for, says he, “ What is it that the remission of sins, and our acceptation, signify, if not inward and immanent acts in God ; acts of which kind do not arise in God anew<sup>e</sup> ? ” A little after he speaks of actual Justification, and expresses himself thus : “ God erects his tribunal in our hearts ; our own conscience, according to the law of God, accuses, terrifies, and wounds us : At length the mercy of God thus shewing it self, the Spirit of God, by the voice of the gospel, raises, comforts, and refreshes us, and pronounces that our sins are forgiven us, for Christ’s sake.” This is what he intends, when he afterwards says actual Justification is not, unless to such as believe ; which, in his sense, is certainly true, for only believers have a sentence of Justification pronounced in their consciences by the Spirit of God.

*Object.* 10. “ Actual possession, be it of a crown, takes place, according to the constitution of the kingdom, and the methods of government, which in all wise administrations are settled, and not left uncertain and precarious : Now is the order of civil governments

<sup>e</sup> Quid quod remissio peccatorum, & acceptatio nostri, non nisi actus internos & immanentes in Deo notant ; cujus generis actiones non suboriuntur Deo de novo ? Exiit enim Deus tribunal suum in cordibus nostris ; conscientia propria, juxta legem Dei, nos reos peragit, consternit, & excruciat : Tandem aliquando sic ferente Dei misericordia, Spiritus Dei, per vocem evangelii, erigit, solatur, recreat, & peccata nostra nobis, propter Christum, dimissa esse pronunciat. *Vindic. Gratiae, Lib. 2. Crim. 4. § 4. p. 79.*

great, and God's government of the world of nature yet greater; and is there no such thing as order in the gospel<sup>f</sup>?"

I answer, that without doubt there is a beautiful order in the gospel; and that this gentleman has offered nothing, which in the least degree proves that eternal Justification breaks in upon that order. I hope it will not be said that God's immanent acts do follow upon, or in order succeed, his transient acts, but on the contrary; as for instance, creation follows God's decree to create: Justification is an immanent act, and doth not follow any transient act; nor is there any transient act of God that is our Justification, or which is the execution of his decree to justify us, as creation is the execution of his purpose to create. Again, I can't apprehend what the actual possession of Justification is, unless it be the sense and knowledge of it, which certainly follows faith, for none of the elect can know they are justified till they believe; the consequence of which may easily be gathered from what has been said before.

*Object. II.* "How expressly are we told in scripture, that in point of actual existence, that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual?" And, if so, the elect not only actually exist, but are actually condemned by

<sup>f</sup> P. 165.

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the law of God, before they are actually justified<sup>g</sup>.”

The answer is, that the inference drawn from the words is not just; for they intend that we first receive a depraved nature from the first *Adam*, and afterwards holiness, or spiritual life, from Christ the second *Adam*. Besides, the existence of the elect is no more necessary to their actual and personal Justification, than it is to their actual and personal election. *Rutherford*, speaking of election, hath these words: “But this, *i. e.* election, is an immanent and eternal act; for no act of God’s will is in time, or transient; what God wills, he willed from eternity<sup>h</sup>.” He observes the very same concerning Justification, in these words: “These acts of imputing, and not imputing, are immanent acts in God, and therefore eternal<sup>i</sup>.” Farther, we grant that the elect are sententially condemned by the law of God, but this is not inconsistent with their Justification in Christ, and freedom from condemnation in him: For, as the author just now quoted observes, “The elect always, yea, before they believe, are free from condemnation; for, and on the account of, the death

<sup>g</sup> P. 163.

<sup>h</sup> At vero haec est actio immanens & aeterna; nulla enim Dei volitio est temporaria, aut transiens; quod Deus vult, ab aeterno voluit. *Rhetorfortis Exercitat. Apolog. c. 2. p. 25.*

<sup>i</sup> Hi actus imputandi, & non imputandi, sunt actus in Deo immanentes, adeoque aeterni. *Ibidem, p. 41.*

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of Christ<sup>k</sup>." To conclude: That which is called their actual Justification, is no more than the discovery of it, as was before observed.

*Object. 12.* "Though now we are glorified in Christ, we who believe, hope one day to be glorified together with Christ<sup>l</sup>."

The design of our author, in these words, is to suggest, that as our glorification in Christ from everlasting is not actual, so the Justification of the elect in him from everlasting is not actual. In answer to which it may be said, that glorification is a work of God upon us, and is expressive of a real change in us, and therefore requires our actual existence; but Justification is not such an act, therefore our actual existence is not necessary to it.

*Object. 13.* "Christ's righteousness is not upon us, in the sense of the gospel, before faith; for the gospel is express, that it is to, or upon us, in a way of believing; and should men or angels tell us the contrary, let us not regard them<sup>m</sup>."

In order to remove this objection, I would observe, that this author himself allows, that the imputation of Christ's righteousness is our Justification, and that this is God's act; which he strongly expresses in these words: "None, save God the judge of all, could make Christ

<sup>k</sup> Semper enim electi, etiam antequam credant, sunt in, & propter Christi mortem, immunes a condemnatione. *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>l</sup> P. 163.

