

Editor's Note: This document represents the continuation the "Appeals to the Unconverted" document, being part two, with that being part one. This was taken from letters published in The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record (1864 issue). They consist of a series of letters between B. B. Wale and J. E. Cracknell on duty faith. In consequence of those published letters a letter, published in pamphlet form was written by Mr. Dixon Burn to Mr. J. E. Cracknell in support of Duty-Faith. In a Postscript Mr. Dixon takes up the matter of James Wells' book "The Moral Government of God". This document presents the information in this pamphlet and one response to the Postscript from The Voice of Truth or Strict Baptist Magazine, March 1865. The Voice of Truth Strongly supports Wells' position. The Voice of Truth was first published in 1863. According to Curt Wildy in his posted article titled "A Brief Review of Strict Baptist Periodicals (UK) (May 7, 2010) the editor was probably Thomas Wall and the articles were based on the tradition of John Gill and John Brine in opposition to the Gospel Standard and the Earthen Vessel's viewpoint.

Mr. Philpot wrote a scathing review of Mr. Wells' work, on "The Moral Government of God," in the Gospel Standard for March 1841, pages 76-84. Philpot's review is available from the Gospel Standard Press as part of the collection of Gospel Standard Magazines on DVD ([http://www.gospelstandard.org.uk/CDs-DVDs/Gospel-Standard-\(1835-2008\)-on-DVD](http://www.gospelstandard.org.uk/CDs-DVDs/Gospel-Standard-(1835-2008)-on-DVD)). To my knowledge the 1841 edition of the Gospel Standard is not in the public domain. Mr. Dixon's Postscript is in support of Philpot's review. The response from The Voice of Truth contains substantial quotes from Philpot's review. Wells' book, "The Moral Government of God" is posted on this website (<http://surreytabernaclepulpit.com/>) and a PDF screen print of the same work can be found at the Mount Zion Web site: (<http://www.mountzionrarebookspbc.org/PDF%20BOOKS/James%20Wells/Moral%20Government%20of%20God%20by%20JW.htm>).

Appeals to the Unconverted- Part 2

Contents

APOSTOLIC PREACHING:	1
POSTSCRIPT.....	7
Review of how and what are we to preach (Apostolic Preaching)	10

APOSTOLIC PREACHING:

A LETTER from Mr. Dixon Burn to Mr. J. E. Cracknell

Or

MR B. B. WALE REVIEWED; AND THE VIEWS HOLDEN BY

MR PHILPOT, MR FOREMAN, AND M R. JAMES WELLS,
BRIEFLY CONSIDERED.

To the Editor of "THE EARTHEN VESSEL."

DEAR MR EDITOR,—TO Mr. Wale's first letter I replied, to his second I simply sent a note correcting his misquotation of my letter, and repeating my determination, formed at the first, not to continue a controversial correspondence.

To this determination I adhere, although strongly tempted by the two last letters to reply.

However, the enclosed communication I unexpectedly received from Mr. Dixon Burn; and believing that it will remove wrong impressions, and make plain the teaching of Scripture on the subject, I send it, asking the favor of its insertion.

Yours sincerely, J. E. CRACKNELL. ROSE VILLA, LECKHAMPTON, CHELTENHAM.

HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING, Nov. 10, 1864.

MY DEAR SIR,—Seeing how much you have been misrepresented by Mr. Wale, in the "Earthen Vessel," I feel constrained to write you a letter of sympathy. Knowing myself how much I have suffered from the prejudices of zealous men, I know how to feel for you.

I assure you, Sir, your first letter in the "Vessel" is so clear and intelligible, that no one willing to understand it can fail to see your meaning; and how Mr. W., in his reply, can shew himself so ignorant thereof, I cannot conceive. To say the least, he evidently is not careful of misrepresenting you. On which account I think you are perfectly justifiable in discontinuing the controversy.

You never quoted J. Calvin and others to prove the truth of your doctrine, as Mr. W. affirms, but for a very different reason; namely, to shew, however Mr. W. and others may condemn you for teaching things pregnant with error, that you are yet in good company, even with those very men whom they themselves extol as champions of the truth. And if they condemn you for preaching a "yea and nay gospel," they must condemn these worthies also. If you are a "Duty faith man," these must be so too. But if your brethren accept them as "men of truth," they cannot reject you as a "man of error," for preaching the same things with them.

You are particularly careful to say that, "the opinions of uninspired men are not to be taken as our authority." But ignoring all this, like a man that is dull of hearing, Mr. W. says you do take them for your authority. How can you reply to any one so painfully absent as this?

Mr. W. says you assert that saving faith is a duty. But I find no such thing in your letter. Your words are these,—"If it be a sin to reject Christ, is it not a duty to receive Him? If unbelief be a

sin, then must not faith be a duty?" But "saving faith" is an undefined phrase which confuses the question, and ought not to be used without a particular definition. We do not say that "saving faith" is a duty, but, to believe that we may be saved. Saving faith, if we may allow the phrase, is that which God gives; and it is no man's duty to have what God sovereignly bestows. We say, it is man's duty to obey God's command in the gospel, which charges us to believe in His Son; but duty finds man without will and power, so it precedes God's gift, and prepares the way for it.

