

or sonship in Christ, they were secretly justified, so that God's people, while in nature, are a justified people; which justification is a secret hid in Christ, until the period arrives for the objects of ancient choice to know it; and this knowledge is brought about by the Holy Ghost, leading the soul to know its condemnation by the law, and giving faith to realize interest in the righteousness of Christ. It is because faith apprehends justification through the righteousness of Christ, that we are said to be "justified by faith." Not that faith in itself is meritorious, but it goes forth in its exercise upon that which is meritorious, namely, Christ's righteousness; and as this righteousness is revealed in the soul, so its effects will be conspicuous, in a greater or less degree, in the walk and conversation, by which we shall be justified before men. For this reason our works are said to justify us, that is, justify our profession before men, while justification before God is "through the righteousness of faith."

There can be no danger in this doctrine, for without imputed righteousness there is no going to heaven, and by it a sinner is exalted far above angels, while he shines in the perfection of Jesus, and at humble distance "crowns him Lord of all." Neither can this doctrine have an unholy tendency, for what can enhance the beauty of holiness more than being enrolled in perfection itself?

Another fruit growing in the land of grace, is
ADOPTION.

By nature all Adam's children, like their fallen parent, "hide behind the trees in the garden,"

preferring any situation but his presence in "whose favour is life." Indifference, worldly cares, infidelity, pride, morality, external religion, duties, respectability, immorality, hypocrisy, a good name, false hopes of heaven, forms of godliness, and other abominations, are so many trees behind which we all naturally hide: but "there is a set time to favour Zion," therefore God's people must be brought away from these "beggarly elements," and "because they are sons, God sends forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father." Not that the children of God, when they first have this spirit of adoption, can plainly say "Father," but "Father" is the essence of that variety of feelings, exercises, and desires, which characterize the new-born soul. The babe in grace feels, but cannot describe his feelings; he sees, but it is so little, he is afraid to speak of it; yea, is unable to tell either what he sees or what he feels; he is uncomfortable with the world, the breathings of his soul run in an holy channel, he thirsts for righteousness, and so little is his knowledge, that he expects the righteousness he needs to come from himself. But the more his expectations and pursuit of happiness abound, the more he discovers the shallowness of his own works, the emptiness of his prayers, and the poverty of his own goodness. Resolutions have been often broken through, promises forgotten, vow after vow made, but weakness and emptiness have always been the result. The holy law of God is opened up in its spirituality and extent, he beholds himself lost without a righteousness equal to its demands, and a perfection equal to its ex-

tent. In vain he strives to keep it, at every fresh attempt he is constrained to cry "My leanness, my leanness." The evil of sin, the weakness of self, the justice of God, the holiness of his law, and his desert as a sinner, are things that more and more conspicuously appear, till, wretched and forlorn, he cries, "Save, Lord, or I perish." Here we behold a bruised sinner, bruised by God laying sin upon a spiritual conscience, applying the law to a spiritual understanding, and revealing justice to a spiritual mind. And he who wounds alone can heal, by a revelation of the life treasured up in Christ. Therefore the Holy Ghost, who in the commencement of this work in the soul, put that which is the principle of faith, namely, life into the man, now gives or draws into exercise this blessed grace, by which the "captive exile hastens to the cross of Calvary, that he may be loosed:" there he realizes interest in the precious blood of Christ, by which his guilt is all removed; appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and takes it as his own, while Jesus' person is beheld as altogether lovely. Passed from death to life, he is sealed an heir of heaven, and can boast of glory yet to come! Clad in a robe of righteousness, without a spot, wrought out by Jesus, how he sings! Washed in the crimson fountain of a Saviour's blood, all pure he shouts for joy! while Abba, Father, dwells upon his tongue. And, like dear Simeon, with the Saviour in his arms, the loosened sinner cries, "Let now thy servant die, mine eyes have seen thy great salvation." All his legal fetters broken, he triumphs in the righteousness of Christ. The dull knell of "do,