<sup>m</sup> P. 170.

to be sin for us ; and none, save God the judge of all, can make any of us the righteousness of God in him <sup>n</sup>." I apprehend him to mean, that as Christ was made sin, by God's imputing our sins to him, so we are made righteous, by God's imputing Christ's righteousness to us : Which, if he does, he is not consistent with himself ; for then it follows, that Christ's righteousness is to, or upon us, in a way of imputation, and not in a way of believing. Therefore, should it be granted that only believers are the objects of Justification (which cannot be, because God justifies the ungodly) yet it would not follow that Christ's righteousness is upon them in a way of believing, or that it is by their faith imputed to them ; for if so, they make themselves the righteousness of God in him ; which our author justly denies, and grants, that Justification is God's act, and not theirs. Farther, I admire that a person of Mr. B's humility should express himself with so assuming an air as he does, in saying, should men or angels tell us the contrary, let us not regard them. Had an anathema been pronounced against such as assert Justification before faith, this sentence would have had the same force and degree of resentment in it, as that of the Apostle against the perverters of the gospel : " If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received,

<sup>n</sup> P. 106, 107.

let him be accursed °." However, it must be allowed, that his delivering himself in as positive a manner as if he had the infallible guidance of an inspired writer, is going far enough in all reason, without pronouncing any dreadful anathemas against those who differ from him. What is the reason why those must not be regarded, who affirm that the elect of God are justified before faith? Is not Mr. B. as likely to be mistaken as they are? I am indeed tempted to think that he has not much regarded what has been offered for Justification before faith, for if he had, certainly his resentments could never have carried him these lengths.

*Object. 14.* "Gifts, how freely soever they may be designed for us, and given to us, they are not ours, before we receive them: There must be the receiving, as well as the giving hand, before the poor are actually possessed of the rich man's gift<sup>p</sup>."

I answer to this, it is a mistake, that gifts are not ours before received; for the donor's act of giving makes them ours, and not our receiving act; and we receive them as what we have a proper right to, because given us by him whose they are to bestow. Therefore it is not the poor man's receiving a gift that makes it become his, but the act of the giver. Besides, legal possession depends upon a prior

° Gal. i. 9.

<sup>p</sup> P. 157.



right to the thing possessed, for otherwise our possession of it cannot be just and lawful; because legal right is founded either upon purchase or free gift, and not on our receiving any thing we enjoy. Again: This makes our right to, and interest in pardoning, justifying, and sanctifying grace, and glory itself, to depend as much upon our act of receiving these benefits, as on God's act of giving them to us; which is absurd. Moreover, it follows hence that heaven is not the saints, or that they have no right to it whilst here upon earth; which is apparently false, for they are now heirs of the kingdom. To conclude: That which is given by any person's friend into the hand of another for him (he not being present) is as much his, as if he had actually received it at the hand of the donor. Thus all grace and glory was given to the elect in Christ before the world began; and both as much became theirs, by virtue of God's gift, as if they had been present, and actually received the one and the other at God's hand. I hope it will be allowed that the doctrine of eternal Justification stands unshaken, notwithstanding this author's attack; for all his objections have not weight enough to bear it down. If many of the similes he makes use of, in treating about the doctrine of Justification, should lie buried in some dark cavern of the earth, where he makes a supposition of putting the sun, I imagine the danger will not be much to the churches.

2dly, I shall now consider some objections which are raised by others against this doctrine. And it is objected:

*Object.* 1. "To this purpose, that as sanctification, and all the fruits of the Spirit, perseverance in grace, and eternal glory, were granted to the elect in Christ from everlasting, no less than Justification; so they were not then justified, in any other or farther sense, than they were sanctified, &c. which they could not actually be."

I answer, that sanctification, and glorification, are transient acts of God, and do produce a real change in us. To these acts our personal existence is necessary; we must first be, before we can be made holy by God's grace: Therefore the gift of sanctifying grace, in the eternal covenant, could be no other than a representative sanctification in Christ, not actual. Justification is an act of God's free grace towards us in Christ, and is not productive of any real or inherent change in us; whence it follows, that our personal existence is not necessary to it. Now as Justification is not the implantation of grace in us, but is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which is an act in God himself, the grant of Justification was not a lodging of grace in Christ's hand for us, to be communicated to us, by which we might become justified, as the gift of sanctification was: Nor could it be a promise to Christ, that God at any certain  
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time would begin to justify us, because Justification is an immanent act, and consequently must be eternal. As the nature of this grace greatly differs from sanctification, it ought not, in the promise of it, to be considered in the same light.

*Object. 2.* “ If *Adam’s* sin, and our own personal sins, were imputed to us in time, we were not personally justified from eternity, but do need a true and real Justification in time. But the former is true, therefore the latter. The reason of the consequence is this ; where the guilt and charge of sin is, and law-condemnation for it, there Justification is not.”