Again, Mr. W. misrepresents you in the October number, glorying over you as a fallen chief, chafed and broken. And why? Because you are indignant at his painful misrepresentations. Surely a man may cry aloud when he is trodden upon without being accused of anger. You told him exactly where he had perverted your words; but instead of apologizing for the injustice, he accuses you of anger, and goes on uncourteously to tread upon your toes again. But enough of this. It is a light offence to misrepresent you. But to misconstrue the Word of God is of mighty importance.

Now that Mr. W. misconstrues the Apostle's meaning in 2 Cor. v. 20, is easily shewn. First, by the context it is evident that Paul is declaring the nature of the ministry which he had received, in which is comprehended a testimony and command—a testimony concerning the Son of God as the way of reconciliation, and a command, or exhortation, for sinners of the world, Jews and Gentiles, to be reconciled to Him in this way. As if he had said, "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to know that God was in Christ, reconciling the world, Jews and Gentiles, unto himself, not 'imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed this ministry to us. We are his ambassadors. As though God did call to the world by us, we, in Christ's stead, preach to all men, Jews and Gentiles, 'Be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' " Second, Paul's meaning is obvious by parallel scriptures, where he is speaking of the same thing, and uses a different form of words. Rom. xvi. 25, 26. He speaks of the gospel which was committed to him, and calls it "my gospel,—according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Now mark, it is the commandment of God that is to be preached to all nations that sinners may obey it. What in the former place he terms "being reconciled to God," he here calls "the obedience of faith." And that which be there puts in the form of a command, he here tells us is the commandment of the everlasting God.

Now, can anyone suppose that the gospel testimony concerning Jesus Christ is without a command, or that one can be fully and faithfully preached without the other? The command is as essential to the testimony as the testimony is to it. Without a command there can neither be obedience nor disobedience to it. It is because God has commanded sinners to believe in His Son, that believing is obedience, and unbelief is disobedience to the Gospel. As without the law commanding there can be no such thing as sin, so without the command of the New Testament, which bids men to believe, there can be no such thing as the sin of unbelief; no, not in any sense whatsoever. Is it not evident, if God had not in the gospel commanded sinners to believe in His Son, that they would have had neither warrant nor obligation to obey?

And what is the commandment of the everlasting God? Let John answer:—"This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Let Jesus answer:—"This is the work of God (the labor that I have exhorted you to do) that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." Thus we see clearly there is a command, and we know by these infallible witnesses

what that command is. This is the one great command of the New Testament which briefly comprehends all, in keeping which, through grace, we keep all others; and whosoever disobeys this, keeps none. It is expressed and declared in different forms ;—sometimes by “seeing,” by “hearing,” and “believing ;” at others by “repenting,” by “turning,” by “coming,” and “receiving,” according to its nature, its different acts, and works,—but the commandment is one. Now, if we examine Paul’s preaching, or Peter’s, or our Lord’s, or John’s, or the prophets’, we find that they all preached this command, or their preaching was according to it.

First of all, let me call your attention to God’s testimony concerning His Son, in the holy mount. When God proclaimed the law and testimony from Sinai, there were two or three persons —— Moses, Aaron, and, I think, Joshua—called up to the mount, near to the thick darkness and the voice of words, that they might be especial witnesses thereof. So, when God proclaimed His testimony concerning His Son and the great command belonging to it, there were three persons— Peter, James, and John—called up to the “holy mount,” near to the bright cloud and the heavenly voice, that they might bear witness to it. Then came there a voice from the excellent glory, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear he speaks exactly the same thing. 1st, Here is the Father’s testimony that Jesus is the Son of God. 2d, The Father is well pleased, or reconciled, in Him and, 3d, A command to hear, or believe in Him. This is the testimony and the commandment that is to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. He that bears Christ obeys this command. He that will not hear Him is disobedient to the voice which spoke from heaven, and is to be destroyed from among the people. Paul’s gospel is according to this command. When God spoke for Himself, He proclaimed it; and when Paul speaks in His stead, he preaches the same thing.

This is the same command which John came preaching, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” And all, as many as were baptized, were such as through grace obeyed this proclamation. They brought forth fruits meet for repentance. This is the command that Jesus came preaching, saying, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” And as many as were baptized, confessing their sins, and their faith in the Son of God, were such as through grace obeyed this call. This is the command that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, saying, “Repent, and be converted [be reconciled,] every one of you.” And as many as obeyed through grace this word, were baptized. So this is the same command that Paul preached on Mar’s Hill, saying, “But now God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.” And as many as through grace obeyed this command, were the fruits of his ministry among the Gentiles. Again, in Acts xxvi. 20, he is very explicit, and tells us his commission from God, what it was, namely, “To open blind eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” But by what means was this accomplished? Paul tells us thus: “Where upon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Thus we see this was the instrument of God’s power. It was by preaching that men should repent and turn to God, that God turned them from their idols to Himself, from their darkness to His light, and from Satan’s power to the power of Divine grace.

