

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

COVENANT OF GRACE.

BY EDWARD BLACKSTOCK,

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"An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

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PREFACE.

SOME months ago, I was for a short time supplying at York-Street Chapel, in Leicester. Upon one occasion, I spoke there from Psalm lxxxix. 34. After the service, a particular friend of mine said the discourse had been profitable to him, and earnestly requested me to write the substance of it when I had leisure, and let him have what I had written, when, with my permission, he would have it published for me. I consented to his kind proposal, and have attended to it as well as I was able. This is what has brought this little piece before the public.

Should it be found to contain any doctrinal errors or unscriptural notions, I do not wish any man to spare them; yet I crave some indulgence from the God-fearing man, on the following accounts: I am an unlearned man, having had to pick up the little learning I possess out of great difficulties; and, as this is the first time I have ever attempted to issue anything from the press, I am quite unacquainted with the business of publishing.

I have done all in my power to render this attempt acceptable to the church of God; nevertheless, it no doubt contains many faults, which I beg the indulgent reader to excuse. Indeed, I am persuaded that no production can be free from blemishes which proceeds from the hand of fallen man.

I was induced to write the Address purely from feelings of attachment to the suffering church of God. Should any Christian reader feel a union to me for the truth's sake, all I request of him is an interest in his prayers.

May the Holy Ghost grant his precious unction with whatever of truth this piece contains.

Christian Reader, fare thee well. Thine to serve in the Gospel of Christ,

E. BLACKSTOCK.

Potton, Beds, 1834.

A DISCOURSE.

“ MY COVENANT WILL I NOT BREAK, NOR ALTER THE THING THAT IS GONE OUT OF MY LIPS.”—Ps. LXXXIX. 34.

A COVENANT is an agreement between two or more persons, or parties, whereby they mutually bind themselves to the performance of the conditions laid down therein. This is the covenant of grace: the Persons who were engaged in its formation, are the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; the triune Jehovah. There is no subject of greater magnitude or importance. A knowledge of this covenant, from the teachings of the Holy Ghost, will inspire the “vessel of mercy,” with true confidence. It affords strong consolations. When the children of the kingdom shall, by the grace of God, learn to look daily into this covenant, they shall find more peace and joy than they now obtain, whilst seeking the living amongst the dead. As, in the opening of this subject, it is necessary to refer frequently to the Holy Trinity, I will endeavour to speak from the words as follows:—

I. View the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity.

II. View the making of the covenant of grace.

III. View the nature of this covenant.

IV. View the manner in which the Holy Ghost brings the “vessel of mercy,” to know his interest in it.

I. View the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity.

This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy. A great part of mankind appear to be sunk in infidelity. Even in this land of Bibles, Infidels are very numerous. Alas, how many of our British youth have imbibed their deadly poison! Arians, Deists, and even Atheists, when opportunity serves, do not hesitate to attack the little flock of Christ. I sincerely pity that part of the rising generation who live in large towns, on account of the temptations of this kind which they frequently have to undergo. To fortify their minds, in a natural sense, against the impudent attacks of these bold men, seems very desirable. I will, therefore, try to prove, from right reason

and material objects, that there is a great and glorious Lord God. For instance, in working, the utmost that a man can do is to take up a material, alter its form and its colour, and then give it a new name. Strictly speaking, he cannot make any thing. No mere creature can create. None but God could produce a single atom; therefore, every atom, every grain of sand, turns preacher, and the whole material universe proclaims a Deity. Then, to the eye of right reason, the appearance of the smallest creature proves that there is a Creator, and he who creates must be God. He that denies there is a God, does, in effect, deny his own existence; for if there were no God, there could not be a single creature. To deny that there is a God, and pretend to account for the appearance of the universe merely by the "chanceful association of matters," is a monstrous absurdity. It is, indeed, to "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." As it is manifest that there is a God, so it is most certain, there is but one. Right reason and Scripture agree in this. He who is God must be almighty; almighty power cannot be possessed by two beings at once. He who is God must fill universal space with his presence; two beings cannot each fill universal space with their presence; therefore there is but one God. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God, is one Lord." "I am that I am, is his name; that is his memorial, throughout all generations." But one of the mistakes, common to natural men, respects the nature of the Deity. Fallen man is not only a self-admirer, but, he is apt to imagine that the Deity is somewhat like unto himself, pleased with what he is pleased with, and offended at what he is offended at. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." No man can possess a true spiritual knowledge of God, unless it be specially given him from above. The written word, however precious it is in itself, affords no spiritual knowledge, apart from the invaluable teachings of the Holy Ghost. When a man is once endowed with a true understanding, the knowledge of God is obtained by the shinings of the Holy Spirit, through the medium of the word, into that understanding.