I answer, that *Adam’s* sin was imputed to the elect, as well as to the non-elect, before they had a being ; and that the elect are under a charge of sin by the law, and a sentence of condemnation for it, as soon as they exist. But all this is not inconsistent with their secret Justification before God, as he considered them in the righteousness of Christ ; that being as really imputed to them for their Justification before him, as their sins were to their guiltiness in his sight. Therefore they need no farther justifying act in time, than passed towards them from everlasting.

*Object. 3.* “ God’s eternal will to justify or pardon, or non-impute sin, is not Justification.” For the support of which two reasons are offered ; as, First, that act or benefit, which is not the fruit of Christ’s death and

blood-shed, is not Justification ; but God's will not to impute sin, is not the fruit of Christ's death and bloodshed, and therefore it is not Justification."

I answer, God's will to save, and make his elect happy, is not the fruit, but the cause of Christ's death. But though God's will not to impute sin, and his will not to pardon it without a satisfaction from Christ, to secure the honour of his law, and the glory of his justice, may be distinguished, yet they ought not to be separated ; for his will not to impute sin to his elect, includes his will to impute it to Christ, and to punish it in him, without any abatement. Therefore it cannot be said that God ever absolutely willed not to charge sin on his people, or without respect to their redemption from it by Christ. Again : God had in his eye, even from everlasting, the atonement made by Christ ; and, on the account of Christ's engagement to suffer for the sins of the elect, he acquitted them as really as though Christ had actually suffered the penalty demerited by their transgressions.

The second thing, which is offered, is this : " That act of God, which is no discharge or freedom from the law, or the charge thereof, wherein God proceeds not by an external rule, as a law-giver, is not Justification ; but God's will not to impute sin to his elect, is no discharge from the law, therefore it is not Justification."

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In answer to this, let it be observed, that the charge of sin upon men by the law, is no other than a manifestation that they were under the secret imputation of sin in God's mind, before the open charge of it: And so also the declaration which is in the gospel of believers freedom from a law-charge of sin, is no other than a discovery of their discharge from all sin in God's eternal mind. God does not then begin to look upon, or consider them as clear from guilt, when the gospel declares they are so in his account. Besides, as on the score of God's imputing sin to us, we are accounted guilty in his view, and not by the declaration of that act; so, on the score of his non-imputation of sin, and imputation of righteousness, we are accounted justified in his sight, and not by the discovery of those acts. If it is not thus, men before their personal existence are neither accounted guilty, nor righteous, in God's view. Let it farther be observed, that the discharge of the elect from sin, in God's mind, was acted by him as a law-giver, or with a view to that satisfaction which the law was to receive from Christ their surety. Herein therefore, he proceeded according to the external rule, which he has published, that is to say his law, and not in the least contrary to it.

*Object. 4.* "The covenant of redemption or grace, as with Christ, is not that whereby sin was charged, or laid upon Christ by

the Father, and therefore is not our discharge."

To this it may be answered, that a surety's engagement to pay a debt. makes it become his in the eye of the law, and in the account of the creditor, and therefore he expects payment at his hand. Thus, when God was reconciling the world to himself, or forming the glorious plan and model of our reconciliation by Christ, which was in eternity, he did not then impute sin to his people; for the Apostle says expressly, "not imputing their trespasses to them<sup>a</sup>:" Therefore he imputed sin to Christ their surety; or else it was then imputed to none, neither to the principal debtor, nor the surety, which I imagine none will assert. The imputation of sin is an act in God's mind, and so it might be, and actually was, imputed to Christ upon his undertaking for the elect; for if God did not look upon our sins as Christ's, by virtue of his suretyship engagements, and we were not discharged from sin in God's sight upon that account, how could the Old Testament saints have been acquitted of their sins? For if we cannot be discharged, unless our sins be imputed to Christ, and they could not be placed to his account, till he "was made of a woman, and made under the law<sup>r</sup>," as is suggested; then not one soul was justified before

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>r</sup> Gal. iv. 4, 5.

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Christ's incarnation ; than which, there is nothing more false. As Christ stood secretly charged with sin from everlasting, as the elects surety, so the open charge of it upon him was in time, when he was incarnate, and made under the law : But what is collected from thence, in these words, is no just inference ; " The charge of sin on Christ was by the law : And I think none should venture to say, that Christ was made under the law from eternity : I am sure the scripture speaks otherwise, *Gal. iv. 5. Isa. liii. 6.* So that neither was he charged, or under any imputation of sin ; neither were we discharged from eternity." I answer, it doth not follow, that because Christ was not openly charged with sin by the law from eternity, which indeed he could not be, that he was under no imputation of sin, unless it be denied that there is any such thing as a secret, but real imputation of sin to Christ, or sinners, in God's breast, which I am sure ought not to be denied ; for imputation is properly an act in God, and must be eternal, as was before observed. Besides, Christ's suretyship engagements were the proper foundation of the imputation of our sins to him, as they are of the imputation of his righteousness to us. Therefore the charge of sin on Christ bears date from his covenant-transactions with the Father, and must needs be eternal.

*Object.*

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*Object. 5.* "Suretyship of this sort bringing the charge on Christ from eternity, would prevent our being under the law, and the charge of sin on us thereby, and consequently our redemption therefrom."