Observe, it was the same command he preaches here that he proclaimed on Mar’s Hill; and he puts it in such a form that there is no mistaking his meaning. If on the former occasion we may doubt, as some do, whether the command was laid upon them as an obligation to obey, in this place we

are at no loss ; for he plainly puts it thus : “ I shewed that they should repent and turn to God.” And not merely with an outward reformation, like the Pharisees who came to John’s baptism, but that they should do works meet for repentance. Observe also, the same command that was preached to the Jews was preached to the Gentiles. There was not one ministry for one, and another for another, as some would make us believe. This is a clear example of Paul’s preaching, and an exposition of his words, “We pray in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Why, does not a child see, that to turn to God is to be reconciled to Him? And the way to turn, is by repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. See how the prophet testifies the same thing. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Again, look at Acts xx. 21. Paul tells us again what was the nature of his ministry. He says, “I have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ah, say they, but testifying is not exhorting. Well, be it so. But Paul did exhort as well as testify. For this we need no better comment here, than his own explicit declaration elsewhere, namely, he shewed to the Jews and Gentiles that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. He is only declaring here in other words, the same things that he had proclaimed elsewhere.

Not like many of our preachers, who have a set form of words for everything, borrowed one of another, Paul varies his words in every place where he is speaking of the same thing, and, by this variety of expression, we come to know his meaning with the fullest certainty. And in each place we have his own comment upon his words—“Be ye reconciled to God.”

Again, look at Acts xiv. 5. He tells us again how he preached, saying, “We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth.” Let this be compared with Paul’s preaching elsewhere, and it will be seen without a doubt, that he is preaching the same command, and that he is testifying the same things, which he had proclaimed in all those places already referred to. Here he varies his words again, but his meaning is the same. Sometimes he only mentions repentance, at others he mentions repentance and faith, and here he names neither, but words which shew us exactly what repentance and faith is—namely, to turn from our vanities to the living God, as revealed in His Son. See how he lays it upon them—“We preach [this is the very thing we continually preach] that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God.” But was it a mere outward turning, as Mr. W. suggests? If it was, then this was all the repentance and faith that he testified of in every other place. For we read in every place where he tells us of what he preached, that this was its burden—“That they should repent and turn to God.” This he declared to the Jews, although they knew and outwardly revered the true God; and this he preached to the Gentiles, ' who knew him not. But what right has any one to limit Paul’s testimony, and reduce it to a mere outward washing, to level it with man’s lapsed condition? Is not the word of God spiritual, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart? If Jews and Gentiles are required merely to turn to God with an outward reformation, when the heart all the while retains its vanities, what sort of a turning is this? And what sort of a comment is this to put upon the command of God? He that thus interprets it, turns Paul into a mere moralist, and God’s word into a carnal letter. That an outward obedience is comprehended and first perceived in the words, is undoubtedly a truth, but the word of God searches deeper than this, even into the secret springs of the heart. “Let

the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Thus we have easily found what Mr. W. sought in vain, although it was scattered so thickly on the ground where he strode. And if any man can resist all this force of lucid Scripture testimony, I think he regards the word of men more than the testimony of God. But if they hear not God’s word, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead.

In conclusion, it is asked, Can a man dead in trespasses and sins reconcile himself to God? We answer, No,—decidedly no. But why does Mr. W. alter the words of the Holy Ghost which you use, to make you ridiculous, as if you taught that sinners should reconcile themselves to God? This is very unfair in Christian controversy. It is unrighteous. Is there no difference between saying, “Reconcile yourselves to God,” and saying, “Be ye reconciled?” God has already provided a reconciliation for sinners, and it is He, and not ministers, that commands sinners to submit to it, saying, Be ye reconciled to God.

But we say also that sinners cannot, or will not, turn to God. Why, then, does God call upon them to do so? Why, if I know not, what is that to me? Does the servant know what his lord doeth? Is it fit to say to God, when He bids His servants to proclaim His command; why, what is the use? If He bids His servants go to the place of the dead and cry, “Live, ye dead,” shall they answer and say, “It is of no use” Does not Mr. W. understand that the word of God, whether to saints or sinners, does not imply power in those that hear it; but it is the instrument of God’s power. It is by saying to sinners, “Be ye turned,” that He reproveth and turns them. See how the Lord speaks to Matthew, “Follow me;” did this imply power? No; but it did devolve duty. Nevertheless, not by duty but by grace, he left all and followed Jesus. See the disciples, how Jesus called them. See Zacchaeus, how the Lord commanded him to come down. Now, in all these cases we see two things, an outward command and an inward power. The command devolved duty on those that heard it; but the inward power was God’s sovereign gift. God could have called them without His Word, but He did not. His Word is the instrument of His power,—a two-edged sword to wound and to heal. So in the gospel testimony, God’s command is not to find power and willingness in sinners, but to seek sinners out, by reproveth them, and convincing them of their want of power and willingness. And when it has found the sinners out, then it gives to them a special call, accompanied with Divine power, to turn to the Lord our righteousness.

When the gospel comes to men dead in trespasses and sins, there is not one of them sinners in their own eyes. They say they see, they hear, they believe, they are righteous. But where the command comes in its spirituality, and says, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and finds them looking at their own vanities, then they that see are made blind. Thus the outward command is good, because by it souls are reproveth of sin, because they believe not.

If so, if it be God’s instrument to convince and to convert, ministers should preach it, that God may make use of it in their ministry. God could call sinners without the outward command, but He does not; it is the instrument of His power. However, let everyone stand in awe, for who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God. Let no man put his own exhortations in the place of God’s command. Confusion is sure to follow. Then comes in Arminian cant like a flood. But if God’s testimony and command be kept faithfully in view, there can be no confusion. God’s

command is the voice of Jesus that raises the dead, but man's exhortations imply ability to do what no man can. There is a sacred majesty in the command of God that makes sinners stand in awe; but for one man to exhort another to do what he never did for himself, is contemptible. God has a right to command and exhort, though men have lost the power to obey, but man over man has no such authority. It was not Paul, but Christ in Paul, that said, "Be ye reconciled to God."

I have written much more than I intended, but the subject opening clearly before me, I could not pause. If this be of any service to you, you are welcome to it. May God accompany it with His power.—I am, Dear Sir, yours in the faith of Christ,

DIXON BURN.

Mr. Cracknell, Cheltenham, Minister of the Gospel, Leckhampton.

POSTSCRIPT.

I am not the only person that has testified against those views on the duty of faith, and general exhortations, taught by Mr. Wells and Mr. Foreman, these two princes amongst ultra-Calvinists. Mr. Philpot, editor of the Gospel Standard, has borne a faithful testimony against them. But he that only cries against a great error once in twenty years, is not likely to make a deep impression. While these two men, with great diligence for many years, have established their views in all the leading churches, holding firmly the doctrines of grace, (till the appearing of the renowned Mr. Spurgeon,) those entertained by Mr. Philpot are hardly known, even by the readers of the Standard themselves. Yea, they have gone the way of Mr. Wells and Mr. Foreman; and now, the editor will have some danger in recalling the wandering sheep, lest they butt him with their heads, and wound him with their horns.

There is a review of Mr. Wells' work, on "The Moral Government of God," in the Gospel Standard for March 1841, pages 76-84. As it has immediate relation to the subject of this letter, and is really of great excellence, I here give an extract from it.

You will perceive that there is some difference between Mr. Philpot's views, as here explained, and mine. But Mr. Philpot's thoughts have undergone a change in twenty years. Then it appears, he was one of those who believe that the Bible is a family book, and the gospel only for the elect. But in the late numbers of the Standard he withdraws from this ground; and tells us plainly, that the non-elect have to do with the gospel; for "he that believeth not shall be damned;" and that men are condemned by the gospel, not only as infidels, but as unbelievers, because they believe not God's testimony. In short, if there be now any difference between Mr. Philpot's views and mine, I know it not. I cannot discern the difference. Mr. Philpot, in reviewing Mr. James Wells' "Moral Government of God," after extensive criticisms, says:—

“We must consider, that Mr. Wells, by either not seeing, or if seeing, neglecting the fundamental distinction between men generally, and the children of Israel particularly, has laid down a rule of interpretation for general exhortations, which will not apply to the greater part of those in the Old Testament, that is, three parts of the sacred volume.

“But we will now go a step further, and express our conviction that Mr. Wells’ rule of interpretation will not apply to the general exhortations contained in the New Testament. Mr. Wells seems to think that there can be no medium between the system that he opposes, which asserts natural men to have the power to believe, repent, and obey spiritually, and his own, which denies that power, and resolves all the general exhortations in the Scripture into calls to moral reformation. He therefore labors hard to prove that there are no general calls to the performance of spiritual acts, and that the exhortation to ‘repent and believe the gospel’ means nothing more than a call to natural faith and natural repentance. He finds, however, one very intractable passage, ‘Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting,’ (John vi. 27,) which he is forced to admit was addressed to the carnal multitude. The words ‘meat which endureth unto everlasting life’ are a sad stumbling-block to him, but at last he boldly proposes this as the meaning of the passage:—‘Well, then, what is the conclusion to which we must come’ Is it not that he exhorted them to labor for that instruction which should better their present moral and social condition, and likewise mitigate future punishment’s. The instruction thus obtained and followed out would be to them of everlasting use, and in this sense endure to everlasting life,’ (p. 87.) If this is not misinterpretation, we know not what misinterpretation is. But such is the usual effect of a theory. Like the iron bed of the ancient robber, every text must fit the standard if too long, it must have its head and feet cut off; if too short, the rack must be applied and the limbs stretched, till text and theory are of equal length.

“But this is not the only passage that stands as an iron pillar against Mr. Wells’ system, nor the only text that refuses to be melted in his crucible. What shall we say to the two following passages, and one (Acts iii. 19) which we have quoted lower, down?

“‘While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light’ (John xii. 36.) Is not spiritual faith here spoken of? Are not ‘the children of light’ especially opposed to ‘the children of this world?’ (Luke xvi. 8.) And do we not become ‘manifestly the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus?’ (Gal. iii. 26.) But were not those to whom it was addressed persons in a natural state? For proof that they were, see context, verses 37-41. Again: ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able,’ (Luke xiii. 24.) Who can deny that this referred to spiritual striving? and yet that it was addressed to natural persons is plain from the context. (See verses 25-28.) Will Mr. Wells widen this ‘strait gate’ into the gate of profession, as he has carnalised ‘the meat that endureth for everlasting life’ into ‘meat for the mind,’ (p. 85,) which if properly swallowed, and thoroughly digested, will insure for its recipient a less hot place in hell!

“Now, our firm conviction is, that there are many exhortations to spiritual actions used generally, in both Old and New Testament; but we believe that they are neither founded, as the Wesleyans and general Calvinists say, on the salvability of man and the universality of the atonement, not upon human responsibility, and as a part of God’s moral government, according to Mr. Wells’ views. Admitting, in their fullest extent, both God’s moral government and man’s responsibility,

we consider the gospel as a special revelation to the elect, and therefore distinct from either one or the other. We do not deny that man's responsibility is increased by there being in the gospel a clearer revelation (witnessed by miracles and other evidences that are appreciable by natural men) of God's anger against sin, according to those words, (Rom. i., 18) 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' But viewed as a special revelation of mercy and grace to the elect seed, we consider the gospel as quite distinct from either God's moral government or man's responsibility. If so, then all the spiritual exhortations connected with the gospel will be equally distinct, and will be founded, not upon man's responsibility, but upon God's eternal purposes of mercy to a chosen remnant. And now comes what we believe to be the true solution of exhortations to spiritual actions addressed, in the Old and New Testaments, to natural men. We look upon these exhortations, invitations, calls, and so on, to be lodged in the Scriptures as in a vast reservoir and magazine of truth, out of which the blessed Spirit, from time to time, takes such portions as He sees fit to quicken, convince, teach, rebuke, or comfort the spiritual seed. For instance, the Lord said, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' This exhortation might have been blessed to elect souls at the time it dropped from His gracious lips, but whether it was or not, it has been lodged by the Holy Spirit in the vast magazine of truth, the sacred Scriptures. Here, then, it stands as a sword in the scabbard in that heavenly armory, wholly and solely for the Spirit's use, who, as He sees fit, employs it to divide between soul and spirit and joints and marrow. Who shall say there are not thousands to whom that text has been useful? Who can say it has not been a means of quickening hundreds into spiritual life? Here, then, we find the use of these general exhortations, corresponding with that text, (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17,) 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God'.

"But to this view it may be objected, that spiritual exhortations to natural men must be absurd, they having no power to perform spiritual actions. This seems to be so convincing an argument to Mr. W., that he considers all such exhortations, if such were their drift, to be 'useless,' (p. 85 ;) and that it would be to 'mock men, and trifle with them, tauntingly, and, with apparent sincerity, tell them to do impossibilities,' (p. 87.) But surely we may reply, are there any spiritual exhortations in the Epistles to regenerate characters to perform spiritual actions, such as, 'Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies' (Col. iii. 12)? Now, are spiritual men one whit more able to perform spiritual actions than natural men, unless the Lord work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure? Can regenerate men put on bowels of mercies any more than natural men, unless the Lord the Spirit work in them? If exhortations to natural men to perform spiritual actions are 'useless and trifling' because they have no power to do them, then are exhortations to spiritual men equally useless and trifling, for sure we are that they have no power to do them. This argument, then, cuts two ways, and, in fact, is worthless, as proving too much. They may be not 'useless,' because Mr. W. does not see their use, nor 'trifling' because he cannot discern their import and beauty. Well, then, they stand upon the same footing as far as man's ability is concerned. But our solution of the difficulty provides for both classes of exhortations, namely, those to natural men, and those to spiritual men.

"The Spirit, in His word, bids spiritual men 'rejoice in the Lord always.' Can they do it? No, not unless He puts joy into their hearts. The same Spirit says generally, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' Can natural men either rightly strive or rightly enter in, No But the Spirit takes this exhortation out of the vast reservoir of truth, applies it to the soul of some elect vessel, and gives him ability to strive as well as to enter in.

“But now comes another question: ‘Are ministers allowed to employ similar exhortations now?’ to which, if our solution of the difficulty be correct, the answer is easy. Do ministers now stand in that position that their words shall ever become part of the sacred volume, or can they feel that they use them under special inspiration? No. If they were to use them, they would do so conscious of their impotency, and might as well imitate Peter in bidding the lame beggar rise up and walk, as imitate the apostles in exhortations to repent and believe the gospel.

“We look, then, upon exhortations, both general and special, as a part, and a very necessary and blessed part of the sacred volume, and to be used by the Spirit just in the same manner as promises, doctrines, and so on, for the edification of the Church of God.

“Whether our solution be correct or not, whether it remove the difficulty or not, must be left; but we put it forward as a nearer approximation to clearing up an acknowledged enigma than Mr. Wells’ attempt to reconcile general exhortations with free grace principles. It is, at any rate, free from an objection that runs through all Mr. Wells’ theory, viz., that he is obliged to make all the general exhortations to repentance and faith calls to natural acts, and that their sole end is reformation of life and mitigation of future punishment. Now, we are sure that no simple-minded believer reading the exhortations in the New Testament would consider them merely calls to natural acts, in order to have future punishment mitigated. What would he think of so interpreting Peter’s exhortation: ‘Repent ye, therefore, and be ye converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord,’ (Acts iii. 19.) This should have been thus expressed, according to Mr. Wells’ view: ‘Be sorry naturally for your sins and reform your lives, in which case, though you will still be eternally punished, yet you will not be so much punished as the rest.’ How does this tally with ‘sins being blotted out,’ and ‘the times of refreshing coming from the presence of the Lord’?