I will now consider the nature, or the perfections, of God. These are, his Wisdom, Holiness, Righteousness, Justice, Goodness, Grace, Mercy, Love, Truth, Power, Faithfulness, Immutability, Sovereignty, Omniscience, and Omnipresence.

His Wisdom is seen in the formation of the universe, and in the mechanism of the human frame. In the sun, the moon, and the starry hosts; in the book of Providence, the mysteries of Grace, and the wonders of Redemption. This Wisdom is

discovered in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ; in God's possessing the knowledge of all things, and all events; in his proposing to himself the highest end—his own glory, and in shaping every event towards the accomplishment of that end; in the deep mysteries turned up by his providence, and in the harmony of his plan, which is without a single mistake. To the believer, how glorious is this wisdom! As its heavenly rays fall upon his spirit, he exclaims with Paul, "O the depths, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!"

His Holiness.—Adam the first, before the fall, was a holy man. The elect angels are confirmed in a state of holiness; but Adam, in his pristine state, was not; and the holy angels, in their confirmed state, do not present so full a copy of God's holiness, as may be seen upon the regenerated soul. However their holiness is derived, it is created; but the holiness of God is underived; it is uncreated. It is infinite, immaculate, and eternal. God is the great and for ever adorable Uncreate! He is the fountain of all true holiness. When a few rays of this holiness fall, through the medium of the law, into the conscience of the awakened sinner, he quakes and trembles! But when this holiness, through the medium of the gospel, lets fall a few sweet rays upon his spirit, it fills him with holy reverence. This holiness, seen in the lovely countenance of Jesus, fixes a deep impression on the soul, and raises it to a transport of holy joy. God is holy, and all his thoughts, words, ways, and works, are holy. The believer could not bear for a moment the full glories of this bright attribute; nor, indeed, of any other. It is, therefore, necessary that we should, whilst here, know but in part. For ever adored be the Lord God of Israel, whose title is, "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises!"

His Righteousness.—The uprightness, or integrity, of his nature. God will not, and, with reverence be it spoken, he cannot, do wrong. To say that he does that which is wrong in itself, but right merely because he does it, would be to defame him. The known rectitude of his nature is a sufficient guarantee to his actions. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth, do rightly?" The believer, in his right mind, needs no other proof that a thing, or action, is right, than to be assured that God has done it. The righteousness of God appears in his casting down from heaven the angels that sinned; in the giving of the law; in his denunciations against sin and sinners; in the judgments he brings upon many of the wicked, in this life; and especially in his punishing Christ, who bore, by imputation, the sins of his people. It is true, this divine attribute is, to us, often covered with a cloud; but the day is

coming when angels, men, and devils shall witness the uniform rectitude of the Divine procedure. His righteousness shall appear in all his councils, ways, words, and works.

His Justice appears to the greatest advantage on the Cross of Christ. In punishing Jesus, he hath pledged himself as a just God. The justification of the whole church is not only an act of grace but of justice. In the great day of judgment, God will deal with the wicked in strict justice; he will give unto them as their work shall be. Weighing their thoughts, words, and actions in the balances of the sanctuary, he will punish them according to their transgressions. The songs of praises uttered by the redeemed, and the smoke of the torments of the damned, will for ever declare that God is a just God.

The Goodness of God is his beneficence, or active generosity. He is good, and doeth good. The goodness of God endureth continually. He delights in doing good to his creatures. To do this is perfectly natural to him; hence he calls the work of vengeance a strange work. He is the blessed God, everlastingly happy and blessed in the enjoyment of himself. All his creatures can never raise the happiness, nor exalt the essential glory, of the Most High, in the smallest degree. He needed them not. Then, his forming angels and men indubitably proves that he is good. His goodness is displayed in the brilliant machinery of the heavens. He formed the sun to rule by day, the moon and the stars to rule by night. His goodness appears in creating the beasts, birds, fishes, and insects; and is further displayed in his ever-watchful Providence, that protects, feeds, guides, and preserves myriads upon myriads of creatures. He stooped to wing the burning Seraphim, yet he supplies the ravens with food, and preserves from destruction the smallest animalcule. O how great is his goodness! for he maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and upon the unjust.

