

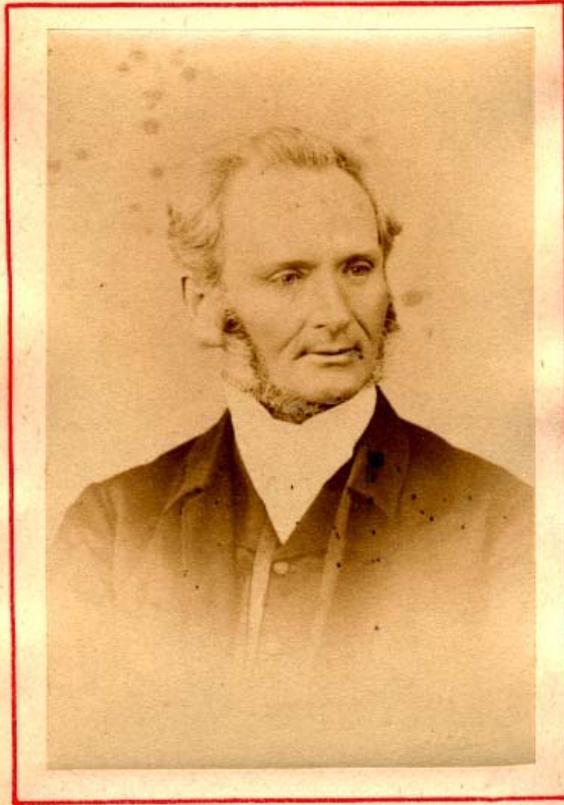
THE
“GRAVE QUESTION” CONSIDERED:
BEING A
REPLY TO MR. J. COX;
SHEWING THAT
INDISCRIMINATE COMMANDS
TO
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES,
AND
INDISCRIMINATE INVITATIONS
TO
SPIRITUAL PROVISIONS,
ARE
Not Authorized by the Word of God
BY ISRAEL ATKINSON.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:" JOHN vi. 44.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned :” 1 COR. 14.

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*Affectionately yours in Jesus
Israel Atkinson.*

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is intentionally controversial; and perhaps this announcement may be deemed a sufficient reason, with some, that they should not read it. This reason may be alleged by them from the best motives, and with the best intentions, but in itself it is weak and bad, and pregnant with evil consequences. Truth is valuable. "Buy the truth and sell it not." Part with it under no considerations. Contend earnestly for it against all contrary considerations. Truth is even more valuable than peace. It is for the truth's sake only that I have been induced to enter into the field of controversy. Truth is my friend. It was assailed,—I have defended it. Its beauty was defaced,—I have wiped away the blot. Its analogy was tacitly denied;—I have affirmed its symmetry. If controversy for the truth's sake is censurable, either error is harmless or truth worthless. I am not the aggressor, but the defendant. The reason of my appearing before the public in this character is simple.

Mr. Cox, of Woolwich, published some little time ago, "**A GRAVE QUESTION FOR ALL PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL;**" namely, "How does God *address the unconverted in his holy Word?*" Having cited six portions of Scripture, he requires three things to be observed respecting each of those Scriptures, the two principles of which are, that *God commands sinners to seek him, to return to him, to believe, to be converted, &c., and that sinners are invited to participate in eternal blessings.* Upon which he asks, "Can either of the above three positions be *honestly denied?*" &c., &c. Believing Mr. C.'s views to be thoroughly erroneous, and highly mischievous, and his manner of remark to my apprehension bearing the character of insulting defiance, I have presumed to oppose. He who is wholly opposed to controversy must be opposed to the gospel, for that is a continued and violent aggression upon every connatural notion of the fallen human mind. It is indeed lamentable to find controversy among ministers, but the occasion served for it by some of them departing from the truth, and insultingly provoking it, is more lamentable than the thing itself. Besides, it ought to be remembered that official stations are important, because influential. If a Christian man errs it is bad, but if a minister errs it is worse; the former being unofficial is comparatively un-influential, but none can tell the influence of the latter.

The error against which I have struck is a discretionary authority assumed by ministers, not only beyond, but contrary to given directions. It is not only an addition to the Word of God, and therefore a reflection upon its sufficiency,

but it is contrary thereto, and therefore a direct insult against its divine Author. By it the self-consistency of the Scriptures is tacitly admitted, and their authority, therefore, and use completely invalidated. If the Scriptures be self-inconsistent all appeal to them is absolutely vain. They can be no standard, no test, no rule; their evidence cannot be received, and by them no truth can be established, no error refuted. Wisdom says, " They are all plain to him that understandeth ;" they agree each to each as one flat surface does to another, to him that *compares spiritual things with spiritual*. Were they not pre-eminently possessed of this quality, their authority would be null, and their utility void. No man can be obliged to regard two opposite testimonies, nor can he be edified or comforted by them. A man can as soon serve God and mammon as believe two contraries' predicates of one subject.

Whoever may read this little book, supposing them to believe the Scriptures, and to venerate their Author, I entreat them to turn scrupulously to the passages quoted, as they read, for confirmation of the observations and arguments used and employed; and if they are seeking for the truth on this subject, and are within the reach of evidence, it is hoped they will rise from reading not only convinced, but confirmed.

If my opponent really believes his new views are comprehended in the faith once delivered to the saints, he ought to contend for them. Should he do so, and give something more than his own dogma for doctrine, assertion for argument, and assumption for proof, I promise (D. V.,) to give attention, and hope to be edified. But if he is still determined to entrench himself by such fortifications as the tacit disavowal of the use of human reason, and the implicit admission of the self-inconsistency of the Scriptures, he will necessarily be invincible by evidence, and may say almost anything without contradiction. He will be out of the reach of evidence and cannot be dealt with by it. But there is one way left. I am forced to it by the necessity of the case for the truth's sake against my inclinations. *I challenge the author to prove the Scriptures irreconcilable, and defy him to maintain his positions otherwise than by assuming the Word of God to be self-contradictory, and by false and un-philological modes of interpretation.*

**Melbourne Place, Sandy Hill, Woolwich,
Feb. 15, 1850,**

THE "GRAVE QUESTION"

CONSIDERED.

A GRAVE question ought to be gravely considered, and all remarks upon it ought to be gravely delivered. Every question relating to the will of God, to the work of Christ, to the operations of the Holy Ghost, and to the documents inspired by the Holy Ghost, must needs be grave. He, who attempts to explain any such question, ought, at least, to be convinced of the importance of his task. He should skillfully and rightly divide the word of truth *deeply* regard the interests involved *strictly* adhere to the standard, and *devoutly* venerate the analogy of truth. He should not bear false witness, nor draw false conclusions. He should endeavor to learn by his considerations, and be humbly subject to just convictions. He should be willing to forego, whatever he cannot retain, consistent with truth, and the honor of the Most High.

Truth is ever analogous and self-consistent. All its parts are agreeable to its whole. It never falsifies itself, and is unfalsifiable. God is true. His word is truth—analogous, self-consistent, beautiful truth. It challenges the closest inspection, courts the keenest scrutiny, and the more fully and clearly it is seen, the more admirable it appears, in all the purposes it reveals, the promises it contains, the doctrines it teaches, and the precepts it enjoins ; and it presents as a whole, one incomparable body of "*sound speech, which cannot be condemned.*"

Some scripture truths are self-evident, some are doctrinal, and some positive; but the two latter are always, and altogether agreeable to the former. This fact should be carefully regarded, and rigorously maintained by all teachers in their ministrations. Slighting this, not a few have set scripture against scripture, one testament against the other, and both against God! They have doctrinally, by false conclusions, broken the *proportion of faith*; and then, tacitly declared, there is no such thing. They have frequently applied scriptures in an unqualified sense, *generally*, which can only bear to be so applied, to a *particular person or people*; and so have proved themselves workmen, which have need to be ashamed, *not* rightly dividing the word of truth.

The *grave question for all preachers of the gospel is*, "How does God address unconverted sinners in his holy Word?" A grave question truly; but

from subsequent remarks made, it appears, it was not proposed for instruction. Without attending to the varied form and manner wherein God addresses the unconverted, the following conclusions are safe. Never contrary to himself. Never contrary to the nature of things. His truth forbids the former, his wisdom the latter.

First. God never addresses the unconverted in a manner contrary to himself. And,

1. God never addresses those unconverted, whom he foreordained to the condemnation of denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, invitingly, to be justified by the blood of Christ, and to be saved from wrath through him: Jude 4; Matt. 21: 37-45; and 23: 32,33 ; and compare Matt. 10: 14, with Acts 13:51.

2. It is said of some of the unconverted, " Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, " He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them : " John 12:39,40.