Review of how and what are we to preach (Apostolic Preaching)

The voice of truth March 1865 Page 68ff

How, and what are we to preach A Letter from Mr. Dixon Burn to Mr. J. E. Cracknell; or, Mr. B. B. Wale Reviewed, and the Views holden by Mr. Philpot, Mr. Foreman, and Mr. James Wells briefly considered. J. Paul, Chapter-house-court.

From the suggestive title this pamphlet bears, it may be inferred that some variety exists in the opinions of men concerning the manner and matter of pulpit ministrations. All allow that it is the gospel that should be preached, and that it should be preached in a manner becoming its dignity, greatness, objects and ends; but what the gospel is, either in itself or its relations, and what is the best way of holding it forth, are points on which all men are not agreed. The present pamphlet, consisting of twelve pages, is addressed to Mr. J. E. Cracknell, a young gentleman who, some

time since, left Blackheath and the faith he had there preached, for a new faith in a new place, where we hope he will continue, till, like a weathercock, he shall rust and fix, and cease to turn from one point to another by the force of metallic currents. Mr. Wale, though having evinced certain signs of mental susceptibility himself, if we mistake not, sought to restore, instruct, or chastise this youthful defaulter in the faith, by a couple of ill-considered letters, which appeared in the "Earthen Vessel," as part and parcel of its miscellaneous cargoes. Mr. Dixon Burn, whose feathers had been recently ruffled by a stray shot from Manchester, came down like an eagle from his eyrie in Houghton-le-Spring, on Nov. 10, 1864, struck his talons into some of the soft parts of his victim, picked his letters to pieces, and soothed his young friend by demonstrating that he was near who justified him.

Flushed by the success of this fell swoop, Mr. Dixon Burn publishes a postscript — not quite so long as his letter, but quite long enough for a letter, in which he compares Mr. Wells and Mr. Foreman with Mr. Philpot, contrasts the two former with "the renowned Mr. Spurgeon," criticizes their views, and reprints a portion of a review which appeared in the "Standard." It is this portion of the pamphlet which we propose to examine, in connection with Mr. Burn's opinion of both it and its author. The review in question relates to a book published by Mr. J. Wells, on "the moral government of God," and the review itself appeared in the "Gospel Standard" for March, 1841, pp. 76—84,—a review which convinced us at the time we read it, that the author was not clear in the truth; and that his curdled criticisms and bitter reviling's, which not unfrequently had an oracular accentuation, combined with an imperious bearing towards men who knew much that he had never learned, and seems not yet to have acquired, were ominous of internal deficiency and boded sad things to come. At that time Mr. Philpot moved like a lord bishop among the Baptist churches,—denounced Baptist associations, especially those of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire,—frightened some of the pastors out of their propriety,—stigmatized them from the pulpit, and abused them in the "Standard," as letter-men, legalists, tyrants, and so on,—being all the while much more of a tyrant himself than the men whom he so bitterly condemned. Yet now this very man, in his doctrinal views, is so much like Mr. Dixon Burn that Mr. Dixon Burn does not know him from himself! For "if there be now," says Mr. Burn, p. 8, "any difference between Mr. Philpot's views and mine, I know it not. I cannot discern the difference." "Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen."

Mr. Dixon Burn considers the review of Mr. Wells' book in the "Standard" to be "really of great excellence," yet containing some difference between Mr. Philpot's views and his own. "But Mr. Philpot's views," he adds, "have undergone a change in twenty years. Then, it appears, he was one of those who believe that the Bible is a family book, and the gospel only for the elect. But in the late numbers of the Standard he withdraws from this ground, and tells us plainly that the non-elect have to do with the gospel; for 'he that believeth not shall be damned;' and that men are condemned by the gospel, not only as infidels, but as unbelievers, because they believe not God's testimony;" p. 8. Now as we confess to the sin of not reading the Standard," and submit to the heresy this negligence is supposed to imply, so must we accept as true Mr. Burn's statement respecting the change Mr. Philpot's views are alleged to have undergone,—just remarking that the change is partly, at least, legitimate and consequential. Mr. Philpot may have seen reasons for changing his ground of moral obligation, and have adopted Mr. Wells' theory of the moral government of God as the foundation of moral agency and human responsibility; but the ground he took in his review involved conclusions inimical to the truth, and to his own theory as well.

Mr. Huntington, whom Mr. Philpot, in the early part of his dissenting career, lauded to the skies, had said that men were "cursed by the law and damned by the gospel." He believed Adam was a spiritual man before he fell, and was smartly handled on that point by a country minister, then living at Needingworth in Huntingdonshire, who wrote a pamphlet entitled, "The Ram's-horn Trumpeter," at which Mr. Huntington deigned to sneer, but to which he never replied. Mr. Philpot, who probably inherited by nature the lordly air and censorious spirit of Mr. Huntington, and who possibly thought he should reign as a king over the hyper-Baptists, who were "as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them," set up a "Standard" as an ensign for the people, around which many rallied—especially Huntingtonian Baptists, who complimented their new leader as the Queen of Sheba had complimented King Solomon. On this point, however—the pregnant point of Adam's original state, there was evidently a want of concord, and schism became inevitable. Mr. Wells crossed Mr. Philpot's path, and had the temerity to publish a book on "the moral government of God," for which the Editor of the "Standard" punished him by a review, occupying, if we mistake not, nearly one-third of the number for March, 1841. Clad in panoply complete, with measured pace and scowling brow, the Reviewer advanced from the armory of Oxford to flesh his maiden sword in the minister of Surrey Tabernacle. Strange to say, he had it all his own way. The author of the book laid passive at his feet, and the review originated no controversy. It was, however, obvious that Mr. Philpot had meddled with a question of great complexity and magnitude, for which he was neither morally nor intellectually competent, but from which perilous onslaught, from some cause or other, he had the rare good fortune to escape. Had the Reviewer been reviewed, he might have fared badly.