His Grace.—In accordance with this amiable and adorable attribute of his nature, he deals not with the elect according to their own desert, but in a way of distinguishing favour. They merit everlasting burnings; he bestows upon them everlasting happiness. Grace is free favour. It is diametrically opposite to the false notion of human merit; and is as much above it as the nature of God is higher than that of a poor, blind Pharisee. Upon the elect, grace bestows God himself and all spiritual blessings. The whole salvation of the Church is one vast piece of grace. Grace is a never-ebbing, but, an everflowing, tide. O! methinks immortal tongues are too feeble, and eternity itself is not long enough, fully to express the wonders of this glorious attribute.

Mercy is the tender compassion of God, the sounding of his bowels towards his prodigals. To show mercy to sinners, is the high prerogative of the King of kings. Some rays of God's mercy have fallen upon mankind at large; his tender mercies are over all his works: but the fulness of this sweetly-overwhelming attribute is bestowed upon the Lord's chosen! "The election hath obtained it." Here is a company of poor worms, who, in their unnatural, devilish enmity, have lifted up their feeble arm of resistance against Him that formed them. What shall be done unto them? Will he not crush them to atoms? Shall not the anger of the Lord smoke against them? No: "wonder, O Heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" No; for the bowels of Mercy yearn over the rebels! The mercy of God is rich, sovereign, and free; from everlasting, to everlasting.

"Dissolved by thy sun-shine, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

O precious, precious mercy, to me, a poor sinner!

Love, as it exists in the divine nature, is not a passion; but a glorious perfection. Its heights, depths, lengths, and breadths, cannot be described. Who can take its dimensions? What line can sound its depths? God only knows the love of God. It is high as the vaulted arches of the third heavens; deep as the gates of hell; broad as the election, and long as vast eternity. Finite minds are too narrow to comprehend it, and tongues of clay much too feeble to utter it. O how impossible it is for me to express what the immortal tongues of the redeemed cannot utter, though assisted in their sublime songs by a grand choir of holy angels. This love is rich, sovereign, free, unchangeable, and eternal. To utter all that can be expressed, in three words, we must say with the apostle John, "*God is love.*"

His Truth.—Nothing is more contrary to the nature of God than falsehood; nothing is more odious to him. In eternity, the Father gave his word to the Son; to the fulfilment of that word, he steadfastly adheres. He hath, in Christ, made many great and precious promises to the church. He will completely fulfil them. He has pronounced many dreadful threatenings against the wicked, which he will not fail to execute. The line which his sovereignty, or his righteousness, has drawn, his truth has invariably kept. He is God, and his truth is inviolable.

His Power.—The combined powers of mankind have accomplished what man calls great things. Angels far excel men in strength; it is admitted that the devils have great power; but all the power of men, of angels, and of devils, must not be

compared with the power of God. All power is his, in heaven, earth, and hell: without him, there were no power at all. His power was displayed in forming the universe out of nothing, by a word, and in creating angels and men. Whether we look beneath us, around us, above us, or within us, we see the wonders of his might. His providence is a perpetual creation, and wonderfully displays this glorious attribute, which, by the church, is seen to still greater advantage in the internal work of the Spirit. But, the power of God is most displayed where we are least inclined to look for it, even on the Cross of Christ. His arm is an almighty arm. He can do any thing, and every thing, he pleases; because he is omnipotent. How dreadful must it be to a man to know that this power is employed against him! And how safe must he feel who knows that the strength of Israel is on his side: he has no cause to fear; therefore saith the Lord, "Hear ye, that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might."