This is an objection which has, of late, been made use of against the doctrine of eternal Justification: But that it is a great mistake, or that this consequence drawn from eternal Justification is not just, will appear from hence. It is many hundred years, since all the sins of the elect were openly charged on Christ by the law, and he atoned for them, and also was actually acquitted of them by God: Now as all this doth not prevent those of the elect, who have lived since his incarnation, coming under the law, and a charge of sin by it, and also a sentence of condemnation for their sins, the secret charge of sin on Christ from eternity, certainly cannot be attended with any of these consequences. But farther: Redemption is necessary, even where there is no charge of sin by the law, if sin has been committed by such who now stand clear of all guilt. This is evident in the case of Old Testament saints, who were actually glorified when Christ suffered, and consequently were under no imputation of sin; yet their redemption was no less needful than the redemption of other elect persons; and it was actually effected by Christ, when they were in glory, as is manifest from those words of the Apostle; "Whom God hath set forth



forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God<sup>f</sup>." It may therefore be strongly concluded, that Justification from eternity doth not set aside redemption in time, since the actual glorification of Old Testament saints, did not make their redemption by Christ unnecessary. Besides, our redemption from the law was what Christ undertook in the covenant of grace; and our discharge from sin in God's mind, did not make it unnecessary for him to fulfil his own engagements, but rather laid him under obligation to perform what he had promised. Upon the whole, it is plain, that this objection has no weight or force in it.

*Object. 6.* "That is Justification to which the definition of it belongs; but the definition of it belongs to some declared act, or sentence of God."

I answer: If the imputation of sin to us, and a sentence of condemnation conceived in God's mind, is our guiltiness and condemnation in his account, which I hope will be granted; then it ought to be allowed, that the non-imputation of sin, and imputation of righteousness to us, or a sentence of absolution conceived in God's breast, is our real Justification in his sight. Again: As on the score of God's im-

<sup>f</sup> Rom. iii. 25.

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puting sin we are accounted sinners, so on the score of his imputing righteousness we are accounted righteous; not by the declaration of that act. Under this head of objection it is said, "That the inward thoughts of a judge concerning a criminal, are neither his condemnation nor Justification, but his passing sentence according to law is so." As an answer to this I would observe, that a sentence of condemnation, conceived in the mind of a judge, is the secret condemnation of a criminal: For when a sentence of condemnation is passed by a judge upon a malefactor, he doth not then begin to look upon him as guilty; but because he concluded him guilty, he formed a sentence of condemnation against him in his mind, and therefore pronounces it according to law. Now, as Dr. *Ames* observes, "A sentence of Justification was, as it were, conceived in the mind of God by the decree of justifying \*:" Which sentence of Justification in God's mind, was as real a Justification of the elect before God, as a sentence of condemnation, conceived in the mind of a judge, is the secret, though not open condemnation of a malefactor. As Christ was really made sin by God's act of imputing our sins to him, and not by the declaration thereof in the gospel; so we were really made righteous, or justified by God's

\* Sententia haec fuit in mente Dei, quasi concepta per decretum Justificandi. *Medul. Theol. lib. I. c. 27. p. 117.*

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imputation of his righteousness to us, and not by the discovery of that act in the gospel. Mr. *Eyere* thus answers an objection, that is much like what is here advanced: "Though the forgiveness of magistrates be by some published act of oblivion, yet it doth not follow, that God must proceed in the same manner; because the promulgation of an act of grace, is for the direction and limitation of judges and ministers of state, that they do not execute the sentence of the law. Now in the Justification of a sinner, God hath no need of such an act, because he is the sole judge and justifier himself; and therefore the purpose of his will secures the person sufficiently, though his security be not declared, and makes the law of condemnation (which depends wholly on the will of God) to be of no force, in regard of the real execution of it, whether he plead it or no; as in infants, and doubting Christians, whose hearts do condemn them." He adds: "A judge, that hath the legislative power in his own breast, needs no published edict to absolve an offender. Now God is such a judge, as doth not receive, but gives laws unto all. The publishing of acts of grace is for the comfort of the offender, rather than for any need that the supreme magistrate hath thereof, as to the compleating of his act; as for instance, the act of oblivion was a real pardon when it passed the house; for though delinquents had no knowledge of their immu-

nity, from the penalties which they had incurred before it was published in print, yet the vote or sanction of the house did secure them from danger, and invalidate the statutes that were in force against them; otherwise delinquents would be more beholden to the printer that published the act, than to the parliament that made it. So the publication of the new covenant was for the comfort of God's elect, and not for their security, *in foro Dei* <sup>v</sup>." Wherefore, I cannot but conclude, that it is a mistake, that Justification before God is the declaration of our being righteous in his sight, and consequently that there is no force in this objection.

*Object. 7.* "If there is some justifying act of God passing upon a man when he believes, then that is the true and very time of his Justification; but the former is true, and therefore the latter." Several things are offered for the proof of this: As, (1.) "Our being in covenant is the rule and measure of our Justification. So far as men are under the covenant of grace, so far they are justified: Now God makes covenant with souls at believing, in their own persons."