3. The mist of darkness, and the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever to some of the unconverted: 2 Pet. 17; Jude 1:13. Are these invited to participate in eternal blessings? Is not this impossible to God? If this be admitted, either there is no stability in his appointments, or no sincerity in his invitations; both which are alike impossible to the God of truth. And as, whatever he has appointed, is in righteousness, and abideth for ever, either his justice must quit its rights, and be mutable, or his invitations are no better than tantalizations! The judicial reservation of the mist of darkness for ever, and a merciful invitation to life everlasting, are contraries, impossible to God, in respect of one and the same individual. What God appoints judicially, he never annuls in sovereignty; nor does he ever use language from which such confusion can be deduced.

4. Mr. Cox seems to admit the doctrine of election in his book; but it is merely in name, for the consequences are denied. But the churches are elect, personally, and unconditionally, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father: 1 Pet. 1: 2. They are chosen in Christ: Eph. 1: 4. But election supposes non-election. Has God made any saving provision, or given any saving promise in Christ, or in any other, for and to the non-elect? If not, how can he be said to invite those to a *participation of eternal blessings*, for whom he has made no provision, and to whom he has made no promise?

Does the faithful and true God invite to substance, and cheat with semblance? Is there dissimulation in either God or his Word? Or, are the blessings of salvation to be participated without election? If these things are too glaring and shocking to be admitted, it appears plain, that to invite indiscriminately, is contrary to God—is a mere human invention—a doctrinal presumption, at direct variance with a self-evident truth ; and therefore, however pleasing to the invited, or profitable to the inviter, it should be dealt with as a noxious innovation. When Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch, they turned from the contradicting and blaspheming Jews, to the Gentiles; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed: Acts 13:45-48. *But we do not find here one word of general invitation*, though there was full scope for it, had the apostles been thus commissioned! To preach the gospel to every creature is a divine command; but to invite every creature to participate in eternal blessings, is contrary to God, and inimical to the creature, because delusive, seeing the elect only obtain them: Rom. xi. 7.

5. Mr. Cox professes in his book, to be a firm believer in the doctrines of a free grace salvation, wrought out by Jesus, as the Surety of his people. We sometimes hear of *covering a retreat*. What is the form without the reality—the name without the nature—the shell without the kernel? However, Jesus is the Surety of his people. The suretyship of Christ extends to all the chosen seed. With these persons, this legal union and engagement is exemplified. He became responsible for their honorable acquittal and justification, their final perseverance and endless happiness. He involved his honor in his undertaking, his work is perfect, his sacrifice is satisfactory, he is accepted and enthroned in glory, and he says to his friends, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” But Jesus Christ was not responsible for everybody, and did not die for everybody. The Surety was responsible for his friends, and the Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep: John 10:15. Remission of sins is impossible without the blood shedding of the divine Surety; but the blood of Christ was shed for his people: Luke 22: 20; therefore his people only can be invited, prudently and rightly, to the blessings arising from thence if the suretyship of Christ is limited, and the meritorious cause of all saving blessings, it is utterly incompatible with general invitations. The Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, in distinction from the goats; does God invite the goats, as goats, to participate in the blessings procured only for the sheep? Rather, I suppose, the goats are invited or commanded to put off their goatly propensities and natures, and become sheep; or to perform an act of self-metamorphosis, analogous to a spiritual creation by the Holy Ghost! Did Mr. Cox ever see this done? Ridiculous! Universal invitations to a

participation of eternal blessings are contrary to the suretyship of Christ, a misrepresentation of God, and delusive to the creature.

6. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed the church with all spiritual blessings; has chosen, and predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Christ; in Christ they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; Christ is made of God unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and Christ was constituted the " Head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the *body*:" Eph. 5:23. He laid down his life for the sheep, and prayed for his *disciples*. He loved the *church*, and gave himself for it. The *foreknown* are predestinated, the *predestinated* are called, the *called* are justified, and the *justified* are glorified: Rom. 8:29,30. *General invitations are an attempted breach in God's order, and an addition to God's Word !* No doctrinal statement can be true which is contrary to self-evident truth: but it is a self-evident truth that God is self-consistent, in his saving intentions, and merciful invitations; while it is an easily-proved fact that his saving intentions are limited; therefore universal invitations in his name, to a saving participation of eternal blessings, are untrue, and deceptive. This argument is an honest denial, and, until it be disproved, I shall esteem it a *solid refutation* of the general theory. How shocking it is to deceive a sinner on the brink of eternity!

Second. God never addresses sinners in a manner contrary to the nature of things, either by an arbitrary command, or a merciful invitation. His reasonableness and goodness forbid the former, his wisdom the latter. An invitation supposes a mutual acceptableness between the inviter, and the invited; and suitableness between the invited, and that to which the invitation relates. Invitations, therefore, are not sincerely given, where there is a rooted enmity between the parties: it is contrary to the nature of things. But, let it be remarked,

1. Sinners, as such, are the enemies of God. They are not only *without* God, but against him. *Actually*, sin is a transgression of the law of God; but *essentially*, it goes beyond this. Actually, a sinner is a transgressor of the law of God; but essentially, a hater of God. Sinners, as such, hate God morally; and God hates them *judicially*. The hatred is mutual, though totally dissimilar. All and every sin is against one or more of the perfections of God; and the sinner is a hater of the God of all perfection. God also is angry with the wicked every day: Psa. 7:11; and his face is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth: Psa. 34:16. The sinner, as such, is not only a hater of God: Rom. 1:30; but his carnal mind is enmity

against God—enmity in the abstract—total enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: Rom. 8:7. God also, is glorious in holiness, of purer eyes than to behold evil, and *cannot look* on iniquity: Hab. 1:13. Therefore there can be no possible acceptableness in any sinner, as such, to him; nor in him to any sinner; neither can any sinner, as such, receive an invitation from him. It is contrary to the nature of things, to propriety, and to truth, for God to invite a sinner, as such, because of a total want of acceptableness. There is no possible room for an invitation. Or does the Father of mercies tantalize him with an invitation, who is enslaved under a will not of enmity, and a *cannot* of impotence? Does God excite thus the sinner's rage, exult over his weakness, and increase his sin? Impossible! But would not these be the legitimate consequences? Men may be careless about reconciling; but God is righteous, and he reprobates that which is not.

2. Sinners, as such, are called the *men of this world*: Psa. 17:14. They are born in the world; and there they are at home. There all their alliances are formed; and there their affections centre. The world comprehends all their profits and pleasures, their good and their glory, their plenitude and prospects. Of the world they are constantly in pursuit; and indeed, they do not inherit the earth, but (perhaps it may be said,) the earth inherits them, body and soul. They know nothing of a better country, nor do they want. You might with more propriety invite a man of this world to travel with you in a balloon to Jupiter, than to invite him to walk with you by faith in Jesus Christ to heaven; for that he can see, this he cannot. He will not deny himself, and sell his possessions to follow, he knows not whom; to go, he knows not where; to possess, he knows not what. All his perceptions and gratifications are sensual; and it is a maxim with him, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. *He neither sees, nor feels anything spiritual; and what is not perceptible by his senses, is folly, or nothing to him.* "Eternal blessings" are heavenly. Heavenly blessings are only suitable to persons who are born from above; who can understand somewhat of heavenly things; who have a heavenly disposition; who bear a heavenly image; who are made partakers of the heavenly calling, and are qualified for heavenly commerce, and who are desirous of, and are pilgrims to, a heavenly country. *There is no suitableness between a man of this world, whose god is his belly, and the "Living bread which came down from heaven ; "* and there is as much impropriety, in inviting such a man to a spiritual participation of such bread, as there is disparity between heaven and earth. God does not so invite. *No; but he quickens him by power, and calls him effectually, according to his own purpose and grace, given in Christ Jesus before the world began.* He slays the carnal enmity, creates a heavenly life, and then he says, "Ho, every one

that thirsteth." "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." But this sort of divinity is so much *above two hundred years old*, as almost to be now antiquated.

3. Flesh and spirit are opposites and contraries. There is no affinity between them. A sinner, as such, is carnal, and minds only the things of the flesh. He is sensual, serving diver's lusts, not having the Spirit. The swine may be washed from the filth it has wallowed in, but it will be a swine still, and swinish. The Ethiopian may change his clothes, and his country; but his complexion he cannot. He may be naturalized in Europe, but he will still be by nature an Ethiopian. Whatsoever is born of the flesh, is flesh; and the flesh is contrary to the spirit. *They that are in the flesh, however they may be invited, cannot spiritually realize God; nor, however they may be commanded, can they please God.* They cannot imbibe spiritual pleasures, perform spiritual operations, nor bear spiritual fruits, because they are destitute of spiritual principles. Similar animals cohabit; similar things cohere, unite, mix, blend, &c.; but flesh and spirit are radically dissimilar, will not, and cannot. You may offer a spiritual blessing to a carnal man, and commend its Excellency as holy, and its use as sanctifying; but he will despise it for the very reasons—the very best reasons you commend it. There would be as much propriety in offering angels' food to a toad. God does not, and he emphatically forbids his servants; saying, " Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine:" Matt. vii. 6. God is neither the author nor abettor of monstrosity or confusion.

4. Death and life are opposites. Between these there is no suitableness, no agreement, no connection, no sympathy. In death it may be said, there is no heart, no vision, no hearing, no smell, no touch, no taste; all capability of perception, and pleasure, is wanting. A sinner, as such, is dead while he lives—dead in trespasses and sins. He may be said,

1st. *To be without heart.* God manifested in the flesh is the mystery of godliness; but the sinner, as such, has no heart to understand it. But those to whom this mystery is made known, had the promise of a heart to know: Jer. 24:7; and 31: 34; they now have the promised blessing, for to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to those who are without, they are parables: Matt. 13:11 ; yea, foolishness ; *and they cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned : 1 Cor.2: 14.*

2nd. *Without spiritual vision.* Christ, to the believer's view, is "*altogether lovely;*" but the unconverted, like the companions of Saul, do not see him.

The things of *salvation* are hid from them Matt. 11:25; and so is the gospel: 2 Cor. 4:3,4. And it is only as God shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, that any man seeth the "*Light of life*." To invite a blind man to see, is folly; to command him, is cruel.

3rd. *Without spiritual hearing*. The sinner can morally regard the gospel, but he cannot spiritually know the "joyful sound." Christ never invited or commanded the deaf, as such, to hear in any sense. He gave the natural faculty to many, he *gives* the spiritual faculty to all who possess it, and he has pronounced the ears of all spiritual hearers blessed. Who would think of inviting, or commanding the deaf to hear?

4th. *Without spiritual smell*. He perceives not the odour of life in the gospel; while to the living, the savour of the Saviour's good ointments therein, makes the very mention of his name as ointment poured forth, and quickens affection : Song 1:3.

5th. *Without spiritual touch*. John handled the "*Word of life*" believingly, and so the woman touched the hem of his garment; and so, in a spiritual sense, do saints now. Men might come into contact with Christ, and they may (so to speak) come into contact with him through the gospel now; but there is a great difference between a senseless contact, and a perceiving touch. There is neither sympathy, nor sweetness, in a senseless contact; but there is inexpressibly more in a vital touch.

6th. *Without spiritual taste*. Saints eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; and by these their spiritual life is nourished, which he, as God immortal, eternal, and Mediator, has given them. But the sinner, as such, has no such life to be nourished, nor gust to perceive the sweetness of the spiritual nourishment.

If "sympathy with God" is the best Christian experience, however much a sinner, as such, be invited to it, he cannot know it; for, being spiritually dead, the power of sympathy with God is wanting in him. Moreover, all antipathies against God are embodied in him naturally, and radically; they are exemplified variously, and remain in immoveable hostility, otherwise than as they may be subjugated by omnipotent operations of grace. *Command the dead! What a magnificent idea! Invite the dead! What unparalleled sympathy!* What splendid results may we not expect from such stirring procedures! Doubtless we shall hear one universal response, from Dan to

Beersheba, of our moral Kibroth-Hattaavah, and see all the graves of lust yield up their dead! The Bible has been considered to stand unrivalled among books, for the sublimity of its subjects, and the majesty of its diction; yea, it has been called the "god of books;" but it certainly has nothing like this. I will now briefly consider the remarks our author has made on this grave question. And,

It appears, Mr. C. complains, that those ministers, who refuse to invite unconverted sinners to come to Christ, call those who do so, by hard names. Without for one moment attempting to justify a bad spirit, or an invidious nomenclature, is there not a cause? True philanthropy and the love of God, require the exposure of error, and the defense of the truth. "All the promises of God are in Christ yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us:" 2 Cor. 1:20. Any denial of this, implicit or explicit, tacit or declared, as it impugns the honor of God, and disturbs the fixity of the humbled sinner's hope, ought to be sternly met, and vigorously refuted. *Grind the golden god to powder.*

Our author states, "He was convinced by the force of simple scripture truth, that he could not preach the gospel in a scriptural manner, unless he invited sinners, as such, to come to the marriage." A mighty argument, truly; and intended to confirm this view of the question, in the minds of "all ministers of the gospel!" However the sincerity of his heart, is, to himself, of the last importance; for, "The Lord weigheth the spirits:" Prov. 16:2. Nothing among men, perhaps, is more detestable than hypocrisy; and perhaps, nothing to God: Matt. 23. But it surely has occurred to Mr. C.'s mind, nothing a man may be quite sincere, and yet quite wrong. It is hoped he was sincere, and his mind fully convinced before it was, as he says, in a "transition state" on this subject, when he remarked, "I am persuaded of the truth of what one said a real Christian is not the work of suasion, but of greatness." And when he further remarked, "*With respect to general invitations, we may say that those who use them teach by persuading, and not persuade by teaching.*" It is hoped also his mind was quite sincere while it was in a "transition state," however long it lasted, and whatever he might then think, feel, say, or do. And the sincerity of his mind is not called into question now; now it has passed out of a "transition state," and he is wildly exulting in the liberty wherewith general invitations have made him free from the "bonds of system." (I had almost said the bounds of prudence and truth.) Now he virtually says God invites the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, act, eat, drink, &c.: I question not he is convinced, but I must be excused from receiving such incoherencies, so destitute of proof, probability, and propriety, as the "*sound*

speech" of divine truth "*which cannot be condemned.*" I may add, however, the sincerity of his present convictions, would have appeared to the world in a stronger light, had he published with them a refutation of his former arguments. When I make a recantation of principle, without publishing a refutation of the arguments whereby I supported it, let the world impute to me unhallowed motives.

After citing six portions of scripture, namely, Isa. 55:6-8; Prov. 1:22-26; Matt. xxii. 2-4; Mark 1:14, 15; John 6:27; and Acts 3:19; direct notice of which I shall at present omit; Mr. C. requires three things to be observed respecting each of those Scriptures. And,

First. "That *unconverted persons are addressed.*" As this is of little weight, I shall only enter a demurrer on behalf of the first and last cited scriptures, a holding the assertor to proof.

Second. "That spiritual acts are called for. God *commands sinners to seek, 'to return, 'to turn, 'to receive the Spirit, 'to 'labor, 'to believe, 'to be converted,*" &c. What does Mr. C. mean by *spiritual acts*? Does he intend intelligent, reasonable acts merely? Or does he mean those acts which are only performable by spiritual people, by persons who are "born of the Spirit," "live in the Spirit," "walk in the Spirit," "are led by the Spirit," "have access by one Spirit to the Father," and whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? The latter no doubt. If so, then God sovereignly commands that which is plainly impossible, which is against his reasonableness. By no means can the gospel be made more effectually, a ministry of condemnation and death.

Let my reader distinctly remark, the question is not, what God *necessarily* requires of the fallen creature according to the law, as law, nor as it is a covenant of works; *but what he sovereignly commands to the fallen creature under a new dispensation.* The necessary commands of God, as Creator and Lawgiver, according to the law, and as it is a covenant of works, are, and must be what they were. *No change in the creature, involving a loss of ability, can abrogate that law, or diminish its claims; nor can the creature's obligations be lessened.* As a creature, though fallen, he is still subject to its demands; and as a sinner, he is exposed to its curse. But the reasonableness of all this, must be fetched from the perfect adequacy of the creature, in his original state, to render perfect obedience. Mr. Cox will not care, I imagine, to call those commands of which he speaks, in the manner in which he speaks of them, necessary commands. Then they are arbitrary commands.

Commands which might, or might not be.

Every arbitrary command of God is necessarily reasonable; and every such command is possible, or it cannot be reasonable. This is a self-evident truth, and a first principle. By this, according to the Scriptures, I shall easily prove the falsity of Mr. C.'s assertions. No arbitrary command can be reasonable which is impossible. Every impossible command is foolish, or tyrannical, or both. No such command can be of God. To command, arbitrarily, an infant to act like a man, a man like an angel, or a natural man like a spiritual man, would be imperious madness. Every arbitrary command of God must be suited to the capacity of those commanded. His divine reasonableness forbids the contrary. If, therefore, I prove the impossibility of those commands of which Mr. C. speaks, I shall prove their unreasonableness; and if I prove their unreasonableness, I shall disprove our author's assertions.

1. We are told, "*Spiritual acts are called for*. God commands sinners to seek." Properly, to seek, is to search, by the aid and use of light and sight. A blind man cannot seek, because he cannot see ; but sinners, as such, are spiritually blind : Eph. 4:18 ; Rom. 11:7,10; 1 John 2:11 ; Matt. 15:14; therefore a spiritually blind man cannot spiritually seek. This argument is incontestable. *To command a spiritually blind man to seek spiritually, is against the reasonableness of God, foolish, and false*. "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:" Psa. 146:8; but he never commands them to see. To command a blind man to seek, is an anomaly so gross, foolish, and cruel, as to be utterly insufferable, only where divine truth, wisdom, and mercy are professedly exhibited, as employed to guide the feet of sinners into the way of peace

2. We are told, *God commands sinners to return and to turn*. By this I understand our author to mean, that sinners, as such, are commanded, spiritually to turn, or return to the Lord; or in the language of the New Testament, to come to Christ. There can be no doubt this is his meaning, and I shall reply to it in the express words of Christ, saying, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which bath sent me draw him:*" John 6:44. The testimony of Christ is true, undoubtedly true; but the assertion of Mr. Cox virtually contradicts the testimony of Christ; therefore the assertion of Mr. Cox is false. If God has commanded it, it is possible; but Christ says it is impossible; therefore God has not commanded it. The wisdom and reasonableness of God, the testimony of Christ, or the assertion of Mr. Cox must fall.

3. We are told, *God commands sinners to receive the Spirit*. Mr. C. does not define what this is, nor how it is to be received. We are not informed whether it is a substance, a sensation, or a sentiment; nor whether it is to be received by the mouth or the mind. I suppose, however, the "Spirit of God" as the "Spirit of promise," the "Spirit of grace," the "Spirit of adoption," the "Spirit of life," the "Spirit of truth," &c., is intended. If this be the intended meaning, of which there can be no doubt, let my reader consult the testimony of John the Baptist, at John 3: 27 ; of Christ, at John 14:16,17 ; and of Paul, at I Cor. 2:12-14 ; and, though he may be incurably prejudiced, or incorrigibly perverse, he must deny one of three things, namely, God's reasonableness as a sovereign ; the truth testified by John, Christ, and Paul ; or Mr. Cox's assertion. But Mr. C. ought to have shown where in the Scriptures anything like a command is given to sinners to "receive the Spirit." I "honestly" deny it to be in the text he has quoted, and challenge him to find a single text in the whole Word of God, where any are commanded to receive the Spirit. It is a solemn thing to alter the Word of God! Cannot general invitations stand otherwise than by false witness?

4. We are told, *God commands sinners to labor*. Every body reprobates the conduct of Pharaoh and his task-masters with the Israelites, who has read of it, as cruel and tyrannical; and the conduct of God with sinners, as represented by Mr. Cox, is equally, if not more exceptionable. The cases are strikingly similar, only the latter is the worst. In that, men were required to make bricks without materials being provided for them, in this, they are commanded to do that for which they are totally incompetent. The natural man has no spiritual powers; therefore to command him to labor spiritually is cruel. No man without (Choris, separate from) Christ, can do anything spiritual: John 15: 5; but a sinner, as such, is without (Choris, separate from : Eph. 2:12 ;) Christ; therefore a sinner, as such, cannot do anything spiritual. Can anything be more conclusive? Here again we are reduced to the former necessity. Either we must deny God his reasonableness, in commanding what is impossible, the testimony of Christ, and of Paul, or the assertion of Mr. Cox. An idiot who has the least degree of reason, has a measure of competency to be the disciple of Newton. An infant has a measure of competency to emulate Hercules; *but the natural man, as such, is totally incompetent to be a disciple of Christ, or to do any, the least spiritual work*. When men talk folly on common subjects, they peril the credit of their understanding, and hazard their liberty; but on religion they are paid and pampered for it. But, to say God is unreasonable, is worse than, folly!

5. Then we are told, *God commands sinners to believe*. That is, *spiritually*.

That is, they are commanded to exercise a principle they have not ;—a principle they can neither create, make, buy, work for, receive from the creature, nor any otherwise obtain or possess, than by the sovereignly bestowed favor of God : Eph. 2:8 ; Phil. 1:29. A principle which is said to be by revelation from the Father: Matt. 16:17; according to the working of his mighty power: Eph. 1:19; and by gift: John 6:64, 65. Now all this is plainly impossible, therefore plainly unreasonable, and therefore not of God. To tell men, God has arbitrarily commanded that which is absolutely impossible, is the easiest way to induce them to subscribe the fool's saying: Psa. 14:1 ; to brand the Bible with infamy, and burn it to ashes ! Ministers, consider the consequences of your assertions!

6. We are told, *God commands sinners to be converted*. It is usual, I think, with believers, to ascribe their conversion to the power and grace of God in regeneration; but as I have fully refuted this assertion in my second argument, I will not multiply words.

Third. The third position raised by our author, on the texts he has cited, is, "*That sinners are invited to participate in eternal blessings.*" Our author evidently means sinners, as such, generally. But as I have partly shown the falsity and folly of this, in some previous remarks, I shall add but little here. Let it therefore be further observed,

Every inviter is either sincere or deceitful. If the former, his invitation is worthy of regard; if the latter, his invitation is a delusion, a mockery, and a feint. Every sincere inviter has made a provision for his friends, and is desirous that his bounty should be tasted, his benevolence appreciated, and that his kind intentions should not be defeated. But God is certainly sincere in all his invitations, and has made a provision, equal to the necessities of his friends, and suited to their capacities; and he too is desirous that his kindness should be appreciated, and that his intentions should not be defeated. But if God invites all, generally, he invites more extensively than successfully; therefore his desire is plainly abortive, because his bounty is untested, his good will unvalued, and his intention is defeated! What a pity it is, the benevolent intentions *the whole hearted* good will of Jehovah, should thus be thwarted!! and, that the ever-blessed God should be destined—helplessly and *hopelessly* destined, by the perversity of a perishing little creature against its own interest, to the gnawing chagrin of present contempt, and eternal disappointment ! What a gratification it must be to the devil that he should succeed, by means of corrupting a petty earth-grub, to generate an undying worm at the heart of God's blessedness! Saints, if the invitations of God are abortive, so may his purpose be, and so his promise! For what then can you

hope? Sinners if the invitations of God may be made void, so also may his threatening! What then have you to fear? What have any to hope or fear, except from a blind fatality, or promiscuous fortuitousness! *But the promise is, " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:" Psa. 110: 3.*

Mr. Cox next asks a string of questions relative to the above positions ; to which I will now turn attention. And, -

1. He enquires, "*Can either of the above positions be honestly denied?*" I am surprised at this question, even to astonishment! What can it be—a defection of memory, or the artifice of simulation,—the dotage of imbecility, or the dissembling of hypocrisy? "Denied?" "Honestly denied?" Why, Mr. C. knows they can if he has not lost his memory. He knows they can be denied by arguments he cannot refute. *He knows that Hussey, Skepp, Gill, Brine, Weyman, Stevens, Foreman, Palmer, Jones, and, indeed, Jones Cox himself, with a host besides, have irrefutably denied those positions again and again.* "Honestly denied?" To what miserable shifts are the opposers of truth driven! Mr. C., instead of refuting the arguments of others, and himself, impugns the moral uprightness, learning, and labors of good men, by a pitiful, self-condemning question. Were not Hussey, Skepp, Gill, Brine, Weyman, and Stevens honest men? Did they not walk, speak, write, live, and die like honest men? Are not the rest of those living, who deny those positions, honest? In every case where necessity compels to the alternative of supposing or attributing knavery or folly, the latter is the more charitable, but Mr. C. has chosen the former. Whether John Cox honestly denied those positions none but the all-seeing Searcher of hearts can know so well as himself; but his question respecting the moral integrity of others, deserves a severer rebuke than saying, it is contemptible. Blush, blush, sir! or make it appear that universal invitations, connected with a limited provision, form the beautiful harmony of inspired truth ; and that limited invitations, connected with a limited salvation, are only the dishonest discord of designing men. But with respect to your own publication, you were perchance not wholly unlike Darius, when he had signed the decree; what you had written, you had written; and, however desirous, yourself could not refute yourself. And, not willing to be silent, though you have most unjustifiably impugned the honesty of godly men, you have said, "*Can either of the above three positions be honestly denied?*" putting your qualifying term in italics, to remind us, I suppose, *we ought to be honest.* But Mr. C. enquires,—

2. "*Are they not simple and obvious truths laying upon the surface of each*

text?" No; neither upon the surface nor in the subsoil, as I will show presently. But our author's sight must have improved since he used to say, in denying, substantially, the very things he now affirms, "*In this doctrine fancy is mistaken for fact.*" Or perhaps he had not read those texts he now cites, when he said, "*I object to this doctrine, because the Scriptures nowhere affirm it.*" This was strong language, and I hope *honest*. But he said more, "*I object to this doctrine because it supersedes the necessity of the work of the Holy Ghost.*" And more, "*Be assured of this, in proportion as you exalt human ability, you lower the glory of divine influence; and if you by hideous hooting drive away the heavenly Dove, you will find to your cost what free-will can do.*" I could quote largely here from a pamphlet Mr. C. published since his release from the bonds of system, wherein he, undesignedly, makes it appear that he has realized the solemn verification of his own very solemn declaration ! But I spare him. But the affirmations of our author are not the obvious truths of those texts. *To command a sinner to believe, is, in effect, to command him to regenerate himself ;* and therefore I may say, as Mr. C. once said, "*I object to this doctrine because another of its tendencies is to set aside, or very much confuse the important doctrine of regeneration.*" Again, speaking on the same subject, he said, "*To whom is this charge to be attributed?* I shall answer in the words of Charnock, or rather in the words of God,—` Take this new birth in all the denominations of it, it is altogether ascribed to God. As it is a call out of the world, God is the herald: 2 Tim. 1:9. As it is a creation, God is the Creator: Eph. 2:10. As it is a resurrection, God is the quickener Eph. 2:5. As it is a new-birth, God is the begetter: 1 Pet. 1:3. As it is a new heart, God is the framer: Ezek. 36:26. As it is a law in the heart, God is the penman: Jer. 31:33. As it is a translation out of Satan's kingdom, God is the translator: Col. 1:13. As it is a coming to Christ God is the drawer: John 6:44. As it is a turning to God, God is the attractor:" Jer. 31:18,19. Our author's mind has passed through a "*transition state;*" but whether from darkness to light or contrariwise, I leave my reader to judge. He sent forth his pamphlet, entitled, "*An enquiry whether anything short of Almighty power can produce conversion to God,*" with this motto at the head of others,—"*God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God:*" Psa. 62:11. "*How is the most fine gold changed!*" But the question of obviousness comes but with an ill grace from a person who has said such contrary things; and our author ought to have spoken more modestly, seeing that he has said so many things against himself without disproving one. For the edification of my reader, I will transcribe a few more of his saying in relation, substantially, to the subject in hand. "But to proceed, I have a still greater charge to bring against this doctrine. The others were felony; *this is treason.*" Strong language,---and if

true, and Mr. C. has not disproved it, our author, by his own confession, is a felon and a traitor ! "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." But again, "*I object, because it makes very light of that which the Bible makes a very weighty matter; viz., original sin, man's depravity, and Satanic influence.*" This objection was honestly raised, I hope, and until our author has disproved it, I shall hold it to be true, both as it respects himself, and all others who now speak with him, and shall consider him responsible for consequences. Again, "*I object to this doctrine because of its inconsistency.*" Does Mr. C. now receive it for its propriety? Again, "It hinders the necessary distinction between the law and the gospel." Then Mr. C. now muddles, instead of rightly dividing the word of truth : (2 Tim.2:15.) Again, "I object further,—*I consider that preaching this doctrine is not dealing faithfully with sinners—it is calculated to make false professors, and to distress the child of God.*" If this objection be true, and who can disprove it? What a perilous condition, by his own confession, is our author in! (Matt. 18:6.) Paul was so fully aware of this, and so tenderly concerned to avoid it, that he would have made great sacrifices rather than distress a child of God: 1 Cor. 8: 12, 13. Again, "It supersedes the necessity of prayer." Again, "This doctrine robs God of his praise. Thus it is a thief; and it is also a maimer. It disfigures, more or less, every doctrine of the gospel." Justify then, sir, its character, or be considered, for ever, as the harbinger of a thief, and the abettor of a maimer! Again, "*It also aims to rob God of his power, by calling upon the creature to perform His work.*" Vindicate it then, sir, in common honesty, as you ought, from the charges you, have preferred against it, or condemn and hang the traitorous knave, or be identified with it in all its malpractices for ever.

3. We are asked, "Would any one, uninfluenced by system, form any other opinion?" Why is system to be thus decried? Is the Bible so heterogeneous in its matter, so wretchedly confused in its form, so destitute of order, so contradictory in its doctrines, and so fanciful, or false, in its facts, that no set of ideas can be formed agreeably to self-evident truth, and relatively consistent ? And is this the revelation of Wisdom's will to us, and our guide to God? Impossible! And why does Mr. C. speak of the proportion of faith if there is no proportion? There is something so inexpressibly beautiful in a well-arranged, symmetrical, and harmonious system, that one feels a difficulty in excusing the motives of a person who despises it. God's ways are altogether systematic and beautiful. Of this fact, all nature is a perpetual proclamation. Hence the Greeks called the world by a word signifying *order* and *beauty*; or *a beautiful whale, or system*.

What a beautiful series of dependencies, what a body of reciprocities, what nice analogies, and pleasing congruities, does the human body present! Indeed, it is a system of many systems, and Christ and his church are compared to it: Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:15, 16. The providence of God, too, is a wheel in the middle of a wheel, while all the saving ways of God were formed in *counsel* and all his works *proceed according to a covenant, ordered in all things and sure*. Why then should there not be system in divinity? And as to forming any other opinion, that man is truly pitiable who forms, and more so if he publishes, opinions which are radically inconsistent with truth, and relatively with each other, and is influenced, I think, by something worse than system.

4. We are asked, "*What does human reasoning avail in the face of such plain declarations?*" Human reason is a good gift from the Father of lights, to be used, and not despised,—human reasoning is the use of human reason. And although our author would represent it as a deceiving will with a wisp, we shall not hesitate to follow its directions in submission to the word of faith, nor be deterred from its use in meditating on the analogy of faith, and in "*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*." We surely are not required in order to be "*simple*" believers to cashier common sense, and so become silly believers; nor to be simpletons, that we may worship God in simplicity. Must a man be ignorant to be devoted, and well-nigh an idiot to entertain respect for the doctrine of faith because of its incongruity? How is that subject shamed which requires such advocacy as the disavowal of human reasoning! But there are other plain declarations in the Word of God to which I beg to draw the reader's attention. See Isa. 1:15; Mic. 3:4; Amos 5:22, 23; Jer. 11:14; Ezek. 8:18; Prov. 1:28. Let the above Scriptures be read and received in what Mr. C. would style their "plain grammatical meaning," without employing any "human reasoning" to explain them, and who then could pray to, or hope in God? But our author would say, They mean Nay, sir! No human reasoning, we will have only the "plain grammatical meaning." What next! That cause must be feeble or bad which requires the disavowal of human reasoning.

5. We are asked, "*What matters it if we cannot reconcile these Scriptures with God's sovereign purpose, and efficacious grace?*" Here we have a tacit admission of a sovereign purpose of God, and an efficacious grace employed by him for the salvation of sinners, but that there are some Scriptures irreconcilable thereto. Amiable infidelity will take this boon at your hands, sir, and thank you for this strength to her weak hands, and this confirmation

to her feeble knees; while poor miserable Christianity *must wallow herself in ashes, and make a bitter lamentation*, that her professed friend should thus sap her foundations pervert her directions, and bewilder her mind, by presenting to her irreconcilables for instructions, contradictions for directions, and confusion for confidence! "What matters it if we?" &c. If we are concerned, if we are to be instructed, if we are to be reproved, if we are to be corrected, if we are thereby to be guided in our conclusions, if we are thereby to learn to fear the Lord, and if we are thereby to know the way of righteousness, it matters everything for the credit of the Scriptures with us, everything for our knowledge by them, everything for our confidence in them, and everything for our veneration of their divine Author. Can we be instructed by irreconcilable documents? Can we deduce directions from contradictions? Can we be edified on confusion? Surely the great God did not inspire the Scriptures for his own amusement, but for the instruction of his people. What matters the Scriptures to us if we cannot be instructed by them? And as all anomalies are perplexing, and no man can be instructed by writings he cannot reconcile, what matters the Scriptures to us if we cannot reconcile them? If it be admitted that the Scriptures are irreconcilable, Christianity falls before infidelity like Dagon before the ark. Upon such an admission there was an unanswerable propriety in the following observation of perhaps the most popular and widely-read infidel of the nineteenth century, "Why refer at all to a record that is made to say anything." *If the Word of God be not to us yea, yea, Christianity has no solid foundation, no fixity, no tenable standing, no right of existence, and must give up the ghost ; while infidelity may reign rampant, and defy opposition and control. If the Word of God has no consistency it can have no authority.*

6. Again it is asked, *Does he tell us anywhere to reconcile before we obey?* What is not irreconciled requires no reconciling, and the Word of God is not "yea and nay:" 2 Cor. 1: 18. Unsearchable mysteries it does contain, but not silly and abominable absurdities. Cannot universal invitations be established but on a tacit admission that the Word of God is yea and nay? What is the declaration of God's will concerning us at variance with his will to us? Does he give an authoritative mandate to us irreconcilable to his sovereign mercy in our salvation? *Impossible.* Hear what heavenly Wisdom says in vindication of her own words, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward, (that is, nothing of sin in twined, no moral tortuousness or turpitude,) or perverse, (that is, relative crookedness) in them. They are all plain, (that is, radically straight, and relatively consistent,) to him that understandeth, (that is, to him that distinguisheth,) and right, (that is, morally right, or upright,) to them that find knowledge:"

Prov. 8:8,9. The Septuagint excellently preserves the sense of this whole passage, and no part better than the first clause of ver. 9, excepting that there is substituted a plural participle for a singular. Literally, "They are all in the face, or face to face to those who put together." Let, therefore, ministers no longer say, *What matters it if we cannot reconcile*, except they are prepared to forfeit the credit of their understanding, or to impeach divine Wisdom. I put all such ministers by the above text to the alternative of denying the wisdom of God, or their own understanding; and choose which they may, they must unfit themselves for the teacher's chair.

7. We are asked, "*Ought it not to suffice that God has spoken, and spoken plainly?*" What God has spoken plainly in one place he has never falsified in another. Paul compared spiritual things with spiritual, for illustration, interpretation, and proof; and to show, as I suppose, the consistency of things; but we never hear him say, *What matters it if we cannot reconcile*

8. We are asked, "*If such Scriptures may be explained away, and another sense beside their plain grammatical meaning put upon them, why may not other passages be treated in a similar manner?*" I may safely offer a premium of any amount, though I have nothing, for a greater piece of nonsense than this question presents. The grammatical meaning! If my reader will try the grammatical meaning upon either of the texts our author has cited, he will find the necessity of some other meaning to make out any suitable meaning to reflecting minds. Our author evidently has started without first principles.

9. It is observed, "*Less liberties taken with the sacred text enables the Socinian to get rid of the doctrine of Christ's divinity; and the Arminian to get rid of the doctrine of election. Indeed, no truth is safe if such a principle of interpretation is adopted.*" Indeed, if such confusion was adopted as to take sound for sense—for that is plainly what our author intends by the grammatical meaning—the Socinian, Arminian, and almost every other error might be easily established irrefutably. I appeal to the controversies for confirmation. And it is remarkable that our author uses some of the very same texts to introduce his own semi-Arminian jumble, as the Arminian himself. This looks a little like affinity.

10. It is observed, "*Those do not act wisely who substitute a comparatively MODERN method on the authority of Hussey, Gill, and Brine.*" I know not who our author alludes to as acting on human authority in divine things, and pity from my heart any who may be enthralled by such vassalage. If he does

not explain, he must be considered as unfairly judging others by himself.

11. *"A method which I think no one can prove to be two hundred years old."* I am ashamed to reply to this remark. What has the age of a doctrine to do with its truth? Mr. Cox could cite from Ignatius, when it suited his purpose, against the very error he now attempts to uphold,—and Ignatius lived in the second century. The last chapter of the "Revelation" "is the end of my Bible; and I care not how novel any doctrine may be considered so long lone as it is taught in the Scriptures ; nor how old if not taught there, the former shall be received and the latter rejected. Not two hundred years old! Why, is not error well-nigh as old as time? And I could mention fifty errors concocted in the professing church under the Christian' name, and all of them above two hundred years old.

12. *" Surely it is not wise to speak contemptuously of that way of preaching which God has so highly honored, and which his most useful servants have adopted."* It is impossible to speak too contemptuously of this remark, as shall appear by another from the same author. " Now, brethren, if I were to look through the annals of Zion, I could bring forth a long list of holy, devoted, and useful men, (who lived and died like Christians and ministers) who maintained invariably the inability of man. *Now these worthies, whose names alone would almost fill my book, all maintained that man was unable to be and to do what was right;*' (that is, as Mr. C. explained it, to repent and believe ;) ' many of them differed about other things, here they met. But I ask, what heroes have arranged themselves under that banner which is inscribed with man's ability? Why all the moral preachers, all the wolves in sheep's clothing, the Pope of Rome, with all his cardinals, bishops, &c., &c., and about the brightest of the whole group, Armenius and his successors, all whose mighty doings and lofty buildings I firmly believe will lose their only foundation when the mighty angel cries, Babylon is fallen, is fallen.' Ask then, brethren, what the Lord's ministers whom he taught and honored, believed." The weight of either of these testimonies on the subject is not so much as the small dust of the balance; but viewed in juxtaposition as coming from one pen they are thoroughly contemptible.

Mr. C.'s concluding remark is so impertinent, and destitute of proof, and is withal, so immodest from him, that I will not trust myself to reply. I pass therefore to consider briefly those Scriptures whereon he founds his practice of universal invitations and commands. And first in order stands,—

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.

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. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord:" Isa. 55:6-8.

Mr. C. is no sciolist on this subject; and, considering his long acquaintance with the arguments adduced against his new views, it is truly surprising he should introduce this Scripture as a warrant for those views. Why did he not disprove the explanations already given? But if the same things must needs be said again, to silence such sickening cavils, and to disprove such sad perversions, let it be observed, *the pronoun "ye,"* in ver. 6, intends, (*in the judgment of Mr. Fuller, also,*) the very same persons as the phrase "every one," in ver. 1. "Every one" is the nominal to the pronominal "ye, your," &c., down the chapter. *Whatever is intended, the thirsty are addressed.* This, so far as this Scripture is concerned, destroys Mr. C.'s first position. And that the Gentiles are intended by the "*wicked*" and the "*unrighteous man*," in ver. 7, contrary to the Jew's thoughts, but according to God's thoughts, is a fact, perhaps, few doubt, and no one will care to disprove. This understood, therefore, if the passage be read imperatively, the idea of the Jews being exclusively privileged in the Messiah's kingdom, (Acts 22:21, 22,) is refuted. Christ then being published as God's salvation unto the ends of the earth, even the "thirsty," "*wicked*," and "*unrighteous*" Gentile is encouraged in gospel hope. But there is another fact in relation to this Scripture, as employed on this subject—a fact which has been many years before the public,—a fact, which if our author did not know, his ignorance is to be lamented; and which, if he did know, his perverseness must be incorrigible, or he would have submitted to it. It is simply this,—the two first verbs as well as the two last, in the Hebrew text, are in the future tense, and read thus, "The wicked shall forsake his way,—he shall return unto the Lord." Thus the passage presents simply a prediction and a promise to the Jewish church, of the salvation of her sister the Gentile church. Jod is truly a little letter; but if Mr. C. could not see it without some aid, he might plainly have perceived it through the spectacles of his neighbor. Let my reader read the remaining part of the chapter, and follow Paul's course, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" let him compare the things contained therein with Mr. C.'s positions raised upon the part in question, and he will find such a disparity, as that he will be necessitated to deny the consistency of the inspired truth of God, or those positions. The second passage is-

"How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at (or to) my reproof:

behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh :” Prov. 1:22-26.

Every Scripture has a *primary* application, which ought always to be prayerfully and diligently sought. To whomsoever or whatsoever any Scripture primarily relates, to him or them, that or those, that Scripture should have its unmodified weight, with this provision, namely, that a strict regard be paid to the laws and use of figurative language. Many Scriptures have a *secondary application*; and all such Scriptures in such respect, must be explained in a modified manner, with more, equal, or less force, as they will bear, according to circumstances and the analogy of faith. Psa. 22:, for instance, is true as the language of David, but many things must be understood *figuratively*. But this psalm has a secondary application with respect to Christ, and will bear a far more literal, and therefore a more forcible explanation. On the other hand, the question put by the Lord at Ezek. 18: 31, “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” primarily respects the Israelites exclusively, and regards their idolatry and the judgment of God *upon them for it in their political and temporal death. It may bear some suitable secondary application, but certainly not such a one as that God commands and invites all men to live spiritually, for that would be cruel and nonsensical, and a violation of the laws of language.* Yet such wretched perversions of the Word of God are frequently made, and in a manner outraging all common decency, and calculated to violate every hallowed feeling in the human mind concerning the great God. The Scripture in question is in precisely the same predicament as the one last mentioned. *Primarily, it was a reproof to the Jews, as Jews, under that peculiar covenant, whereby they, as the seed of Abraham, were peculiarly privileged beyond their Gentile neighbours,* connected with a promise of continuance under the performable conditions thereof. Solomon warned the people of their danger, admonished them of their folly, and seemed to prophesy the consequences. See also Isa. 65:11,12; 66:3,4 ; Jer. 7:13-16 ; 25: 3-7 ; 11:7-10 ; 13:10 ; 16:11-13 ; 18:11-17 ; 19:15 ; 22:21-23 ; 7:23-28 ; 26:4-6 ; 29:16-19 ; 35:14-17; 2 Kings 17:13-23. In all the above Scriptures similar language is used for a similar purpose. And after God had long warned the people by word and example to cease from folly, that is, idolatry, to regard his counsel and to keep his law, (of all which in the respect required they were capable,) he, being disregarded, righteously retaliated according to the tenor of that covenant: Isa. 1:19, 20 ; and brought upon them fear as a desolation, and

destruction as a whirlwind : 2 Chron. 36:15-21. It may have a suitable secondary application to the Jews, in respect of their rejection of the Messiah, and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem; and perhaps otherwise also. But according to our author, it presents an impossible condition: John 6:44; 15:5; to be performed for an unappreciable good: 1 Cor. 2:14; this condition is sanctioned under an awful threatening of destruction, and a rigorous severity is to be accompanied with insult and mockery in its execution! if fiendish malice itself can devise anything more deadly malefic than this, it is worse than I took it to be ! O Christianity, if these are thy rules, let me rather be tried by the riddle of some new sphinx! If these are thy laws, let me find an asylum in the most perilous position of the kingdom of Draco! How awful a thing is error! It is alike detrimental to the character of the Most High and the interests of men, however "*honestly*" embraced; nor less so when, however "*honestly*," a gracious promise to a definite people is twisted into an impossible command to all men! The next scripture is---

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage :." Matt. 22: 2-4.

Of course Mr. C. explains this passage according to its "plain grammatical meaning," and so founds a doctrinal position on a parabolical expression. This may serve his purpose, but perhaps nothing could be more prejudicial to his judgment, or more show a want of skill. We are, however, not left to guess at what is always required to a right understanding of a parable, namely, the scope, design, and doctrinal instruction thereof : our Lord has supplied these at ver. 14 : " For many are called, but few are chosen." It is plain therefore, that whensoever, and wheresoever the Lord Jesus himself preached, or the truth in him is preached by his ministers, there and then there was, and is supplied, a full evidence of his being the promised Messiah, and that evidence challenges a reasonable regard, and acceptance of his person and ministry as such. As far and wide, and to as many as the gospel is preached; so far and wide, and to so many is the word of this salvation sent. It bids them by preeminence and precept to come, to listen, to try, and by indubitable and appreciable evidence, claims a reasonable acceptance. Beyond this its province and prerogative reach not. It is entirely and distinctly of God to make the word efficacious for the saving profit of the hearer. *The hearing of the word cannot savingly profit any man in whom*

saving faith is not mixed with hearing : Heb.4: 2 ; and saving faith is the gift of God : Eph. 2:8. Hence, while all are bidden or called to hear the word and reasonably receive it so far as it extends, the chosen only are savingly called by the word. But this whole parable has in its primary application, direct reference to the Jews, in distinction from the Gentiles. Our Lord conveyed by this parable, though implicitly, a severe reproof to them; and took occasion from the enmity and perversity of them who are intended by the bidden, to publish parabolically the salvation of the Gentiles. Any other application of the whole or a part of this parable, must be according to the analogy of faith. The next scripture is-

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel:" Mark i. 14, 15.

Repentance in respect of a creature is a change of mind and manners; but it may have the quality of being reasonable merely, legal, or spiritual. *A reasonable repentance upon conviction of wrong is within the power, and is the duty of all men ; but a spiritual repentance, a " repentance unto life" is within the compass of no natural man's power, it is not his duty, and the not doing so is not his fault. The power of a spiritual repentance is the gift of God. Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted (edoken, given) repentance unto life : Acts 11:18. This divine gift is always connected with the remission of sins and eternal life: Acts5: 31. Jesus Christ announced in this passage what he called in another a regeneration: Matt. xix. 28; a change of divine manifestation, government, and worship: Heb. 1:2. And he called upon the Jews to change their minds and manners accordingly. The faith also called for here, was a reasonable persuasion upon evidence produced, that the end of Judaism was come, and was to be succeeded by Christianity. Jesus Christ never commands the exercise of a spiritual principle where it is not. This conduct would make him an austere master, requiring to reap where he had not sown. The next scripture forced into this service, is-*

“Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed :” John 6:27.

In all sciences, it is supposed, there are certain first principles, which are undeniable, because they are either self-evident, or established by irrefragable proof. These are the student's guide; by these he makes his

observations, shapes his course, and directs his way. Agreeably to these he forms his conclusions ; and without these he would run in uncertainty, and fight as one that beateth the air, System in divinity may be ignorantly decried, and the beauty and utility thereof perversely denied ; but while order is an established principle with God in all his ways, neither can be disproved. But there are certain first principles in divinity, of which, the following may be called one, namely, "*Salvation is of the Lord.*" The work of salvation is altogether and totally of the Lord, without any co-operation on the part of the saved; the purpose, the promise, the kingdom, and the power, all are the Lord's. No truth can be published more fully and clearly than this is; and no truth can appear more evident. While therefore this is an evident, undeniable, and fundamental first principle of divine truth, and while truth is always self-consistent, no explanation must be given or received of, and no doctrine must be raised upon, any part of the book of truth, which may in any way obscure, pervert, or contradict this fundamental first principle. *This doctrine is irrefutable.* But it is said, by the text above cited, God commands sinners to act spiritually. If God commands natural men to act spiritually, it is but a fair inference, that God commands them to be spiritual. Let us try this assumption by our doctrine. A man cannot act spiritually without being spiritual, he cannot be spiritual without being regenerate, but regeneration is a part of salvation, and salvation is of the Lord. *No cause, no effect. No root, no fruit.* The fruit depends on the branch, the branch on the trunk, and all on the root. *Spiritual action depends on spiritual life, and spiritual life depends on Jehovah, the Spirit of life.* It is a gift of love, a work of power, and a part of salvation; but the love, the labor, and the salvation is of the Lord. This assumption then is contradictory of a fundamental first principle of divine truth, and therefore evidently false. God has not, and will not abdicate his kingdom, lay aside his power, forfeit his glory, and deny himself by commanding a sinner to act spiritually, because that is a fruit of his love and power, in, by, and for which he receives honor: Psa. 115:1 ; Zech 4: 6 ; Isa. 43:1,7,21 ; Psa. 100:3 ; Eph. 2:10. We conclude therefore, whatever is meant by the passage, it cannot mean that a sinner ought to act spiritually. My cause requires no more. It is sufficient for me that I have entered a valid objection. The burden of proof lies on Mr. C. I may, however, gratuitously add, it is evident from the whole passage, that our Lord exhorted these sordid, belly-loving Jews to be employed in their minds about the evidences he supplied by his miracles of being *God's Messiah*, rather than to be serving their belly with them. While the preposition "*for*" in the text cannot affect the minds of some, to others it may be of *importance*; and to these therefore it may not be unacceptable to know, it is a supplied word, to complete the English reading. "Be not employed about the meat which perisheth, which I supply by

miracle, in evidence of my person and mission, but (as though Jesus had said) about me, who am that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. I who am the bread of life, which giveth life to the world, am of more importance than the perishing bread I give by miracle ; and it is of more importance that you know and receive me as such thereby, than that you may glut a low appetite thereon. Therefore employ yourselves only about my gifts as they declare me to be a gift of God to you, in distinction from the Gentiles, sealed by God the Father to preach, work miracles, and die among you. And if you ask me what you shall do to work the works of God, I answer, that you believe on him whom he hath sent; that is, that you, by the evidence produced in the miracles wrought, do reasonably acknowledge, receive, and honor him, as being whom he declares himself to be. The concluding portion produced to prop this insupportable Arminian theory is-

“Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord :” Acts 3:19.

Mr. C. says the persons here addressed were unconvicted sinners. I object to the assertion, and hold the assertor to proof, though I shall not avail myself of the arguments against him. But, admitting they were unconvicted sinners, what then ? In the way our author has introduced the passage, and made his observation, the blotting out of their sins is made to depend on their repentance and conversion, as the effect depends on the cause ; whereas the Spirit, the Word, and experience teach, sins are only legally blotted out by the shedding Of the precious blood of Christ, and experimentally by the efficacious application thereof. Repentance and conversion are not the causes of pardon in any sense, but the fruits of pardoning love manifested In, and justified in its acts by the vicarious sufferings, and blood-shedding of incarnate God. Whether the persons addressed were unconvicted or not I decide not; and it is totally unimportant which hypothesis is correct. In either case the scope and design of the apostle are precisely the same here, as in the chapter preceding, when he said to those who were pricked in the heart, “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” Peter did not exhort those who were pricked in the heart to repent spiritually, he saw they did so already by their question ; but Judaically. Nor does he exhort the people addressed in the passage in question, to repent, &c. spiritually, for he knew of themselves they could not. *The repentance enjoined in both cases was reasonable and in respect of Judaism, the conversion in the latter was to Christianity, and their sins to be blotted out were national.* It is certain the above remarks are an honest denial, and it is hoped they are a sufficiently

convincing refutation of the redoubtable position of our author; and especially of the two latter, according to the law and the testimony of the Word of God. It is hoped also the reader will find explanations of the Scriptures produced by our author, quite agreeable to the proportion of faith, and neither impeaching heavenly wisdom, nor violating common sense. In conclusion, let us ask,

What is the testimony of experience in the matter? Mr. Cox himself shall be a witness again by another excellent passage he adopted from Charnock. "In ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, can bring forth nothing spiritually good and acceptable to God; a mere composition of enmity to good, of propensity to evil, of weakness and wickedness, of hell and death. A fardel of impotence and conceitedness, perversity, and inability, every way miserable, unless infinite compassion relieves us; we have no more freedom than a galley-slave, till Christ redeems us; no more strength than a putrefied carcass till Christ raises us. An unlamented hardness, an unregarded obstinacy, an insensible palsy spread over every part, a dreadful cannot and will not triumphing in the whole soul." Mr. C. once seemed to receive this humbling testimony as the truth, but he now despises it without disproof. And what he only mentioned to despise, he now in effect says, and seems to prize without proof, namely-

"Rise, noble creature man arise,
And make yourself alive;
Prepare yourself to mount the skies,
For endless glory strive."

I affirm without hesitancy, the little less than blasphemous sentiment of this verse, is precisely the doctrine of Mr. C.'s positions. And what is the legitimate effect of its proclamation to a brokenhearted sinner? Is it the joy of good news to him?—news of his debts being all cancelled, his crimes all atoned, his sins all blotted out, the law on his behalf magnified, justice satisfied, truth established, faithfulness exemplified, holiness righted, peace made, and mercy's opened fullness flowing freely in richest effusions to meet his gnawing, craving, soul-wasting necessities, as a self-ruined, self-condemned, and righteously damnable delinquent? Nothing of the kind! It is utterly contrariwise, it is the ministry of condemnation—it is worse than either the Egyptian task-master's cruelty, or Rehoboam's folly,—it is a putting caustic to a sore—it is a threatening to miserable impotence—it is a taunt to the tortured—it is a wound to a wounded spirit—it is a mockery of the pungent and deep pangs of a broken heart—it is a death-knell to the

dying! Command a broken-hearted sinner to believe! The character of God, and the catalogue of his deep crimes; the claims of the law, and the clamour of his conscience raise, enhance, and confirm a tormenting fear in his heart that his ruin is irremediable, and his destiny is destruction ! *Rather pursue that more ancient way, though almost antiquated, the apostolic way, preaching "Christ and him crucified." Exhibit how the holy excellencies of the Most High are vindicated, and how sin is punished in the sinless substitute for the penitent sinner's exemption, exoneration, and exculpation. Let it be fully set forth that through the divinely-sealed and voluntarily self-sanctified sacrifice of that divine victim, the raised-up ire of inflexible justice is appeased, a finishing end is made of sin, death is swallowed up in eternal victory, the policy of hell nonplussed, and its power vanquished, life immortal is brought to light, and the sanctified are perfected for ever. Let also those sweet encouragements be trumpeted forth which arise from the permanent purposes, precious promises, glorious precedents, omnipotent power, and from the unmeritable, full, free, and everlasting grace and mercy of Jehovah to the worthless and miserable penitent criminal. And thus, though the profane will scoff, and the proud professor sneer, the gospel will be preached, the Holy Ghost will bear witness to his own truth, Christ will be exalted, God our Father in covenant will be endeared, the case will be met, the poor sinner will be prostrated in humility and absorbed in love, sin will be hated, spirituality promoted, and the church of God gladdened.*

What are the legitimate consequences of the doctrine of those positions in the minds of the unconverted? Are they awed by the representations of God glorious in holiness, and themselves weak in wickedness? No! *But a delusive conceit is raised in their minds, that they are rich in will to choose, in wisdom to direct to, and in power to obtain the salvation of God.* That it is of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that sheweth mercy, working all in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. They are told they are commanded of God to repent, &c.; "therefore we can repent," say they," when we please, and we intend to do so; but not yet." *It is in the nature of the doctrine to foster that self-sufficient vanity, in the minds of the people.* They are not awed by the declarations of the majesty and justice of God rigorously holding them by an inflexible equity to in diminishable obligations connected with the testimony of their vileness and weakness; but are bloated with the braggart conceit of possessing a power with God whenever they choose to exercise it ; *and as though the great God waited in his ways to be regulated by the nod of their caprice.* They are not told thereby that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and that those who are in the flesh cannot

please God; but are indirectly, however honestly, bolstered up in their lust by the insane and mischievous notion that they possess a power to repent, &c. It is useless to declare to men their sins, without declaring their sinfulness; that is, their weakness, perversity, and death in sin. *They will live in their sins with no other notion about them, than that they can, and shall repent of them.* He who declares not to sinners their perversity in their sin, and their weakness in their wickedness, or tacitly or indirectly speaks otherwise, doctrinally robs God of that of which he is in the highest degree jealous, deceives men in that which is of the very utmost importance, and cannot say " I am pure from the blood of all men."

If evident facts were allowed the authority they might justly have in this case, they would unequivocally condemn the doctrine of universal invitations (if I may use that term) as the most inducing premium for vice. Canvass the sentiments of the people, and it will be found, from the most fashionable circles of the nobility, to the very lowest grade of society, while they all in their several spheres are reveling in every species of iniquity, that they each conclude from the tuition they have received, *they CAN repent, they can make their peace with God; and resolving so to do at a convenient season, drink deeper still. This conceit defeats all reproof, deadens the heart to all creature responsibility, and is an ever present and unfailing panacea for any and every transient consciousness of guilt.* Ball- rooms, operas, theatres, taverns, pot-houses, and every other hot-bed of vice teem with their thousands of dreadful examples of the consequences of the doctrine of universal invitations. Some can and do repent, and so cancel their sins as they contract them; others can, but will defer payment until some little time before they die. It is true their minister urges them to an early repentance, alleging the uncertainty of life among other reasons; but they are young perhaps, and if not, they are strong, and well in health, and however it may be, there is time enough yet. Sometimes in a dying sickness, as the result of their religious education, they cover themselves in the cloak of self-righteousness; and as in life they made lies their refuge, so in death they comfort themselves with the fire they have kindled. With what blood-chilling horror I have left the room of a dying sinner wrap in the self-righteous delusion, I will not attempt to describe; neither will I harrow the feelings of my reader by a description of what I have known to take place, when in the last sickness the detestable charm has been broken, and the dreadful reality of a just God, inflexible in his claims, unmoved by misery, and unappeasable by the tears of a criminal, has appeared in full view. *In one word, Universal invitations and commands of a spiritual nature are without Bible precept, without Bible precedent, without propriety, without profit, without prudence.*

Without Bible precept. They have no tenable standing upon any one fairly explained text of the whole book of God. They form no part of the law, nor of the gospel. They by just consequence lower the claims of the former, are a satire upon the power of the latter, and miserably mangle the whole. They are a monstrous inconsistency, flatly contrary to the whole revealed manner of divine operation in the accomplishment of salvation, and to the whole testimony of the experience of the saved.

Without Bible precedent. However ancient their use may be, certainly that use has not been taken up from any rightly understood custom of inspired men recorded in the Scriptures. Their use may indeed be ancient, and so is a great deal besides; but all old sentiments are not true, nor are all old customs commendable. As early as the second century, if *Alstedius* may be credited, persons were found who worshipped and adored the serpent which seduced Eve, *tanquam is fuisset Christus*, as though it was (as I suppose believing it to be) Christ! Indeed I think there is no blasphemy, however blasphemous, no superstition, however stupid, no folly, however foolish, and no will-worship, however extraneous, but which might easily obtain the suffrages of antiquity. But when men shall become subject to the decisions of sovereignty, and the dictations of Scripture, universal invitations, (however much the use of them may now be venerated for its age) with all their Arminian kindred, will die a violent death by the hand of those who have nurtured them, unregretted, and reprobated. "*What with the Scripture?*" The sentiments and usages of no good men can form a rule of action, nor plea of justification for us in the fear of, and before God. Paul required to be followed only as he followed Christ: 1 Cor. 11:1.

Without propriety. What might be justly thought of a person directing a blind man by visible signs, or a deaf man by audible sounds, may fairly be concluded of him who indiscriminately invites men to things spiritual. *He, who commands a bad tree to bear good fruit, had better if he can first make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good by consequence.* Nothing, naturally, can act above itself. Surely there is, there must be an apprehensible propriety in the will, the work, and the Word of the all-wise God!

Without profit. All Bible promises are made and confirmed in Christ to specified characters only: hence also their propriety. Accordingly Peter encouraged those who were pricked in their heart, saying, " For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as

the Lord our God shall call:" Acts 2:39. He who makes a promise to any one in the name of the Lord, that is not a promisee by the will of God, exceeds his commission, misrepresents his Master, and raises a vain expectation. It is a solemn thing for a man to rush into the marriage feast without having on the wedding garment: Matt. 22:11-13. *Ministers, be sure by a devout reverence of, and a rigid adherence to the proportion of faith, that you keep yourselves pure from the blood of such a man !*

Without prudence. Universal invitations, if those who use them are not satirical, are, indirectly, an imprudent bolstering of men in the deceitful conceit, that unto them belong the issues from death, *whereby also they are by just consequence indirectly licensed to continue in sin, because they can change their condition when they please.* Universal commands also are an imprudent saddening sound to a broken heart. And perhaps the word of the Lord by Ezekiel may be considered a severe reproof of both,—"*Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall no more be in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:" Ezek. 13: 20-22.*

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