His Faithfulness.—He always fulfils his promises to the full extent of their meaning. He has never once deceived any of those who have trusted in him. Had he failed in the performance of a single declaration, to rest upon his word would have been to stand on dubious ground, as the promises are the basis and the plea of faith. But, he has ever proved his word to be as firm as his existence. He will fulfil it. His eternal faithfulness secures this. O, Lord God of Hosts, "who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee?" The Father will steadfastly adhere, not only to the promises he hath made to Christ, but to all those he hath made to his people in his name. These promises, supported by the faithfulness of God, are firmer than a rock of adamant. The promises are made, the oath is taken. God's faithfulness is deeply engaged, and his honour is pledged; what stake can equal this? What would the perishing of a million worlds have been, compared with the least tarnishing of the honour of God? The point of honour, then, with true believers, is to plead the promises, and rest upon the divine faithfulness.

"What Christ has said, must be fulfill'd,
On this firm rock, believers build."

His Immutability, or unchangeableness.—If God could change his mind, that changing would undermine every attribute of his nature, and would un-deify him. The Armenians represent that he has often changed his mind. Their principles can never be sufficiently abhorred! Are they not

"Industrious, to sound abroad,
A disappointed, changing, God."

Popular as their doctrine is, it is strongly leavened with Atheism!! But the God of Israel knows no change. He says, I am the Lord, I change not. He is in one mind, who can turn him? He never had but one mind. He, in eternity, laid down his plan, and he will never swerve from it, to the right hand, nor to the left. That plan can never be subject either to alterations or improvements. To change it in any way, would be to mar it. The immutability of his nature secures the accomplishment of his plan. Fallen man may twist about like an eel, but God knows not the shadow of a turning. Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased. For ever adored be the unchangeable Jehovah of Hosts!

His Sovereignty.—What poor finite being can, without trembling, look into this depth profound? God, being the maker of the universe, had no occasion to subject the work of his hands to the direction of fate, the chaos of chance, or the government of the creatures. Adam, in his pure state, was unfit to be his own governor. How much less are his degenerate sons fit to be sovereigns over their own selves! Whether has the clay or the potter the greater right to reign? What is so meet as that he who made the universe should govern it? All that the creature has to do with the government of the universe, is to look on, submit, be silent, and adore. He who sees the glory of the other attributes will soon learn to acknowledge the sovereignty of God; knowing that he is “too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.” To the enlightened understanding, every event bears the impress of the divine sovereignty. Why was this a blade of grass? Why was it not a flower? Why was this man poor and that man rich? Why was this man a king and that man a beggar? These, and a thousand other questions, must be resolved into the sovereignty of God. Had he not a right to permit the fall of part of the angels if it pleased him? Had he not a right to choose these and leave those to fall? Had he not a right to permit the fall of man, or to choose a part of them as vessels of mercy, afore prepared to glory, and leave the residue to the consequences of the fall? All this he has done, and what part of his conduct stands impeachable? May not the decrees of God take hold of every event, without either destroying the accountability of the finally impenitent sinner or making God the author of sin? I will venture to say, all this may be done, for it is the case; and yet, as Christ, when on the earth, said, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” The Father may say, “Which of you convinceth me of wrong?” His putting a part of mankind into the covenant of grace, and

his leaving the remaining part of them out, were acts of pure sovereignty. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? Nay but, O man! who art thou that replyest against God?"

He is Omniscient.—He, with one glance, beholds all the things, and all the events, of time and eternity. He sees the end from the beginning. With him, there is no past nor future. With him, time and eternity are ever present. He knows all things, in heaven, on earth, and in hell. He searches the hearts of men, and knows all their thoughts. To him there is no obscure place; the darkness and the light are both alike to him. How glorious must that vision be, which at once explores the hearts, and observes the goings, of myriads and myriads of men, investigating every heart as particularly as if there were but that one to examine. "To whom, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?" Consider the spirits of just men made perfect, the angelic legions, the sun, the moon, and the starry hosts; view this ponderous globe, the eight hundreds of millions of our own species that are upon it; the lofty mountains, the rugged rocks, the numerous hills, the rivers, streams, woods, and plains; the waste howling desert; the numerous beasts, birds, and insects; see the trees, plants, herbs, and flowers; the green meads, and the numberless fields of corn; the old ocean with all its finny tenantry; explore, if possible, the bowels of mother earth, with all her hidden treasures, yea, even hell itself, with its miserable spirits and their fierce tormentors, together with all the creatures that ever lived or ever shall live; they are at once surveyed by the Omniscient Eye!