do," that formerly issued from the Arminian caverns, now is changed for "it is done," "it is finished." And though after this he gets benighted, tried, and tossed about by enemies, yet when he receives an earnest of his interest in the Son of God, his fears are sure to fly, doubts sure to vanish, the devil must sneak off, the world must be forgotten, troubles will be lost sight of, wretchedness will be removed, "the king will be seen in his beauty, the land beheld that is very far off," and Abba, Father, cried with holy confidence. What is the danger of adoption? It endangers free-will heresy, Arminian vanities, and creature exaltation. But does not endanger Jesus' crown, but puts it on his head. It does not endanger holiness, but sings of it. It does not lead to sin, but triumphs over it.

Another fruit is,

THE NEW BIRTH. By which I mean, a sinner dead in trespasses and sins quickened by the Holy Ghost, and brought forth into spiritual life. Before this happy change takes place the thoughts are vain, the affections vile, the desires sinful, the judgment erring, the memory strong and retentive of what is evil, but weak in what is good, the conscience hard, the understanding dark, the will perverse, and the whole mind enmity against God: but by the invincible work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration, the thoughts are raised to heaven, the desires purified, the affections spiritualized, the conscience softened, the understanding enlightened, the will bent, and every faculty of the soul turned into a new and holy channel. It is from this newness of life in the souls of the redeemed, that faith, hope, and

prayer proceed. Without this mighty work in the soul, no other doctrinal truth can be rightly known or duly appreciated; no warfare with the world, the flesh, or the devil felt, or burden of sin groaned under; no promise received or consolation understood; no joy in the Holy Ghost known, or heavenly-mindedness experienced. But where the "washing of regeneration" has taken place, the truth as it is in Christ becomes the pursuit of the soul. Sin is felt as a grievous load, the world is discovered to be a wilderness, the heart is found to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," while the heart breathes after God. Christ says, "Ye must be born again," and "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii.

There can be no danger in this doctrine, for it is the gate of entrance into the kingdom of God's grace, the portal to gospel knowledge, the inlet to true repentance, and the translation from the "power of darkness into the marvellous light of God's dear Son."

And another fruit of grace is,

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF ALL THE REGENERATE.

By this they escape the pollution that is in the world through lust, overcome every difficulty, and ultimately conquer every foe. This, their perseverance, however, does not depend upon themselves, but upon the Lord, for their "life is hid with Christ in God;" and Christ says to his people, "He" (the Holy Ghost) "dwelleth with you, and shall be in you;" and God the Father says, "A vineyard of red wine, sing unto it, I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any

hurt it I will keep it night and day," Isaiah xxvii. In consequence, therefore, of the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the perpetual keeping and watering of the Father, and the immutable efficacy of the Saviour's work, "the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" learning, as they go forward, to "mortify," "crucify," "put off," and "lay aside" the old man with his affections and lusts. Wherein lies the danger of this doctrine? Blessed be God, the very nature of perseverance is to overcome everything that is dangerous and unholy. So that the happy partakers of grace prove victorious over all their enemies within and without, and death itself only proves the harbinger of eternal day.

" Then not the sun shall more than I
His maker's will perform ;
Nor shine with brighter purity,
Nor burn with zeal so warm." *

Thus, reader, I have presented thee with a view of some of those precious doctrines of God's word, frequently called "dangerous." But where lies their danger? Nowhere but in a pharisee's brains, which is the devil's foundry for most of the lying speeches made against the grace of God, for "the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy and to utter error against the Lord; to make empty the soul of the hungerer after a free grace salvation," Isaiah xxxii. But let these vile persons recollect that the doctrines of grace are the doctrines of the Bible, and therefore the

* I do not know the author, or would have affixed his name.

