

believers? To every unbeliever for whom Christ has given himself a sacrifice, he will give faith to receive that sacrifice. The gospel warrants this to be believed.

2. He who admits the scriptures to be the rule of his judgment, is certainly required to believe, that Christ has already redeemed him from the curse of the law; or that his salvation is forever impossible; and that Christ will never save *efficiently*, any one whom he has not already saved *meritoriously*. To all the rest he will finally say, *I never knew you*. But he still says, All that the Father giveth me *shall come* to me; and shall in no wise be cast out. This also the gospel warrants all who read, or hear it, to believe.

3. Christ laid down his life for his chosen sheep, "whether they then believed in him or not." Faith is no cause or condition of redemption, though it is an infallible evidence of it. But if God has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for all his chosen people, how shall he not, with him also, freely give them his Holy Spirit, his holy word, and faith to receive it affectionately?

Mr. F. says, "there was no promise that Christ would save him, whether he believed in him or not." This is spoken of the man who, at last is found to have no interest in Christ. But what is meant by their being no promise, that Christ *would* save the lost man if he believed in him, or if he believed not? Is not this shutting the door of mercy on all men? Is it not saying Christ will save no one? I may be told Mr. F. never *meant* to say, Christ would not save the sinner, though he should believe in him, I dare say he did not, but it shows that he could say strange things. The gospel however, does not warrant us to believe him in this, any more than it does in many other of his erroneous assertions.

8. Speaking of a man in perdition, he says, "That for which he ought to have trusted in Christ was, the obtaining of mercy, in case he applied for it: for this there was a complete warrant in the gospel."

Our author here again supposes the effect to precede its own cause; for he has supposed an ungodly person, who has not obtained mercy, to trust in Christ. But mercy is the *root* of recumbency, as well as the object and end of it: not only is it sought and received by faith, but it also bestows faith. Whoever trusts in Christ for mercy, has

already obtained mercy. I obtained mercy, said Paul, while acting ignorantly in unbelief: for so I understand him; giving the Greek particle, *oti*, an adverbial sense, with regard to time. Paul obtained mercy while he remained in ignorance and unbelief: mercy met him before his faith was formed within him, and he was designed for a pattern to them that should afterwards believe on Christ to life everlasting.

Finally, Whoever trusts in Christ for mercy, does so, either through being regenerate, or as being still dead in sins: if the *latter* be the case, it is a merely natural act, and is carnal and mercenary, and to such recumbency there is no spiritual promise of mercy to be found: if the *former* be the fact, and the trust is that of a new-born soul, it is the fruit of mercy, and every such person is not only sure to apply for its continuance, even to eternal life; but, his application is sure to prove successful. In the first case, I see no such complete warrant as that Mr. F. talked of; and the second, is foreign from the question before us, which concerns the duty of the dead, and not of the living; of the carnal, and not of the spiritual.

Quot. "The gospel is a feast, *freely* provided; and *sinner*s of mankind are freely invited to partake of it. There is no mention of any gift or grant distinct from this; but this itself is a ground sufficient. It affords a complete *warrant* for *any* sinner, not indeed to believe the provisions to be his own, whether he accepts the invitation or not; but that relinquishing every thing that stands in competition with them, and receiving them as a *free gift*, they *shall* be his own."*

Ans. 1. Is the gospel a *feast freely provided*? Then are there not a people chosen to enjoy it? If it be a feast upon the sacrifice of Jesus, then it must be provided federally in the covenant of redemption, and sacrificially on the cross; for Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. But the provision of the covenant, and of the cross, was made for a loved and chosen people. Whom Jesus represented in covenant, he died for on the accursed tree; and to all these he sooner or later says, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken *for you*. He loved the church and gave himself for it. His perfected atonement is the children's bread. The provision is marked with forethought and wise design;

* Page 16.

nor can there be any feast in the gospel contained, but for the royal priesthood ; but these have an altar, whereof they have no declared right to eat that serve the tabernacle, or that cleave to the law in opposition to the gospel. Now, the gospel is intended to exhibit the preparations made by the settlements of grace, in, and with Christ, as the surety of his people. There can be no reference to any other persons in the doctrine, than those provided for in the covenant of promise, and whom Christ died for on the cross. Whom the Father adopted in his will, the Son redeemed by his blood, the Holy Spirit quickens by his power, and the gospel nourishes by its truths.

2. It is said, "Sinners of mankind are freely invited to partake of it." There are none on earth but sinners ; and therefore, they are sinners who are invited no doubt ; but this does not prove that sinners without distinction are invited. They are all sinners who are invited, but all sinners are not invited : in the sense in which Mr. F. evidently uses the term. The greater part of sinners never hear of the feast at all, which strongly testifies that it never was intended for them. And very many of those who hear of it, have no saving benefit by it ; nor ever experience any sense of their need of any such provision. They are chosen to see the table spread, and to hear of the good things prepared for all that want them, and to attend in the meetings of the saints, but they have no inward relish for these spiritual blessings, and often hear of the enjoyments of the righteous without envy or anxiety ; but not always without impression, to a certain extent. There are, however, many marks of difference amongst them who yet are all alike dead in sin. And except a man be born of the Spirit he *cannot see* the kingdom of God.

3. Inviting *sinners*, conveys no clear idea, as to the persons supposed to be invited, while the appellation remains unexplained and unknown. Different persons in an assembly would attach very different ideas to the term ; and some would question whether it could at all, with any fairness, be applied to them. In the established order of things, invitation properly follows preparation for the invited, and also a spiritual want and receptive capacity, qualifying the agent to enjoy the welcome given. And whom God invites, *he invites in love*, as truly as *he elected in love* ; for the elected, the redeemed, and the invited are

the same persons. Thus, in purpose, in purchase, and in power, God's people are the same.

4. When *sinner*s are invited, we are to understand, not such as are so *in fact* merely; but such as are so *in their own apprehensions and feelings*. "A sinner is a sacred thing, said *Mr. Hart*, the Holy Ghost has made him so." Their case is intimated by that of the publican: and they that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. The hungry and the thirsty are invited to the gospel feast, while the full soul continues to loathe the honey-comb. An invitation is not to give life to the dead, but to excite the living to pursue and esteem their privileges. "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But this can be no invitation to sinners in general, who experience no thirst, nor have any will for the things of the gospel.

5. The invitation of God, supposes the invited to be interested; for otherwise he would never invite them in love as he does. Nor does their interest in the provision depend upon their belief; though the evidence and enjoyment of it is thereby manifested. God gave us eternal life in his Son from everlasting; our receiving it is not *that* which makes it ours *in right*; but *in possession*. Complying with an invitation does not make the provisions to which I am invited mine, in right, but in enjoyment; for right is founded in the act of the giver, and not in that of the receiver. This is so plain that, nothing but a desire to uphold the yea and nay gospel, could have misguided our author to confound things so evidently distinct. "*Receiving them as a free gift they shall be his own.*" Why not say, they are possessed by him as his own? If a man receive a present, he receives it as his own, for his reception, and, as his, prior to the act of receiving it. It may be, the article was given into the hand of another for him, some time before it came to his hand; and at some distance from him, and being so given, to whom else can it be said to belong? A legatee receives certain bequeathments of the testator, at the hand of the executor, but surely his receiving them, cannot be the foundation of his right to them.

6. It is evident that *Mr. F.* could not see the distinction which the Holy Spirit has made in the scriptures, between the Father's giving grace *IN* Christ before the world

began,* and his giving it THROUGH Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart, in regeneration and conversion. He all along confounds the gift and the manifestation of it by the gospel. Faith was as really and properly a gift as any other thing; so that there can be no propriety in speaking of it as that for, or through, which all other things are certainly ours, in point of right. Doubtless, right and possession ought to be distinguished; the one is before faith, the other is through faith. But if men are determined to pay no attention to those necessary and scriptural distinctions, we shall certainly continue to be troubled with another gospel.

I am well aware that this subject respecting the sinner's warrant to believe has been differently stated by different authors, but as my business is to answer Mr. F.'s notions, it will not be expected that I should formally notice others. *Mr. Booth* has taken one way, and *Mr. Scott* another, but confusion and contrariness may be pointed out in their systems. For as they undertook to serve both sovereignty and conditionality; universal and restricted grace; no man need marvel if they seemed a little mazy in their performances. How could it be otherwise?

This much ado about the general warrant for all sinners, we must remember, does not pretend to save Esau, and Jacob is safe without it. Even Mr. F. has acknowledged "that none ever did or will believe in Christ, but those who are chosen of God from eternity." No. 14. A warrant to rely upon Christ refers to *special favour*, and is only necessary for the new-born and needy soul, that is apt, through a view of its own sins and unworthiness, to be sinfully and injuriously diffident, in its applications to God for salvation by Christ Jesus. It is useful to repel fear from the timid mind, through the power of the Holy Comforter, who for that purpose uses the encouraging language of the declarations and promises of the gospel. The Holy Spirit is engaged for the applicatory part of the divine plan of mercy and salvation; as truly as was the Son of God for the meritorious procurement of that salvation. No warrant, therefore, ought to be supposed, or mentioned, as extending beyond the Spirit's office, or as preceding the grace of it, in the regeneration of the chosen seed. The

* Eph. i. 3. 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. i. 1—3. and iii. 4, 7.

gospel cannot include any gracious warrant, beyond the will and power of its divine author. The grace given by the Father IN Christ, and meritoriously procured, BY Christ, is *dispensed* by the Holy Spirit, as sent from the Father and the Son, to the very same persons, to whom it was given, *in* and *by* the *ante-mundane* covenant; it is, I say, dispensed by a *passive* work in the hearts of the chosen seed, *prior* to the instrumentality of the gospel warrant, which written warrant becomes, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, a powerful mean of knowledge, sanctity, liberty, and joy.

SECTION IX.

ON INTEREST IN CHRIST, AND IN ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

THAT good men should deny that any unconverted sinner has interest in Christ, as the head of all spiritual blessings, while they profess to believe the doctrine of absolute and eternal election, has appeared to me as extraordinary, as for a serious man to deny the ordinance of believers' baptism, while he holds in his hand the New Testament, in which it is so fully represented and established, both as a duty and a privilege. It is nothing in favour of the system of Mr. F., that it led him to espouse the fallacious principle, of NO INTEREST BEFORE FAITH.

Mr. F. "Sinners *have no* interest in spiritual blessings, according to God's revealed will, while they continue in unbelief:—unconverted sinners *are not interested* in Christ. I am fully convinced that, whatever be the secret purpose of God concerning the unconverted, they are *all at present* under the curse of the law. The interest that any individual hath in Christ—*more than another*, is not revealed." On union with Christ he has spoken to the same effect. "The holy *nature* of faith, unites to Christ. Union with Christ is *the foundation of our interest* in the blessing of justification. Of him are ye IN Christ Jesus.—That I may be found IN him.—We are accepted IN the beloved.—There is now no condemnation to them that are IN Christ Jesus: now faith in him is that by which this union is effected."*

* Pref. page 12, 13. page 4, 6, 102, 103.

Faith is precious, and without it no man can please God ; but it does not follow that, we are to exalt it above its own sphere of acting, and attribute those things to faith which most evidently have far higher causality. I am so far from admitting that, faith is the foundation of union to Christ, and of interest in him ; that I reverse the idea, and affirm, that they are the causes of special faith. But, that an *evidence* and an *enjoyment* of *interest* are by faith obtained, under the Holy Spirit's enlightening and applying influence, is most willingly acknowledged. But Mr. F. confined his ideas to interest through the Holy Spirit, and entirely overlooked the proper ground of interest by the sovereign will of God the Father ; and so doing, he might be said in a sense, to assert truth ; yet, it was not the whole truth ; nor suited to give his readers any copious and uniform view of the subject of a gracious interest in the Son of God, as the head of the Church and Saviour of the body, chosen in him.

1. Interest may be viewed in two respects, both as *elective* and *effective* : or as *decretively constituted*, and as *efficaciously manifested*. The former is, by the eternal Father of our Lord ; the latter is, by the eternal Spirit of our Lord ; or, the first is, by an immanent act of the divine will ; the second is, by an effectual act of divine power ; the one precedes faith, the other is through faith. Interest is constituted by the former, and is manifested by the latter. Hence it is clear that, the trite language of *no interest before faith*, is fallacious.

2. Relative and influential interest may be further viewed by comparison. *Constituting* an interest in Christ was taking a certain fore-known people into Christ, as a public head by eternal election ; *manifesting* an interest, is bringing Christ into the hearts of the elect by power : the former is *real* interest, the latter is *revealed* interest. Constituting our interest was writing us in his will ; but manifesting it, is putting us in possession of the legacies : the former is real and absolute interest ; the latter is the believing enjoyment of it. Here it is easy to perceive the difference between *right* and *possession* : but the former is truly interest, the latter is the fruit of it. Constituting our interest was making us righteous in Christ, as the head of the elect body ; manifesting our interest, is by the Holy Spirit's witnessing that we are justified through faith.

Here is interest *before* faith, evidenced and enjoyed *by* faith. These distinctions ought never to be confounded, nor should the things so distinguished be separated. They cannot be divided in fact, but if it be done ministerially in words, God is dishonoured, and his people are injured. We are interested before we live by our interest.

3. Interest is of God, by election and regeneration, before the act of believing takes place. The sinner is saved, in three respects, before he becomes an actual believer in Christ. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *chose* him in his Son to salvation; the Son of God *redeemed* him to God by his blood; and the Holy Spirit *quickens* him into a vital union with Christ his living head; and all before he is a believer in Jesus, to the open salvation of his soul.* But all this is denied by the doctrine of Mr. F., which holds forth the unscriptural principle of *no interest before faith*.

4. Whoever is chosen in Christ is interested in Christ, but election precedes faith, therefore, interest must be before faith. None can be chosen in Christ, but he must be interested in Christ; therefore, Mr. F.'s sentiment denies election. The elect could not be loved in Christ, and Christ give himself as their Surety and Redeemer in covenant, before the world began, and yet they not be *interested* in all the blessings of sovereign love, and free redemption. They could not be written in the Lamb's book of life, and yet not be interested in, and eventually partakers of the life of that book. The life of all who shall be saved at last, was hid in Christ from of old; and, therefore, they must have been interested in that life, with all spiritual blessings.

5. The gospel contains no such doctrine as *no interest before faith*. It never teaches the converted person to conclude that, he was not interested in the favour of God before the time of his conversion. But on the contrary, that his conversion is the effect of his having been loved with an everlasting love, and that, therefore, he has been drawn to follow the Lord. *I have loved* thee, said Jehovah to his people, and have therefore drawn thee. He *loved* me, said Paul, and gave himself for me. Had Paul no interest in Christ, when Christ gave himself for him? Who

* Titus iii. 4, 7. Eph. ii. 4, 9. John x. 26.

but a *very* moderate calvinist can believe such a thing. Yet, Mr. F. says, "Unconverted sinners are not interested in Christ."

6. If no unconverted sinner is interested in Christ, then neither can Christ be interested in any unconverted sinner; but, Christ is interested in many unconverted sinners; therefore, many unconverted sinners are interested in Christ. If interest is by the will of God, and not merely by the transitive act of his power, then it must be eternal, for the acts of the divine will are eternal; and, if so, interest must be before faith. God's elect were known, loved, and blessed in Christ, before the world, therefore, before they believed. Now, surely, it will not be pretended that, they might be known and loved, yea blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and yet not be interested in the love, or the blessings.

7. According to Mr. F.'s extravagant notion of no interest but by faith; all mankind are alike without any interest or share in Christ, until some of them believe, nothing being done for and in behalf of one more than for another, until that act of belief is put forth. This is excluding election, the covenant of grace, the work of the Mediator, and the truth of those texts, which represent redemption as a work meritoriously finished FOR a certain people; many of whom are yet unborn, or if living on earth, are in unregeneracy. Thus, this moderate calvinism would exclude the whole of the fundamental principles of the christian system. Let the serious be aware of it, and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints: and that knowing the time is come upon professors, in which they will not endure sound doctrine, that now it is high time for the truly spiritual to awake out of sleep.*

8. "The interest that *any* individual hath in Christ more than another is not revealed." This is utterly false. "Interest as revealed respects us *as characters*."† True; but still it respects us *as persons* possessed of those characters. It is certain that the interest of every believing individual is revealed, beyond any thing that can be known of them that believe not. But as Mr. F. knew these things, what could induce him to write as he did? He speaks of *interest*, and of its being *revealed*; if these two are distinguishable, and one of them has the *priority*, it will follow that, in-

* Rom. xiii. 11.

† Page 6.

terest must be, before it is revealed, in other words, it must be before faith! Then Mr. F. has egregiously erred from the truth in asserting the things before quoted.

9. He said likewise, "that he was fully convinced that all the unconverted were *under the curse* of the law." Surely this is a vague way of writing on this subject, especially in a controversial treatise. I suppose he sheltered himself under the words of the Apostle, who says, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." But then the Apostle directly adds, "Christ hath *redeemed us from the curse* of the law, being made a curse for us." Are not both these sentences true? It will hardly be pretended that Paul by the *us*, meant believers only; for then all the unbelievers must remain for ever under the curse of the law. Mr. F. has also said, "That a being redeemed from the curse of the law, does not necessarily suppose the subject to be in the actual possession of that blessing; yet, to understand it of any thing less than such a virtual redemption as *effectually secured our enjoyment* of deliverance in the fulness of time, is to reduce it to no meaning at all. Certain it is that our being redeemed from the curse of the law, refers not to what takes place on our believing, but to what was done at the time when Christ was made a curse for us by hanging upon the tree."* Very well. Then to be interested in redemption, and to enjoy that interest by believing, are two distinguishable favours, and one *precedes* the other; so that we have interest before faith, though we have the evidence and enjoyment of that interest only through faith. Thus the *Moderate* and the *Hypers* meet, as if by stern necessity.

How then, after all, are the unconverted all under the curse of the law? They can only be under it in such a sense as will allow that, many of them are redeemed at the same time from that curse, by the death of Christ. Yes, reader, they are so redeemed, even according to Mr. F. as that "their deliverance is effectually secured." What then? Why, then it follows that many unconverted sinners are interested in Christ, and are not left to suffer the curse of God's righteous law: and then the doctrine of *no interest before faith* is proved to be a pernicious falsehood. In short, he that is not interested before faith, or

* Reply to Philanthropos, page 70, Note.

while without faith, can never become interested at all. For *God is of one mind, and who can turn him ? and what his soul desireth that he doeth. I saw the dead small and great stand before God,—and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire :* that is, all who were not interested.

When Paul says, “Christ hath redeemed us,” he must intend by the term, all that ever shall be saved, all the elect. And when he says, “For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse;” he cannot be thought to have contradicted himself. His meaning must therefore be, that all who are working at the law for righteousness and life, are, by the same law, accursed *as sinners of Adam’s race*; and that their works cannot possibly deliver them, but that all such must have perished for ever, if Christ had not sovereignly redeemed a remnant according to the election of grace.

10. As to the UNION to Christ above mentioned, it is not to be restricted to a vital union, which is but the effect of a decretive one. “As the decree of election flows from the love of God,” says *Doctor Gill*, “and is in Christ from everlasting, there must of course be an union to him so early : the union of the elect to God, as it is in its original, is *an internal immanent act* in God. The love of God is indeed the bond of union between God and his chosen people, or that by which he has taken them into near union with himself. This bond of union is indissoluble by the joint power of men and devils. Now of this love-union, there are several branches, or illustrations and confirmations, and all *in eternity*. There is an election-union, a conjugal-union, a federal-union, and a legal union, between Christ and the elect. In a word, union to Christ is *the first thing*, the first blessing of grace flowing from love, and effected by it; and hence is the application of all others; *of him are ye in Christ Jesus*, first loved and united to Christ, and then it follows, *who of God* is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” Thus, the Doctor most forcibly asserts union before faith, and according to him, the union may be justly said to be the foundation of interest. But such views are now not to be mentioned, except to censure them as highly injurious : so greatly are the churches degenerated, since the times of *Doctor Gill* and his fellow-labourers in the

kingdom of our Lord. The highest notion of union now approved, is union by faith: "the holy nature of faith unites to Christ," saith Mr. F. But whence have we this holy nature, if regeneration be the highest branch of interest and union admitted? Our ministers and churches, I fear, are mostly contented with asserting that, all the unconverted are under the curse of the law, and that none of them have any interest in Christ. Offered grace that may be rejected, and sufficient merit that does not suffice, are in our day in high request. Blessed are all they, who, believing in Jesus to the saving of their souls, renounce all such God-dishonouring notions.

Mr. F.'s notions of union by faith, and no interest before faith, seem to proceed entirely on the supposition, that men are chosen on the ground of their believing, and that election is, therefore, conditional. Yet, he says, "It is granted, that none ever did, or will believe in Christ, but those who are chosen of God from eternity." Thus the gospel with him was yea and nay, to the delight of the Arminians, as the letters of Mr. Dan Taylor witness. To assert an election of persons from eternity in Christ; and a consequent redemption of the same persons exclusively by Christ, and at the same time to declare that no unconverted sinner is interested in Christ, is egregiously inconsistent with the word of God, and contrary to common sense.

SECTION X.

ON THE PROMISE, AS GIVEN AND RECEIVED.

OUR author imagined, that God's promise might be both *general* and *particular*. Hence he has said, "The sense in which the promise is taken, by what is called appropriating faith, is not the same as that in which it is given in the promise itself. As *given* in the word, the promise is general, applying *equally* to one sinner as to another, but as *taken*, it is considered as particular, and as ensuring salvation."*

The distinction here made appears to me to be altogether unscriptural, and consequently injurious and indefensible. By *the promise*, he must certainly mean the promise of life

* Page 12.