"Amazing knowledge, vast and great;
What large extent, what lofty height;
My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is, in the boundless prospect, lost."

His Omnipresence.—His glorious presence is in heaven; his gracious presence with his church on earth; and his awful presence in ever-burning hell. The swiftest courier, travelling through the whole course of time, towards the utmost limits of space, could not half reach the goal. Who shall ascend into heaven, and climb his "topless throne?" Who shall descend into the awful depths of abysmal hell? Or, who can take the wings of the morning, flee over creation's verge, and pass beyond the border of where reign old Chaos and eternal night? God is everywhere.

True faith, in the bosom of the simplest soul, when looking for a moment on the countenance of our precious Lord Jesus,

sees and realizes more of the glories of the blessed God than I shall ever be able to set down on paper. What majesty there is in the answer which the Lord God makes unto his servant Job, out of the whirlwind: "Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding, who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it, whereupon are the foundations thereof fashioned? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

For the least knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity, we are indebted to the bible. The mind of man, unassisted would never think of this truth. It is quite out of his reach; yet it is a doctrine plainly taught in the scriptures; and as they are true, so is this doctrine. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Here, the Deity, speaking of himself, uses the plural pronouns, us, and our. The height of wickedness amongst the old heathens appeared in their multiplying of false gods. Paul reproaches the heathens, saying, "There be gods many, and lords many." I cannot think that God, when speaking of himself, would unnecessarily have used plural pronouns. What was so likely to have led the people astray, as the unnecessary use of such words by the inspired penmen? God has always set his face against the multiplying of false gods. Though the pronouns referred to are not intended to convey the least idea of plurality of gods, yet there is a meaning. For, there are Three Persons in the Deity—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. The work of creation is ascribed to the Holy Trinity. God the Father said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Even then the Word was with God; the Word was God; and by and for him all things were created. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Here are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, performing the work of creation. The three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, remind me of the doctrine I am speaking of. Abraham points to the Father offering up his dear Son; Isaac, when bound, and stretched upon the altar, typifies Christ, as a sacrifice; and Jacob, the wrestler, points out the wrestling, the invincible Spirit. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The psalmist says, "The Lord said unto my Lord." Here the Father and the Lord Christ are plainly intended. Again he says, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Lay these scriptures together, and here is the doctrine

I am contending for. Also, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me." "Who will go for us?" Here the Father and the Holy Spirit are spoken of; but "Here am I, send me," are the words of Christ. And now, "the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me." The burning Seraphims cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts"—Holy Father, Holy Word, and Holy Ghost. Is not this doctrine contained in that memorable expression "the Lord God?" Is not the word "Jehovah," which, in our version, is rendered Lord, in the singular number? Is not the word "God," in our version, "Adonai" in the original? And does not this word stand in the plural form? Here, then, is the doctrine of Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. Thus, even in old time, this great truth shone out of obscurity; and firm promises assured the church of a fuller development of it. Did not God the Father promise to send his Son? "Behold, the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple;" and his Spirit? "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The very name of the blessed Saviour stands under cover, in the old Testament. He is typified by Joshua, a name signifying a Saviour, and synonymous with that of Jesus. He is also called the Anointed; namely, the Christ. How thin is that veil which anciently concealed the name of the Saviour! But I will come to the personal testimony of Christ, for the purpose of establishing the doctrine of the Trinity. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth. He shall not speak of himself; he shall glorify me; he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and show it unto you. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me, through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." Here Christ, in speaking of God, makes use of the three personal pronouns, I, thou, and he. When these words are taken in their literal and grammatical sense, the doctrine of the Trinity appears most obvious. It is not more plain that the sun shines when he is in his full meridian, than that the doctrine of three divine Persons in one Jehovah is contained in these words. Here, O believer, let us joyfully make our little stand, unmoved by the pityful Anti-Trinitarian schools! "Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened; and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a Dove, and rested upon him;" and from the excellent glory, the voice of the