I answer, that it is a mistake that God actually makes covenant with his elect when they believe, or that at that time they are in the covenant of grace in a farther sense than

<sup>v</sup> Free Justification, &c, p. 153, 154.

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they were before; for the covenant is only revealed to them at the time of their new birth, and is not then made with them, as will appear from these following things. Those who are not in the covenant of grace, cannot partake of any blessings in that covenant; for their right to the benefits of it, depends upon their interest therein. Again: If God actually makes covenant with his elect, it is either before or after they are regenerated. It cannot be before, for they are full of enmity against God, and are not subject to his law, neither can they be, as the Apostle declares: Therefore at that time they are altogether incapable of entering into covenant with God. Dr. *Ames*, in shewing the difference between the old and new covenant, observes that they differ in the efficient cause. His words are these: "For in that, *i. e.* the old covenant, there were two parties, namely, it was the compact of God and man; but in this, *i. e.* the new, God alone contracts; for man is now dead in sins, and hath no power of entering into a spiritual covenant with God<sup>w</sup>." Dr. *Chauncy* asserts, that the elect are interested in the covenant of grace before they believe, in these words: "All the elect have a real right and interest in the covenant, even before believing; such a right

<sup>w</sup> In eo enim duarum partium, Dei nempe, & hominis fuit compactum; in isto, vero solus Deus paciscitur; homo enim jam in peccatis mortuus, nullam facultatem habuit spirituale foedus cum Deo contrahendi. *Med. Theolog. lib. 1. c. 24. p. 102.*

as entitles them to believing : For Christ hath undertaken, that all that the Father hath given him, shall come to him ; and it's therefore absolutely necessary they should, as promised in the covenant ; not as a condition, as a leading benefit, and no otherwise <sup>x</sup>." Elsewhere he expresses himself thus : " It's mightily to derogate from the covenant of grace, to make the promise thereof to depend on a stipulation on our parts : For, if we stipulate with God, we also promise to him, as well as he to us, before performance, and likewise that we do our part before he doth his ; for the stipulating is covenanting ; and for any man to talk of any such thing, runs upon multitudes of rocks. Our radical stipulation was in Christ ; all other stipulations are effects of it <sup>y</sup>." He adds, " The covenant of grace is the act of God ; in the person of the Father with us, in the person of Christ in him, we did restipulate. He was the great covenanter on our part, and the condition of this covenant ; and when we by virtue of the promise take hold of this covenant, we stand upon this condition with God, and God dispenseth all benefits upon this condition to us : And it is a free and absolute covenant to us, a covenant of promise ; because not only the promise is bestowed, without foederal conditions performed by our selves, and the great foederal condition, the Lord Christ, is freely bestowed on us."

<sup>x</sup> Neonomianism Unmasked, p. 2. & 156.    <sup>y</sup> *Ibid.* p. 164.  
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To these things I subjoin, that all the posterity of *Adam* were actually in, or under, the covenant of works, when that covenant was made with him, because he then represented them as their public head; wherefore their personal consent was not required to that covenant. If this is not granted, it must be denied that we were guilty of *Adam's* sin; and also, that the corruption of our nature is the consequence of his transgression. Now, if all *Adam's* off-spring were actually under the covenant of works, immediately upon his consenting to it, and from thence his sin became as really theirs, as though they had been actually present when he committed it, and upon that account they receive inherent sin from him; why may it not be allowed, that the elect were actually interested in the covenant of grace, when Christ, as their public head, entered into that compact with the Father? And also, that his righteousness was really imputed to them for their Justification, by virtue of their interest in the covenant of grace, tho' they did not then exist, as *Adam's* sin was imputed to all his seed, before their personal existence, by virtue of their interest in the covenant of works? Not after, or upon believing, doth God make covenant with them, for then they must be supposed to partake of one eminent blessing of the covenant of grace, before they are interested in it; for faith, yea, all regenerating grace, is contained

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in, and promised by that covenant; as is evident from those words, "A new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh\*." Therefore because they are interested in the covenant of grace, even when unregenerate, they are born again in God's appointed time. Now who can imagine, that if the elect are interested in the covenant of grace before they believe; and that it is from thence they do believe, or receive faith, that that covenant is made with them after, or upon, believing? That would be no less absurd, than to suppose an effect gives being to its cause. Therefore when we read of God's making covenant with his people, it only intends the manifestation of covenant promises and blessings to their souls; which is evident from those words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew unto them his covenant\*." This author observes,

(2.) "Our Justification follows our union with Christ: Now as there is a legal and representative union of the elect in Christ, which infers their being justified in him; so there is a vital and influential union brought about at believing."

As an answer, let these things be observed. Our vital union with Christ is not the effect,

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

\* Psal. xxv. 14.



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but the cause of our faith; as the union of the scion with the stock, is the cause of its bearing fruit. Again; Vital union with Christ is not the foundation of our Justification, but that legal union which is between Christ and us; that is, as he is our surety, and we are the principal debtors: For it was by virtue hereof that our sins were imputed to him; and from hence it is that his righteousness becomes ours, or is imputed to us. This union is eternal; and so is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, which arises from that union. That which was not necessary to the imputation of our sins to Christ, is not necessary to the imputation of his righteousness; vital union to Christ was not required to the former, therefore it is not to the latter. He farther adds,

(3.) "Justification goes with our possession of Christ; that is, all blessings of the covenant go with him."

I answer, that the elect are interested in Christ before they believe, though till then they are ignorant of their interest in him. They are his by choice and acceptation, and also by redemption and purchase; and he is theirs by a gracious donation of himself to them, in the everlasting covenant. Farther; Justification depends not upon our possession of Christ, or an application of his grace and righteousness to our souls, by the Spirit of God, though our knowledge of it does; for that is an act in  
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God towards, and not the infusion of grace in us, and is therefore eternal; for no new acts do, or can, arise in God; he has the same view of us in Christ before we believe, as after believing. He subjoins,

(4.) "That believers have a farther discharge from the law, and are not so under the sentence of condemnation therein, as unbelievers, tho' elect."

I answer: The elect are under a sentence of condemnation by the law, as was before granted; yet, this notwithstanding, they are justified in their head Christ, as was before observed. The elect who are not called, are justified in God's sight; the called elect are justified, not only secretly, but openly: A declared freedom from condemnation, is no more than Justification revealed. He adds,

(5.) "Believers are under the justifying discharge of the gospel."

It is true, they are so; but this is no more than the manifestation of Justification, and not the thing it self. Under this objection it is farther said, "That when souls are brought under this, *i. e.* the covenant of grace (which mode of expression I cannot but disapprove, as improper, because they are in the covenant before they believe) then the filthy garments are taken away, and they are clothed with change of raiment." Which, if true, it follows, that their sins are imputed to them, at least till after the first act of faith is put forth:  
And

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And also, that Christ's righteousness is not imputed till after the exercise of faith; which makes Justification to follow both the habit and act of faith; and is directly contrary to the express words of the Apostle: "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly<sup>b</sup>;" for no regenerate person is an ungodly person.

These objections are to be met with in Mr. *Beart's* Vindication of the eternal Law and Gospel, second Part. I hope the answers here given to them, will take off all that force which they may seem to carry with them, against the doctrine of eternal Justification.

There are some other popular objections, which have lately been advanced against this important truth, which I shall endeavour to answer.

*Object.* 1. "There cannot be a Justification from sin, till there is a charge of sin; but the one is in time, therefore the other."

I answer, this objection is as much levelled against the imputation of sin before time, as against eternal Justification. That God from everlasting did impute sin to his elect, as in themselves considered, is evident by the covenant which God and Christ entered into. Again: The charge of sin upon them by the law, is no more than a discovery of their standing secretly charged with sin in God's

<sup>b</sup> Rom. iv. 4.

fight long before, as has been already observed ; neither is their open acquittance by the gospel, any more than a manifestation of their secret Justification in God's mind, as he beheld them in Christ from eternity. It is granted that their open discharge from sin follows the declarative charge of it by the law, and that the one and the other is in time ; but this militates not with eternal Justification in Christ.

*Object. 2.* " If the elect are justified without faith, they may be saved without faith."

I answer ; It is very bad logic to argue from a part to the whole ; that which is true of the whole, is of a part, but not on the contrary ; that which is true of a part, may not be so of the whole. Again ; It may justly be said, that in some sense the elect are saved before they believe, and consequently without faith, as appears by these words : " who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ before the world began<sup>c</sup>." Salvation in a sense precedes vocation ; for the elect are saved with many temporal salvations, before, and in order to, calling ; or they are preserved by God's kind providence from many dangers, and recovered out of many afflictions, in order

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. i. 9.

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to be called; which I take to be included in those words: "preserved in Jesus Christ, and called<sup>d</sup>." Besides, they are saved in a spiritual sense, before calling; for Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, the wrath of God; and also has conquered all their enemies, sin, Satan, death, and hell. This was the work which the Father gave him to do, and he came into the world to accomplish; for, "he came to seek and to save that which was lost<sup>e</sup>." The distinction of the impetration and application of salvation, which is commonly made by divines, perfectly agrees with this; the impetration of salvation is before, the application of it begins, when we believe.

If glorification, or the consummation of salvation, is intended in this objection, as I suppose it is; it follows not, that because we are justified without faith, that we may also be taken to heaven without faith: For it is not only necessary that we have a title to glory, which is the justifying righteousness of Christ; but that also grace be implanted in us, in order to fit us for the actual possession of everlasting life.

*Object. 4.* "Some have said they will never believe the doctrine of eternal Justification, unless it can be made appear, that we were sinners from everlasting."

<sup>d</sup> Jude i.

<sup>e</sup> Luke xix. 10.

If there is any thing of weight in this trifling objection, it must be this, That we cannot be justified from sin before we have committed it : I answer, were not the elect of God considered as sinners in the act of election? I am sure the Sublapsarian doctrine necessarily supposes it ; and I am inclined to believe that the authors of this objection do not much favour the Supralapsarian notion. Now how the elect of God could be considered as sinners, in God's eternal counsels, and yet no sin be imputed to them, I freely confess that I am not able to conceive : But if sin was imputed from everlasting to the elect, as in themselves considered ; why may it not be allowed that they might be discharged from all sin, as God viewed them in Christ in eternity ? Again, the actual commission of sin was not necessary to the imputation of it to Christ ; this is so manifest, it needs no proof. Now let the authors of this objection make it appear, that though our sins might be, and actually were, imputed to Christ before we had committed them ; yet that we cannot be justified from our sins, before the actual commission of them, I am tempted to think that this is a task they will not undertake, because they can't hope to succeed in it. Farther, this objection lies as strong against the complete Justification of believers ; for if we cannot be discharged from sin before it is actually committed, we are not perfectly justified upon believing : But Justification

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cation is progressive, as sanctification is, which does not suit well with Protestant doctrine.

*Object.* 5. "Some have farther said, that this doctrine is only speculative, and of no great moment; and that they think it safest to go in the common beaten path of Justification by faith."

I answer, the same may be objected against other great truths of the gospel. It may as justly be said, what need we trouble our selves about such speculations as the doctrines of election, the eternal covenant of grace; the imputation of our sins to Christ, and his righteousness to us; and of God's eternal love, as the spring and source of these blessings? What reason can be offered, why the doctrine of eternal Justification should be called speculative, any more than these important truths? Again: For any to flirt against a doctrine as speculative, without taking notice of those arguments which are made use of to support it, is, in my opinion, a tacit acknowledgment that they are not able to answer them; or at least that they are unwilling to be at any pains that way, and therefore think to bear down their weight with a magisterial air. This, indeed, is taking the shortest method to end a controversy; but is no instance of a generous temper, or a mind open to conviction. Let such objectors shew us why it is safest to go in the common beaten path of Justification

by faith ; with submission it may be told them, that some divines, of no less penetration than themselves, could see no danger in holding the doctrine of Justification before faith. Dr. *Owen* speaks very honourably of some that did, though he differed from them, in these words : “ I am imposed on to lay the foundation of all *Antinomianism* (as Mr. *Burges* is also) to maintain *Justification* from eternity, or at least in the cross of Christ, of all that *should believe*, and *Justification by faith* to be but the *sense of it* in our *consciences* (which *last* I know better and *wiser men* than my self that do, though I do not<sup>f</sup>.” It is very well known that those, who hold the doctrine of eternal Justification, are reproachfully called *Antinomians*, by some who differ from them in that point ; and it may be equally observed, that many of their opponents are very fond of being thought men of catholic and charitable tempers ; to maintain a due respect to such as are not altogether in the same way of thinking with themselves, (which is what they ought to do) but their loading those who are for eternal Justification, with the heavy charge of *Antinomianism* on that account, is no instance of their justice or charity : For, if I am not greatly mistaken, those who believe that doctrine, are far more clear of what is objected against them, than many

<sup>f</sup> Vindication from the Animadversions of Mr. R. B. p. 4.



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of those charitable persons who are forward to asperse, and labour to bring them under contempt. It may be presumed, that some of these persons are of opinion that such as be moderate *Calvinists*, or are somewhat inclined to *Arminianism*, and *Pelagianism*, are not to be treated as enemies, but friends; whilst those that embrace the doctrine of eternal Justification, are to be esteemed dangerous adversaries to truth, although they profess to agree with them in almost all other respects. How well it becomes any men, professing *Calvinism*, to discover an unkind and rancorous disposition towards such as believe, and endeavour to defend this doctrine, let the unprejudiced and impartial reader determine. My design in this, is not to court the favour and respect of such persons, but to observe to them how agreeably they conform their conduct to that moderation and charity, which they sometimes earnestly recommend.

*Object. 6.* "It is objected by some, that many who have embraced this doctrine, have been a reproach to religion by their disagreeable conduct, and therefore they cannot judge favourably of the doctrine itself."

In answer to this I observe, that we ought not to determine in favour of, or against, any opinion by the conversations of those who believe it; for a regular life is no proof of a person's principles being just, nor is an

irregular deportment always an evidence of mistakes in the judgment. Besides, many who never believed this doctrine, have brought an odium upon the gospel by a sinful course and practice; now are we to object against, and recede from, the truths of Christ on that account? surely we ought not. Moreover, corrupt nature abuses the law of God, as well as the gospel of Christ, as appears from those words of the Apostle: "But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; for without the law, sin was dead<sup>s</sup>." The strict prohibition of sin by the law, irritates our depraved minds; and lust works in us with the greater force and violence. "We strive for that which is forbid, and always desire those things which are denied us<sup>h</sup>," as *Pareus* observes. Therefore should this objection take place, we must regard neither law nor gospel. Farther, I hope it may be justly allowed, that the far greater number of those who believe this doctrine, do adorn their profession by a conversation becoming the gospel. Upon the whole, it appears that neither candor, nor impartiality to truth, is discovered in this objection.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. vii. 8.

<sup>h</sup> Nitimur in vetitum, semper cupimusque negata. *vid. Par. in loc.*

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*Object.* 7. “ Say, some suppose this doctrine is true, what use or service is it of to men?”

I answer, it is our indispensable duty to make diligent search after divine truth. We cannot be excused in slight enquiries into what God has revealed in his word, by this vain pretence, that we are unable to conceive what advantage may arise to us from the discoveries we make of some truths contained therein. Again: This objection is a very unbecoming reflection on the infinite wisdom and goodness of God; for it supposes that he has revealed something that is not profitable to his people, which must be esteemed a foul imputation on the divine perfections: For it is not to be imagined that God would, or can, reveal any doctrine to men, which is not in it self advantagious to them, however they may abuse it; wherefore this objection deserves to be treated with contempt. Farther, this doctrine, in my opinion, stands and falls with the important truths of God's everlasting love to his people; their eternal election in Christ, and the eternal covenant of grace. That Christ loved and delighted in his people from everlasting, is evident from these words, “ my delights were with the sons of men<sup>1</sup>.” When did Christ thus delight in his people? The

<sup>1</sup> Prov. viii. 31.

answer is, “ before the mountains were settled, before the hills were brought forth; while as yet the earth was not made, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the earth<sup>k</sup>: That is to say, before the world was formed. And the Father then took the same delight in these persons: Now as they stood charged with sin, and under condemnation, or, as considered in themselves, they were not the objects of the divine Persons pleasure, but as clear from guilt, and justified in the perfect righteousness of the Mediator. That they were chosen in Christ, cannot be disputed; and, as viewed in him, they were never objects of condemnation, but always of justification. If there is an eternal covenant of grace, in which Christ engaged to pay their debts, by virtue of such his engagement they really became his, and the persons of the elect were acquitted of them by God and Christ, and also were justified in their account: Whence it appears that eternal justification is of the same weight and use as these doctrines are, for it is inseparably connected with them.

*Object. 8.* “ Those who are objects of God’s wrath, cannot be justified at the time they are so. All the elect are objects of God’s displeasure and wrath, before conversion, is evident from these words: “ And were by nature children of wrath,

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 24, 25, 26.

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even as others<sup>1</sup>." Therefore they are not justified before they believe.

I answer, that they are children full of wrath, or enmity against God, whilst in unbelief: And in that sense they may be called children of wrath, as they are of disobedience. It is therefore true of them in an active sense. Farther, I grant that they are also children of wrath in a passive sense, or that they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law before regeneration. *Zancky* has well observed, in his excellent book *de natura Dei*, that the wrath of God is to be taken in different senses: "*First*, it signifies the certain and most just will, and decree of God, to avenge or punish the injuries done to himself and his church; thus with *John* iii. 36. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him: That is, just vengeance against him is confirmed by the decree of God<sup>m</sup>." The elect are not objects of God's wrath in this sense, but "are vessels of mercy, which God has afore prepared to glory<sup>n</sup>."

"*Secondly*, it intends the threatnings of punishment. *Lastly*, it imports the effects of wrath, or penalties, and the avenging of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> Primum, significat certam eamque justissimam Dei voluntatem, atque decretum ulciscendi, seu puniendi injurias sibi, & suae ecclesiae factas; sic apud *John* iii. 36. Qui incredulus filio, ira Dei manet super illum: Hoc est, iuxta decreto Dei firmata vindicta.

<sup>n</sup> Rom. ix. 23.

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injuries °." Now the elect are secured from the punishment due to their sins, by God's decree; for "they are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ <sup>p</sup>:" And also by Christ's satisfaction, "who has made peace for them by the blood of his cross <sup>q</sup>." Therefore it is only in the second sense that they are children of wrath; which is perfectly consistent with their interest in God's love and delight, as they are in, and members of Christ, and with their complete Justification in him, their foederal head. The law doth not consider men as elect, or non-elect, but as transgressors; and, as such, condemns them. But as God put the elect into Christ, or united them to him in eternal election, he views and considers them in him, and so justifies them, and takes infinite pleasure in their persons as members of the Mediator, in whom he always had the fullest satisfaction and delight; tho' they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law, as violaters of it, while in unbelief.

Thus I have considered all the objections which I have met with, that seem to have any weight in them against the doctrine of eternal Justification; and have, as I hope, fully answered them; tho' that I freely submit to the

° Deinde, significat ipsas poenarum comminationes. Postremo, significat ipsa effecta, seu poenas, & ultiones injuriarum. *Lib. 4. c. 6. p. 407.*

<sup>p</sup> 1 Thess. v. 9.

<sup>q</sup> Col. i. 20.

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judgment of candid and impartial readers; and shall think my self obliged to any such, if they will take the pains to inform me of any mistakes I may have been guilty of: But I shall not, in the least, be concerned at the treatment which this performance may meet with, from a warm and censorious adversary; having this inward pleasure, that it was the cause of truth, and no lower view, which moved me to this undertaking.

Erratum. *Page 49. line 18. for was, read were;*

*F I N I S.*