doctrines of God; concerning whom we read that "he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," but if the doctrines of God tempt or lead men to sin, then God leads to sin, so that our opponents have ratified in their character those words, "He that rolleth a stone it shall return upon him," Prov. xxvi. 27. for they often but very falsely say, we who love free grace, make God the author of sin, whereas they make "God the author of sin," who charge the doctrines of God with having a "licentious tendency." Contrary to what they affirm, we find these doctrines are holy, heavenly, and spiritual in all their parts, branches, and effects. But it may be asked, "why is it seeing the doctrines of grace are really doctrines according to godliness, that some men who profess to love them and zealously defend them, live in sin." Some there may be of this stamp, but they know the doctrines speculatively not vitally; theoretically not unctiously; notionally in the head not savingly in the heart. But the doctrines of grace even speculatively known, forbid sin; therefore, it is not from knowing these doctrines that men sin: it is because these doctrines having no reigning power or sweetening efficacy in their hearts, notwithstanding their profession, they still remain "dead in trespasses and sins." For to say the doctrines of grace have a sinful tendency, is as reasonable as affirming the sun produces cold, or the moon darkness. And to attempt to root up all the empty professors, daring hypocrites, and almost Christians, who force themselves into the communion of God's saints on earth, would be doing that which

Christ has commanded us not to do, for saith he, "Let the tares and the wheat both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather my wheat into my barn," Matt. xiii. —Thus God has ordered it, and who can disannul it? Ishmael shall dwell under the same roof as Isaac; Esau be in the same womb with Jacob; and the Samaritans live near the Jews. Paul had an Alexander to trouble him; Peter an Annanias and Sapphira; and John a Diotrephes. But Paul, Peter, and John, preached the doctrines of grace notwithstanding, and were no Antinomians either. And look to what fellowship of Christians we may, some tares are sure to be growing, for even Christ in his little company had a Judas. These facts, however, do not make God's children run from the truth, but in the Lord's hand constrain them to cling more steadfastly to it. So that when many of the nominal disciples of Christ "go back, and walk no more with him" in the paths of grace, they cry, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life."

If there is a place of worship where the grace of God is faithfully preached, it is often said with much contempt, by the fashionable professors around, "none but poor people go there;" "it is not a respectable congregation." Very true; but this does not establish the assertion that the doctrines of grace are "dangerous." "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" And such

ministers as are surrounded with a people who love the truth in the life and power of it, however despised as "poor" in this world, and "not respectable," are more like Christ than they are, who, perpetually encompassed with the wealthy and the great, forget the dignity of the office they profess to hold: for Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," and he had only poor fishermen for his first disciples; and those who chiefly composed his retinue on earth were the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind. But it is said, "most people speak against that preaching which savours of so much grace." Very true; but it is the multitude who are walking in the broad road; therefore this does not prove the doctrines of grace dangerous to God and godliness; though very dangerous to the devil's schemes, priestcraft, and free-will, which latter has the most votaries because the most natural. And while the children of God are reckoned the "filth of the earth," they are to God his precious jewels, — his special treasure, — his everlasting delight.

Reader, what does thy heart say to these things? If thou art a careless, thoughtless infidel, living without any profession at all, thou will think what thou hast now read not worth thy concern; but remember, without a soul-interest in them, everlasting woe will be thy portion. If thou art an empty professor, knowing the doctrines in the head and not in the heart, thou hast in the perusal satisfied thy notions and thy fancy, while thy soul has neither tasted the sweetness, nor known the strengthening virtue, of "the doctrines of grace." If

thou art an almost Christian, thou wilt not approve of it, because I have not been moderate enough. If thou art a Pharisee, thou wilt hate what I have said in it more than thou dost sin or the devil, because it is not palatable to thy self-righteous nature. If thou art a broken-hearted sinner, thou wilt hail the truth, knowing it to possess healing virtue; thou wilt be panting after it as the only thing that can comfort or strengthen thee in thy distressing moments. If thou art an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile, thy desires will be going out after it as the life of thy soul; and if thou canst not say, "My beloved is mine and I am his," thou canst say, "That I may know him" in the efficacy of his grace, "and the power of his resurrection" in my soul, "for I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," whom I long to call "my Lord." Then be assured thou dost not only know the doctrines of grace, but what is better still, the grace of the doctrine. And "what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter."