

C A N O N IX.

The prophets make excursions and digressions; and, whilst they have before their eyes some object of more remote time, suddenly they leave it; and, by a rapid excursion, turn themselves off to address the men of their own time, or of the next period; that, from their subject of prophecy, they may admonish, exhort, and convince men: which having done, they resume the thread of their prophecy, and go on. See Joel, chap. iii. 4--9.

C A N O N X.

That interpretation of the whole word of God, and of the prophets in particular, is to be accounted the best, which pursues and demonstrates the greatest emphasis of the oration or speech of the prophet, and the wisdom of the holy Spirit. This is a good and sure rule, which I would recommend to all serious christians; namely, to observe

C A N O N IX.

Ad ta episodia sermonis prophetici recte quoque referuntur excursus, sive diexodoi digressiones, in quibus prophetæ, dum vere ob oculos habent objectum aliquod remotioris temporis, illud subito deferentes, se per modum excursus convertunt ad homines sui aut proximi temporis, ut ex subjecto prophetiæ suæ illos moneant, exhortentur, convincant: quo factò, prophetiæ suæ filum repetunt.

C A N O N X.

Interpretatio totius verbi divini, & præcipue quidem prophetiarum, ea habenda est optima, quæ maximam sectatur & demonstrat orationis emphasisin, ac sapientiam spiritus sancti. Regula bona & certa, & tamen ad subjectum prophetiæ contextum prudenter applicanda.

observe the energy of the words, the beauty of the images, the riches of the thoughts, and the sublime and marvellous conceptions of God himself.

C A N O N XI.

A sure key for the interpretation of the prophecies is to have a true understanding, or solid knowledge of Christ Jesus, the eternal son of God, and the divine and infinite righteousness wrought out by him for the church, and of that spiritual kingdom founded by him in the world, according to those remarkable words of the apostle Paul. Rom. xii. 6. Let us prophecy according to the analogy or proportion of faith. For the prophets all fix their eyes on the glorious son of God; and their minds were filled up with Christ, and fired with zeal to prophecy chiefly of him and his glorious kingdom, and the times and prerogatives of that kingdom.

CANON XII.

C A N O N XI.

Certa clavis interpretationis prophetiarum est intelligentia vera JESU CHRISTI, & JUSTITIÆ per illum procurandæ ecclesiæ, & REGNI spiritualis, ab ipso in orbe fundandi, secundum illud apostoli, Rom. xii. 6. Prophetandum esse *kai ten analogian tes pisteos*. Prophetas de Messia, ejusque regno, et regni ejus temporibus ac prærogativis, præcipue vaticinatos esse, evici part. ii. cap. v. § vii. Confer. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Act. iii. 24. Rom. iii. 21. Quis dubitet? Ipse Messias de se. Ps. xl. 8. Ecce venio: in VOLUMINE LIBRI scriptum est DE ME. Faveat ratio. Spiritus enim propheticus est spiritus Christi; &, cum inter effecta divinæ providentiæ & gratiæ nullum majus, illustrius, & magis salutare sit, quam REGNUM CHRISTI JESU: est utique probabile, prophetas, libere de futuris vaticinantes, hac maxime contemplatione se occupatos habuisse.

C A N O N XII.

There is a two-fold method of interpreting the word of GOD, and especially the prophecies : the one is dry, barren, and insipid---the other is liberal and richly divine, full of an high-spirited unct̄ion and pathos. Of the former method, those divines that follow that, seldom or never find Christ Jesus in the grandeur, fulness, and beauty of his person ; nor do they pay much regard to his glorious kingdom in the prophecies. On the other hand, those wise and holy divines who adopt the heavenly way of interpretation, they find Christ Jesus in his glories, offices, graces, crucifixion and kingdom, and all the grand things that belong to it. Undoubtedly, this latter method is infinitely to be preferred to the former. This is a rule of great use in divinity. For certainly the holy spirit of GOD, which was in the prophets, either is not Christ's spirit ; or if he is Christ's spirit, he directly speaks of Christ ; and if he speaks directly and clearly of Christ, it is the wisdom and glory of a good interpreter first, and above all things, to seek diligently after Christ in the prophetic Scriptures, and then, as the occasion favours, to demonstrate
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C A N O N XII.

Quare cum duplex sit methodus interpretandi prophetias, altera sterilis, altera liberalis, quarum illam qui sequuntur Christum Jesum & regnum ejus ægre & rarius, hanc qui adoptant, Christum & res ejus crebrius in verbo prophetico deprehendunt : dubitandum non videtur, quin posterior præferenda sit priori. Illustrandus est canon magni & utilissimi usus.

and display Christ in the loveliest colours. Yea, he ought never to shun any opportunity of proclaiming Christ when it offers itself, but willingly take it, and, with ardour of soul, at all times, to seize it. A sad example of a dry, barren expositor, we have in the learned Grotius: and we have lovely examples of rich, evangelical expositors in the amiable Mr. Henry and the judicious Dr. Gill.

C A N O N XIII.

As it is absolutely certain that there are in the prophecies distinct and bright delineations of the whole counsel of God; so judicious and masculine expositors act rightly, who, in prophecies which plainly treat of the kingdom of Christ, and its great affairs, industriously and keenly attend to the events of the church of Christ, which are known from sacred and foreign history.----Lampe's Synopsis of Ecclesiastical History, 12mo. 1726. and the larger histories of the church, are of admirable use in this case. ---The bishop of Bristol, in his excellent Dissertations on Prophecy, has judiciously shewn how profane

C A N O N XIII.

Cum non probabile tantum, sed certum etiam sit, in verbo prophetico esse distinctas *upotuposeis*---& delineationes totius concilii DEI: recte instituunt interpretes, qui in prophetiis, quas agere constat de regno Christi & fati ejus, ad eventus ecclesie Christi, ex historia notos, industrie attendunt, eosque ex iisdem producant, modo id fiat absque vi ulla in scripturam illata.

profane history may be applied for the illustration of scripture prophecies.

C A N O N XIV.

The interpretation of the prophets, and the application of them made by Christ and his apostles, and by the holy Spirit in the book of the Revelations, is an excellent key for our rightly explaining and applying the prophecies which they have touched on and illustrated. Who can doubt of this? seeing that every one is the best interpreter of his own words and writings. Therefore it may be justly concluded, that the holy Spirit, in more recent or new prophecies, alludes to ancient ones: yea, he often uses the same words, phrases, and images in the New Testament as he did before in the Old Testament; designing by this to lead us by the hand into the true understanding of those lively and glorious oracles.---See this set in a striking light, in almost one hundred and thirty instances of images and expressions, taken from the Old Testament, and applied in the Revelations, by the learned and judicious Moses Lowman, 8vo.

CANON XV.

C A N O N XIV.

Interpretatio sermonis prophetici, facta a Christo & ab apostolis, & a Spiritu sancto ipso in apocalypsi, NORMA est & CLAVIS prophetiarum, quas illi attigerunt, recte explicandarum. Quis dubitet? cum enim verborum suorum quisque optimus sit interpres.

C A N O N XV.

Whatever is declared or predicted concerning some certain person, in a most excellent, glorious, emphatical, and characteristic manner, in the psalms and the prophets; and yet the peculiar properties, or glorious qualities and perfections, will agree to no one person of that period of time; or amongst mankind of any other time: it must be taken as a prediction of the Messiah, and as descriptive of the glories of the eternal son of God incarnate. This rule will deceive no man; but will hold good to the end of the world.

C A N O N XVI.

In all prophecies which treat of the Lord Jesus and his kingdom, that sense is best which is most spiritual and sublime. This canon hath an easy and certain evidence. For the kingdom
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C A N O N XV.

Quicquid excellenter, gloriose, emphaticè, characteristicè, de PERSONA quadam, suo nomine non appellata, in prophetiis aut psalmis prædicatur, ita ut predicata singularia in nullo illius, vel alicujus alterius temporis sub-jecto singulari demonstrari queant, accipiendum est tanquam dictum & prædictum de MESSIA. Canon hic neminem fallat. Argumenta pete ex Deut. xviii. 18. Ps. viii. xvi. xxii. xl. lxix. lxxxviii. cxviii. 22, 23. Jes. iv. 2. vii. 14, 15. xlii. 1. liii. Zach. iii. 8, 9. xii. 10.---These are all glorious predictions of Christ.

C A N O N XVI.

*In prophetiis, quæ de Christo & regno ejus agunt, sensus ille est optimus qui quam maxime est spiritualis. Canon hic certam & facilem habet apodeixin.---Regnum enim Christi aliud prænunciatum non est in prophetiis, quam quale illud manifestum factum est in tempore. Atqui
illud*

of Christ is not otherwise declared and foretold in the prophecies, than as it manifestly appears in the several periods of time. Now that kingdom is not at all of this world; but it is spiritual, heavenly, and like God. John xviii. 36. My kingdom is not of this world. Rom. xiv. 17. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, i. e. earthly and sensual; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; i. e. internal, spiritual, and divine. Therefore no interpretation is of any worth or weight; none is right and good, which understands these things in a carnal and earthly sense, which are predicted of a thing spiritual: for the attributes and qualities of a spiritual subject are spiritual.

C A N O N XVII.

In prophecies; in some places which are prudently to be distinguished, you will find what is usually called a *υστερον προτερον*, a *last put first*: so that the subject on which the prophet dwells is
put

illud non est de hoc mundo, est SPIRITUALE. John xviii. 36. Rom. xiv. 17. Nulla igitur valet, nulla proba est prophetiarum interpretatio quæ corporatiter intelligit, quæ de re spirituali prædicantur. Rei enim spiritualis sunt attributa & prædicata spiritualia. Et SPIRITUS ipse, cum spiritus sit, spiritualia amat, non carnalia: & etiam tum ubi corporales imagines, aut a corporeis rebus desumptas locutiones, adhibet in oraculis de CHRISTO & REGNO ejus.

C A N O N XVII.

In prophetiis, quibusdam locis, prudenter discernendis, obtinet aliquod *υστερον προτερον*, ut nimirum id, in quo immorandum est, posteriore loco ponatur, ut continue & ad finem perducipossit.

put in the last place, that it may be carried on without interruption to the end.----See an example in Zech. ix. 9, 10, 11, compared with the 13th verse.

C A N O N XVIII.

The sacred writers of the New Testament, when they are about to confirm their doctrines from the prophetic writings, oftentimes borrow words from one prophet, and take the matter or fact from another.---See Matth. ii. 15. Hof. xi. 1. Jer. xxxi. 15. Rom. ii. 24. The words from Isai. lii. 5. The matter from Ezek. xxxvi. 20. Rom. ix. 26. Matth. xiii. 35. The words from Pf. lxxviii. 2. The matter from Pf. xlix. 4.

C A N O N XIX.

In things which are future, we must not indulge an ungovernable fancy, or wild conjectures; but we ought to judge in a manner worthy of the wisdom, faith, and modesty of a christian, concerning

C A N O N XVIII.

Scriptores Novi Testamenti sententias suas ex scripturis prophetiis confirmaturi, subinde ab uno propheta verba mutuuntur, ab alio resumunt.

C A N O N XIX.

In futuris non est indulgendum nostris conjecturis, sed ut dignum est fide & modestia christiana, quæ indefinitius dicuntur, & per prophetias parallelas non determinantur, reputandum, DEUM illa voluisse quoad modum, personas, tempora, loca, & species, posita esse in sua potestate. ---See these Canons of the great Campegius Vitringa, in his treatise, intituled, Typus Doctrinæ Prophetiæ, 4to, Franeker, 1726.

cerning all things which are indefinitely spoken in Scripture, and not fully determined by parallel prophecies. We must always deeply consider, that God determines, that the persons, times, places, modes and kinds of things, should be always deposited in his own breast, and intirely in his own power; to shew himself to be what he is, the soveraign and glorious LORD GOD.

V. CANONS, OR RULES, for the right understanding of the MORAL LAW, OR TEN COMMANDMENTS.

R U L E I.

The moral LAW is perfect, and it binds every one to full and exact conformity in the whole person to the righteousness of this law, and to entire obedience for ever; and in such a manner as to *require* the utmost perfection of every DUTY, and to *forbid* the least degree of every SIN.

R U L E II.

The LAW is extremely spiritual, and of such vast extent, that it reaches to the understanding, the will, and the affections; and to all the powers, motions, and passions of the soul; and to all our words, actions, and behaviour towards God and man.

R U L E III.

In this sacred LAW, one and the same thing,

in divers views and respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.

R U L E IV.

Where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded:---so where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included. Thus in the fifth command, the promise of long life, the contrary threatening to disobedient children is included.

R U L E V.

Whatever GOD forbids, is at *no* time to be done; what he commands, is *always* our duty: and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

R U L E VI.

Under *one* sin or duty, *all* of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, approaches to, and appearances of it, and provocations, motives or excitations to that sin or duty.

R U L E VII.

What is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound according to our places and stations to endeavour that it may be *avoided* or *performed* by other men, according to the duty of their

places or stations; otherwise we are partakers of their sins, and guilty before God.

R U L E VIII.

In whatever is commanded to other men, we are bound according to our places, stations, and employments, to be helpful to them, and to beware of partaking with others in whatever is forbidden.

See these excellent rules illustrated and enforced by pertinent passages of the word of God, in the ASSEMBLIES larger CATECHISM.

Let it be observed, that the aggravations of our own sins are judiciously comprized in the following words:--1. Quis? 2. Quid? 3. Ubi? 4. Quibus auxiliis? 5. Cur? 6. Quomodo? 7. Quando?---In English thus: Who? What? Where? With what assistance or aids? Why? How, or in what manner? When?---I have found these of unspeakeable use to myself for more than thirty years past. They are of admirable service to bring a christian to true repentance and deep humility.

VI. CANONS OR RULES for understanding the glorious GOSPEL.

R U L E I.

That only is true GOSPEL which is wisely adapted to promote the utmost GLORY of DIVINE GRACE. By grace we do not mean the good-will and bounty of God, as the creator and preserver
of

of all worlds; which bounty extends to the whole creation. God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. In this he acts according to that unbounded goodness which is essential to his nature. Many persons have no other conception of divine grace, which is the cause of salvation, than that it is this universal good-will of God, as creator, of which all creatures are the objects in their state of creation. This is a great and fatal mistake of the Socinians, and many others who verge towards their corrupt sentiments.

Divine love, which is the origin of our salvation, is the sovereign pleasure and good-will of God. There is a fitness in the exercise of goodness towards all creatures, as they were originally formed by God their maker. But God doth not provide for the recovery of *guilty* creatures, because it is fit in *itself*, that he should do so; or because it is agreeable to goodness, as it is natural to God. If this was the case, then God would not be at liberty to save, or not to save sinners: but making provision for their salvation would be *necessary* to God. For all acts of goodness, as it is natural to him, are necessary, and not free acts of his will, although his will acts freely in determining to put forth such acts of goodness.

Divine grace, from which our salvation springs,
is

is absolutely free favour, which acts without any inducement or motive in its objects. If we consider the temper and conduct of the subjects of salvation in their state of nature, we must be convinced of the truth of sovereign and absolute grace. We are naturally under the dominion of sin: lust is the governing principle in us: our carnal minds are enmity against GOD: our minds are alienated from the life of GOD. These are our hateful, beastly, and devilish DISPOSITIONS. And as to our conduct or behaviour, our conversation is according to the lusts of the flesh; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We were ALL foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

What can there be in creatures so blind, so guilty, so filthy, so full of brutal and devilish dispositions, so utterly unlike GOD, and determined in their hatred of his being and perfections, to invite the esteem, the desire, the good-will, or delight of GOD to them? In a word, we are as much fallen from GOD as the devils are, in tire despair only excepted; and could no more recover ourselves to the image of GOD than the devils can, without the aid of almighty, invincible, and victorious grace.

Men of corrupt minds, who hate the gospel, in order to disprove the absolute freedom of
divine

divine grace in our salvation, are obliged to rise up in direct contradiction to this dreadful, but real representation of the horrid disposition of our minds, and of our conduct to GOD in a state of nature ; and to maintain, that, in fact, we are not so *corrupt* in our hearts, nor so *criminal* in our actions, as the Scripture strongly and clearly represents us to be.

By grace we are saved. Eph. ii. 8. The kindness and love of GOD our saviour towards man, appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done ; but of his mercy hath he saved us. Titus iii. 5. It is of faith, that it might be by grace. Rom. iv. 16. Our salvation is intirely and absolutely of the grace of GOD, without any works of ours. The admission of them, as concurring causes with the grace of GOD, destroys the true nature of grace ; for if it be of works, then it is no more grace. Rom. xi. 6. Our works are not the *impulsive* cause of our salvation, for that is the grace of the Father : nor the *meritorious* cause, for that is the grace and redemption of the Son : nor the *efficient* cause, for that is the grace of the Spirit : nor the *final* cause of our salvation, for that is the glory of the grace of GOD, displayed to the very uttermost to eternity. The whole ultimate design of GOD, is to magnify the boundless riches of his grace. Let us try all the doctrines of the gospel by this rule : it is an
eternal

eternal and infallible rule: it will deceive no man. 'Tis a bright axiom of truth, " That whatever depreciates or eclipses the grace of God, is not gospel; it never was gospel; it never can be gospel; but proceeds from the corrupt wisdom and abominable pride of man." And, therefore, you may be as certain of this truth as of your own existence, that whatever principle is not calculated to promote the utmost glory of divine grace, cannot be true; it must be false, let it be embraced by any man, or set of men whatsoever. No popes, or councils, or synods, or assemblies of doctors in divinity, can make that doctrine to be true, which in the least degree impoverishes or eclipses the rich grace of God; and therefore never receive it, but reject it with everlasting scorn and abhorrence. Which leads us to observe,

R U L E II.

The true DOCTRINES of the GOSPEL are such, and must be such as exclude BOASTING from MAN. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law or established order of faith. Rom. iii. 27. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph. ii. 9. BOASTING is absolute or comparative.

ABSOLUTE BOASTING is this:--it consists in a man's thinking, affirming, and insisting upon it, that he has, in the course of his life, performed

the whole of his duty, and in such a manner as the law requires; and therefore he has a right to life, according to that law, which is the rule of his actions.

This kind of boasting cannot have place in any man who acknowledges himself a sinner, and that he stands in need of salvation: and, therefore, this is not that boasting which the apostle means, when he says, that boasting is excluded in the affair of salvation; but it is comparative boasting which this great man opposes.

COMPARATIVE BOASTING only can be intended, and it consists in thinking and affirming, "That, by a proper and wise improvement of those means which God affords to that end, we have secured to ourselves life and happiness, which some men have foolishly neglected to do, and therefore perish."

In the apprehension of many persons, the fact stands thus with men in the great business of salvation, God is pleased in infinite goodness to make proposals of pardon and peace to them, and affords them such advantages and means as are sufficient, if they are not wanting to themselves to enable them to obtain these blessings. Some men and women act the *wise*, and others the *foolish* part, in the possession of those advantages; and, therefore, the event is different, according to their different temper and conduct in the same

same advantageous circumstances.---For instance, PETER and JUDAS, through divine mercy, are favoured with proposals of pardon and salvation, and both have assistances and means of the same kind to facilitate the attainment of those blessings; yea, which are sufficient to that end, if wisely improved by both. PETER, he is so prudent as to consult his own welfare, and makes the best use of those helps and advantages, by which he obtains the great blessings which GOD in mercy offers and promises to bestow on such prudent conduct. On the other hand, JUDAS, he is foolishly unmindful of his eternal interests, and neglects to improve those aids which GOD grants him, by which he also might obtain life and happiness; and therefore he misses of the blessings which are offered and promised to be given on a good behaviour. Now, if this be the true state of the case, PETER has the proper ground for COMPARATIVE BOASTING, or the same reason for applauding his own wisdom and *virtue*, as Judas hath for censuring his own *vice*, and condemning his own folly; because each had the same gracious proposals and the same kind assistances; and, therefore, the welfare of PETER is owing to his own good sense and virtuous attention, as the ruin of JUDAS is the effect of his own folly and laziness. For PETER was not determined by divine influence to act as he has done; but his
determination

determination to act the wise and virtuous part, flowed from a rational consideration of the fitness and wisdom of acting in such a worthy manner: and it was possible for JUDAS to have determined to act in the same manner, and by that to have obtained the very same holiness and happiness to which Peter, by his virtue and good sense, acquired a right.

This is that boasting which is excluded in our salvation, and for which it is impossible that any man should have the least reason or foundation; because the WHOLE of our HOLINESS in principle and action is from GOD as the efficient cause: and all that he intends to save, he will surely bring to this humble and grateful acknowledgement, that we are NOTHING, and that it is by his GRACE alone we are what we are. Let us try every doctrine of the GOSPEL by this rule, which is so plainly laid down in Scripture; and let us be sure to reject with disdain every PRINCIPLE which agrees not to exclude boasting from man.

R U L E III.

That alone is true GOSPEL which is a proper FOUNDATION for strong CONSOLATION in all true BELIEVERS on earth.---It is the will of GOD, that all true christians in the world should enjoy such consolation; and, therefore, sentiments which are not suited to produce and maintain such comfort in the soul, cannot be *true*; let the sentiments

ements be held and propagated by any man or set of men whatsoever.

The deep peace and strong consolation of believers spring from, and are founded on the *security* of their most important interest, i. e. the ETERNAL SALVATION of their souls. If their best and noblest interest is safe and secure, their joy will be full; but if it be a matter quite uncertain and precarious in ITSELF, because it is not effectually provided by GOD, then the believer will fall into dejection and inexpressible perplexity of soul: for nothing in the whole world can more make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom GOD would not have made sad, Ezek. xiii. 22. than a supposition, that their eternal HAPPINESS is doubtful IN ITSELF; which it must be, if the pardon of their sins, if the justification of their souls, and if their perseverance in faith and holiness, depend on their fickle and corrupt will, without a determining influence upon it by the spirit of GOD.

Other men, who are not well acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, may think it is a sufficient ground of comfort and peace to have offers of pardon and salvation, with aids afforded to facilitate the practice of virtue and the obtaining a right to happiness.

But sound and serious believers, who are deeply convinced of their impotence, and the dreadful

dreadful depravity of their hearts, can hear of *nothing* more dismal and distressing than this; “ That their future happiness depends upon the free actings of their own will, without being determined in its volitions by the good SPIRIT of GOD; because they know that their determination to chuse what is spiritually good, is intirely the effect of the grace of GOD.

But we must advance much farther still, and affirm, that if it is fact that final salvation is dependent on the will of christians, without an effectual influence upon it by divine grace, their future BLESSEDNESS is a thing IMPOSSIBLE; and that they certainly know it must be, because they are sensible, that all acts of holiness in them are the pure effects of an invincible and efficacious operation of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT in their hearts, who works in them to will and to do, of his own sovereign good pleasure. Phil. ii. 13. And, therefore, let us not fail to examine every doctrine by this rule: for we may be assured, that any principle, which is not calculated to administer the STRONGEST CONSOLATION to regenerate persons, can be true, however plausible at first view it may appear to be.

R U L E IV.

The true GOSPEL DOCTRINES are always according to GODLINESS, or the real gospel promotes
vital

vital holiness in the souls of men to the very uttermost. No principle can come from God, which gives the least countenance to sin, or favours lust in the soul; or which supposes, that a *lower* degree of obedience is required of us now, because of our incapacity to yield a perfect and sinless obedience through our deep and horrid depravity which is within us.

To accommodate the law to our present weakness in its precepts, is the worst kind * of antinomianism; and to affirm, that we are not under the law, as a rule of action, is downright rebellion and insolence against God: 'tis such abandoned and scandalous licentiousness as ought to be abhorred by every true believer in the church of God.---To suppose we are not under the law, as a rule of ACTION to Christ our king, and a rule of GRATITUDE to Christ our redeemer; I say, such a supposition necessarily implies, that no acts are unlawful, or sinful; for where no law is, there is no transgression. We are not freed from the law, as a rule of conduct, nor is any abatement made in its preceptive part; no, not in the least. Neither does the divine law-giver make any allowances for our defects or imperfections, and what are sometimes called our unallowed and involuntary sins. Nor does he JUSTIFY our persons on the ground of a PARTIAL OBEDIENCE to his just and HOLY LAW. This would

* Dr. Owen.

would be to conceal, or deny, or misrepresent the true character of God, and be an everlasting dishonour to his justice, holiness, majesty, and eternal dominion over all.

We ought, therefore, strictly to examine every doctrine by this rule; and not, for one moment, advance any principle in religion, which is inconsistent with the purity, perfection, and extensive commands of the law. For God cannot abate; he never will abate of the strictness of his precepts, in order to save sinners; nor will he ever justify their persons without a RIGHTEOUSNESS, a divine and infinite RIGHTEOUSNESS, which is absolutely and eternally answerable to his precepts, in their utmost purity and extent. As we must not dare to corrupt the glorious doctrines of the gospel; so we must and will resolutely maintain the doctrine of the law in its purity, perfection, and dignity, whilst life, and thought, and immortality endures.

R U L E V.

The TRUTHS of the GOSPEL are one uniform glorious SYSTEM, consistent with itself, and with the wonderful and adorable CHARACTER of God, and with what is usually styled the ANALOGY of FAITH; and free from all CONTRADICTIONS and ABSURDITIES. Contradictory principles cannot possibly be truths. One or other of such principles must certainly be false. But there is no
inconsistency

inconsistency in the glorious gospel: it is all one beautiful system of grace; of free, absolute, sovereign grace. WORKS and GRACE, as CAUSES of SALVATION, are OPPOSITES; and, therefore, we must never dare to attribute our salvation *partly* to works, and *partly* to grace; nor ascribe it sometimes to one, and sometimes to the other.

There have been many, and there are still too many INCONSISTENT PREACHERS. And often we see the doctrinal part of a sermon and the application clash and disagree, either through the mistaken conceptions of the preacher, concerning some truths; or for want of a due consideration to express himself in such a manner, that his discourse may, in all parts of it, be uniform and consistent with the pure gospel, and with itself. The *former* is the effect of a weak and mistaken judgment; the *latter* discovers a want of attention, or a criminal neglect to compare spiritual things with spiritual; which is a great blemish and disgrace to the character of a true minister of the gospel of Christ.

These rules are most plainly scriptural, and therefore they are infallible and eternal. All the wisdom of the world, and all the artifices of hell, can never overthrow or destroy them: they are absolutely invincible, and triumphant over all opposition. Here we have firm footing, and

solid rock for our souls to eternal ages. Let us see what is done.

No doctrine which eclipses the glory of divine grace; which excludes not boasting; which is not a proper ground of *strong* consolation in true christians; which is not according to godliness, and allows of the least sin; which is inconsistent, or agrees not with the analogy of faith;--can be true.---Let us, therefore, carefully examine every sentiment in religion by these plain and easy rules. We may be absolutely certain, as we are of any axiom or truth in pure geometry, that those principles are divine truths which agree with them, and that those which do not are errors, let who will embrace and defend them. All the wisdom, and learning, and authority in the world can never make error to become truth; and great and omnipotent is the truth, it must and will prevail and triumph over error to eternity.

If all men, professing to believe divine revelation, would but honestly try their notions by these plain and easy RULES, and be determined in all their religious opinions by them, which we all ought to be, they could never pester and injure the church of Christ with pernicious doctrines, which many have done, and are now doing, to the great dishonour of God, and the inexpressible grief of wise and holy souls.

But

But as for us, who love the gospel, and have the honour to be put into the room and stead of God our Saviour himself, let us never be ashamed of, nor afraid to preach those precious doctrines which are capable of being proved true by those divine rules or evangelical canons, tho men of learning and science may object to them, and despise us for preaching them. The gospel always had, and we must expect it will have, numerous opposers, so long as the human mind remains carnal; for that will eternally deem the things of the spirit of God foolishness, and such as ought to be rejected by every worldly wise man.

R E C O L L E C T I O N.

Thus we have gone through the general rules for understanding the holy Scriptures---we have entered into the special rules for interpreting the word of God---the rules for understanding the prophets, from the learned and judicious Vitringa ---rules for understanding the moral law---and canons to assist us to discern the gospel of Christ, from the judicious and excellent Mr. Brine;---I do, with great cheerfulness and confidence, commit these rules, which have stood the test of ages, to the blessing of God our Saviour, and the deepest consideration of the people of God; praying that our love to Christ may abound yet more

more and more in knowledge, and in all judgement. Amen.

Select BOOKS on this SUBJECT.

1. Dr. Thomas Ridgeley's Sermon at the funeral of the great John Hurricn, 1731.
2. Mr. Brine's Answer to Dr. Foster, 8vo. 1746.
3. Vitringa's Typus Doctrinæ Prophetiæ, 4to. 1726.
4. The Assemblies larger Catechism, 8vo.
5. Diligence in Study; a Sermon by Mr. John Brine, 1757.----This is one of the most judicious and wise Sermons I ever read.

N. B. I am happy to inform my dear inquisitive readers, that all the rules for understanding the scriptures in general; and the prophets, the law and gospel in particular, are wisely observed and richly exemplified in the Expositions of Bp. Patrick, with Mr. Lowth's Continuation on the Prophets: in the amiable and striking Mr. Matthew Henry: by the great and learned Vitringa, in his famous Commentary on Isaiah: by Dr. Gill, in his vast work on the Old and New Testament: by Dr. Guise, in his judicious Exposition of the New Testament: and by the sprightly and devotional Dr. Doddridge, in his New Version and Paraphrase, 6 vols. 4to. with the great Dr. Owen's Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 4 vols. fol.---It is, I think, impossible for a true christian, or student of taste, to open any of these precious works, for one hour, without some singular improvement in knowledge, holiness, and pleasing devotion to God.---But for illustrations of particular passages of Scripture, none are equal to those of Dr. Witsius and Mr. Hervey. You can hardly open a page of their works, without meeting with some beautiful criticism, or devout remark on the most sublime and rich parts of the word of God. These two incomparable authors appear to have all the talents requisite to constitute the best expositors of Scripture: clear perception, rich imagination, correctness and delicacy of taste, lively passions, vigorous faith, rational ardent devotion, sound learning and elevation of thought, with every other imaginable excellence that can form the complete christian and the able divine. Read them ten thousand times, you are never weary; you are always instructed, and richly improved.

A C O N-