Mr. Wells had said that spiritual acts were not required of natural men, as such; and it was principally with the view of overturning this proposition, that the Reviewer penned the article to which Mr. Dixon Burn has called attention. After sundry animadversions on Mr. Wells' theory, the Reviewer proceeds to examine—much as Mr. Fuller had done before him—certain passages of Scripture, which he supposes implies or demands spiritual acts on the part of unregenerate men; and expresses his "firm conviction" that there are many "exhortations to spiritual actions used generally in both the Old and the New Testaments;" founded, not on God's moral government, nor on man's responsibility, "but upon God's eternal purposes of mercy to a chosen remnant." It is marvelous that Mr. Philpot should not have discerned the conclusions to which he hereby committed himself. It is remarkable also, that though the author of this review mostly insists upon Scripture for everything, and generally produces it for statements of his own, even when "eternal generation" is the subject, produces none in proof of this theory; except 2 Tim. iii. 16, which occurs in a parenthesis, towards the close of a paragraph, can be so called; but even this passage has no more to do with the essence of the question than a full moon with algebra, or grey eyes with the new birth. Instead of proofs, the reader is put off with illustrations, which prove nothing, but which Mr. Philpot has the extreme stolidity to call "the true solution of exhortations to spiritual actions, addressed, in the Old and New Testaments, to natural men." Yet these illustrations are so jumbled together, that they serve to confound rather than to assist the mind. We have a "reservoir," a "magazine," an "armory," and scabbards in which spiritual "exhortations, invitations, calls, and so on, are lodged wholly and solely for the Spirit's use." In other words, all mankind are exhorted to perform spiritual acts, and invited to a participation in

spiritual blessings, in order that the Holy Spirit may be provided with suitable means for saving the elect! Is this credible?

Page 118ff May 1865

It is the duty of natural men to perform spiritual acts? On this question there is much dispute; and Mr. Dixon Burns' pamphlet is intended to ventilate the subject. Some time since, Mr. Burns replied to a series of pieces from the pen of Mr. Foreman, which appeared in the pages of the Gospel Herald, and was subsequently gathered together into a thick pamphlet. Mr. Burns is by no means a despicable writer, nor is he, we are bound to say, a clear logician. He does not secure his premises before he draws his conclusions; and he reasons from analogy where no analogy exists.

It may help us if we go at once to the fountain of law, which contains two original rules of obligation, called moral and positive. The first is natural, necessary, universal, unchangeable, and endless: the second is sovereign, voluntary, limited, and capable of abrogation. Positive laws are to be obeyed precisely as they are enjoined. Those given for certain occasions; on those occasions, and no other. Those given to individuals; by those individuals, and no others. Those given to the Jews; by the Jews, and no others. Those given to the Apostles; by the Apostles, and no others. Those belonging to all Christians; by all Christians, and no others.

Moral law is the law of nature, and may be called natural law, because it springs from the nature of God, who commands, and corresponds to the pristine nature of man, who obeys. A mutable creature, under an immutable law, is bound by the immutability of that law, whatever changes his moral nature may undergo. He may lose his ability for duty, but not his relation to equity. Whatever dispositions and acts the law requires of any one man, it requires of all men who are under it: of one as much as another; for moral law is not based upon sovereignty, but upon equity. It represents the rights of their Lawgiver, not the bestowments of a benefactor. But it cannot exceed man's original capacity; for then it would require natural impossibilities, and cease to be natural. We conclude, therefore, that man's obligation is necessary, equitable, and perpetual; and whatever is the duty of man in an unregenerate state, that duty is determined by the law under which he was created, and stood up in his legal rights, with the image of God upon him. The fall has not altered the basis of his relationship to God, nor the rule of his obedience. He has lost his morality, but not his moral agency; his ability, but not his accountability. When, therefore, it is asked, "What is an unregenerate man's duty towards the gospel?" the proper reply is, To treat the message from his Maker, as we may suppose innocent Adam, or any innocent creature would have done, could he have been placed under a similar dispensation.

If this reasoning be just, it will follow that if spiritual acts are duties belonging to unregenerate men, they must be enjoined by the moral law as a rule of justification, for under no other law from God is an unregenerate man. The simple question, then, is this,—"Does the moral law, as a rule of obedience for justification, require the performance of spiritual acts?" understanding by spiritual acts such acts as are proper to persons raised up by a new birth into a vital union with Christ Jesus, in whom all spiritual ability is securely rooted. We think not. And we base our conclusion on the following grounds:—

1. The law of God cannot require natural impossibilities. This, as we have said, would deprave the character of moral law, and make it immoral; for to be unnatural and unjust is to be immoral. But to require spiritual acts without giving the principle essential to their production, is to require a natural impossibility.

2. Acts not required of man in his innocent state for justification, can hardly be supposed to be demanded of him in his fallen condition; for that would enlarge the measure of his obligation when his capacity was greatly lessened, which would be tyrannical and not equitable. But spiritual acts were not required of man in his innocent state, and therefore it is morally impossible that they should be required of him in his lapsed condition.

3. The law of nature, under which all are through Adam, knows nothing of Christ, and therefore could not require those acts which have special reference to him. Where an object is not revealed, an eye is not required.

4. If the law requires men to be justified by their own works, it cannot require them at the same time to be justified by the faith of Christ. To suppose both would be very absurd.

5. If the law once required perfection without a mediator, it seems impossible that it should now require perfection by one. Yet spiritual acts have to do with a mediator, and therefore could not be comprehended in the Edenic covenant.

6. Moral law, as such, and as it obliges through a federal relationship, demands nothing as a means of salvation; therefore it could not require faith in Christ, which is a means of salvation.

June Page 139ff

It was Mr. Fuller's opinion, and the opinion of others before his day, that unregenerate men, as such, elect and non-elect, were bound to have and exercise that faith in Christ, which issues in eternal salvation. Mr. Fuller ignored essential differences in faith, love, repentance, and holiness, thereby differing from Charnock, Owen, Goodwin, and others, who, though they held with external calls and universal exhortations, yet admitted and insisted upon the difference between things natural and spiritual, legal and evangelical. At the present time there are but few genuine Fullerites; the followers of Mr. Fuller having degenerated into open-communion Baxterians, represented by Mr. Hinton, Brock, Landels, and others. What Mr. Dixon is, in this respect, it is difficult to say. He is not a hyper-Calvinist, for this he appears to eschew; but he seems a sort of hyper-Fullerite, for he would hardly descend to the level of Fullerism, and must therefore be somewhere above it; but where, and how much, we shall not attempt to show.

In the number for May, we assigned some reasons for a contrary opinion to the one advanced by the author of "How, and what are we to preach?" intending to add a few more in the present month, which want of space compels us to forego. We will, therefore, only add that if none but the elect can be saved, and all who believe will be saved, it must be as impossible for the non-elect to believe as it is for them to be saved. One is not more so than the other; and if both are impossible, of what use are universal exhortations, or commands to unregenerate men for the performance of spiritual acts? Where is the *cui bono*? Mr. Dixon says this question is not

legitimate, and ought not to be put. But it may be subjoined, that no man is at liberty to invent a system which is contrary to reason, and then to charge God with his absurdity or his folly; especially if he appeals to reason in support of what he advances. If the principle of action must in every instance precede the act, the act can never precede the principle; and if the principle be a free gift, the obligation cannot be prior to the bestowment. If it be said, man lost this very principle by the fall, it may be replied, this is begging the question. It is basing the conclusion on disputed premises. And further, we venture to affirm, that if the premises were granted, the conclusion would not follow. For if the moral law of God requires no natural impossibility, which Mr. Fuller admits, and which every thinking man must confess, it will follow from this premises that the law does not require the fallen sons of Adam to reproduce what their great ancestor lost. Preservation was a duty: reproduction is not.

Mr. Burn says we are to be governed by the word of God. True. But does he think those who differ from him have a standard superior to this? Let him be assured they have not. "To the law, and to the testimony." Here we concur with the author. He says, however, he has scripture authority for his view of moral obligation and ministerial duty. Here we differ from him, and hesitate not to say that every one of the Scriptures he has quoted is susceptible of a different interpretation to that put upon it by Mr. Philpot and Mr. Burns. All scripture, being inspired of God, is consistent with itself, and must be explained according to the economy, or covenant to which it relates. If to the covenant of works, it relates to all men who are under it; if to the covenant of grace, it belongs to the elect only, whose characters are described; and if to the Jewish covenant, it must be explained accordingly. This last covenant was partly moral, partly ceremonial, and partly judicial. It was peculiar to the Hebrews. And to argue from the commands, exhortations, and various duties which belonged only to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, to universal obligation, is a manifest sophism. The same may be said of Mr. Philpot's argument, produced with approbation by Mr. Burn, namely, that it is no more absurd to exhort natural men to spiritual acts, on the ground of their inability, than it is to invite regenerate persons to spiritual acts, seeing they, too, are unable, without Divine aid, to act in a spiritual manner. But if a living dog is better than a dead lion, there must be a great difference between the living and the dead; and to argue from one to the other, where the functions of life are concerned, is sophistical. Let it be granted, that without union to Christ, believers can do nothing: it may be asked—"Are they ever exhorted to do anything independently of Christ and his Spirit?" Exhortations, commands, and invitations to spiritual acts, suppose vital interest in Christ, with radical and vital ability, through the Spirit, for the performance of enjoined acts. There is in the worst of seasons a radical, passive ability in all regenerate persons, which cannot be predicated of men dead in trespasses and sin. And to reason from the living to the dead, on a question of evangelical obligation, is illogical and deceptive. We are glad the Editor of the "Gospel Standard" has waked up to the importance of Scripture exhortations. We hope he will exhibit them in harmony with interest and relationship. But, taking Mr. Philpot for an honest man, it would not surprise us should he swing over to the duty-faith party. If he is going to work out the principles of his Review of Mr. Wells' book to their legitimate issue, he cannot stop short of the system we oppose.