Father is heard proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Trinitarians, how soul-satisfying is this vision! The ministers of Christ are commanded to baptize in three names. Why? Because there are three Persons in the Godhead: "baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," &c. (1 John v. 7.) In these words, the doctrine of the Trinity is thrice asserted. First, "there are three that bear record in heaven:" secondly, their names are given, "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost:" thirdly, we have the summing up, "these Three," and yet the undivided essence of the Deity is positively declared; "these Three are One:" One innature, power, glory, and being. If it be asserted that some of the Greek copies have not the contents of this verse in them, that does not militate against this truth. If some copies do not contain them, others do (as the learned inform us); and, I have no doubt they would have appeared in every copy, had it not been for the cunning Arian foxes. Take these words out, and you destroy the connexion; then, the following words have evidently lost their antecedent. Let them stand, and Apollyon himself cannot get past them without acknowledging the Trinity. Again, I remark, that Paul closes his second epistle to the church at Corinth in these words; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." These words need no comment. The doctrine of the Trinity is a great Scripture truth. A good man, through the force of temptation, may for a while be puzzled at this doctrine, and, whilst in that snare, he may almost hesitate to receive it; but the Lord will not suffer him to die in that state of mind. If I were sure that any professor died denying this doctrine, or ever hesitating to receive it, I should have no hope that he were saved. This is the foundation. If a man die not on the foundation, as surely as God is true, he must perish. Maintaining this doctrine, christianity is at least consistent with itself; but denying it, a man perverts the whole christian scheme. He at once does away with the whole fabric of divine truth; he opens a door of hope for Jews, Turks, Arians, Socinians, Sabellians, Deists, Atheists, and even Devils! In my present mind, if I were to lose entirely my foothold of this doctrine, I would throw up my profession. I would relinquish both preaching and hearing the gospel. I would then lay the Bible aside, and endeavour to follow the light of nature, as being the readiest and the safest way to attain unto the true knowledge of God. The following couplet, which I at this moment

believe to be blasphemous, must, alas! then become my motto:

“ For modes of faith, let stupid bigots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Many say, they will not believe this doctrine because they cannot understand it. How, say they, can one be three, and three be one? I believe no Arithmetician, or Mathematician, can answer such a question; so as to satisfy the querists. If a man's faith reject all mysteries, and he receive nothing which he cannot understand, he cannot come here. Would you bring the line “ human reason ” to sound these depths? Would you come and hold up your farthing candle to see whether the sun shines or not? Sooner may you tell the stars, count the grains of sand by the sea shore or the drops of which the old ocean is composed, or number the moments in for “ ever and ever,” than comprehend this doctrine. Can a little fly understand the laws by which a great empire is governed? can you compress the immensity of space in the hollow of your hand? Then, how can you, reasonably, expect to understand this deep doctrine? Paul did not understand it, nor does he now; but he acknowledged the mystery; and that is what he exhorted the church at Colosse to do. You cannot tell how the grass grows; yet you acknowledge it does grow. Now, how very unfair it must be in any man to believe that which is mysterious in nature, but to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because, forsooth, he does not understand it. Hear, O earth! A poor, breathing, sinful, particle of dust and ashes, cannot understand how God can exist in three co-equal Persons, and, then, O tempora O mores! he refuses to put his insignificant seal to it. How can these things be? say these masters in Israel. To be serious, God only can fully comprehend the knowledge of God. If I pretend to understand the knowledge of God fully, there would be no mystery in the principal article in my creed: that circumstance alone would set me down as being a fool and blind. But, though I cannot comprehend this doctrine, blessed be God! I am brought to acknowledge the mystery. The Holy Trinity is the great Rock on which my soul is built. Here I have rested; here, blessed be God! I do rest, and have the comfort of it. The Holy Ghost has, by his precious teachings, borne his solemn testimony in my conscience to the truth of this doctrine. I have, at times, had sweet fellowship with every person in God. When the gospel comes to the heart with power, it brings sweet fellowship with God. As a poor sinner, by faith you approach unto the Father. By what access? The Lord Jesus Christ. Whose power is it that thus draws the heart into sweet fellowship with God the

Father? It is the power of the Holy Ghost. Who bears witness with your spirit that you are regenerated? The Holy Ghost. Thus, even Zion's babes have been taught this doctrine. The Lord help them to hold it fast! When a good man, through the force of temptation, for a season loses sight of this truth, he loses all real comfort; he sinks in his feelings, and sink he must,—until he is brought again on sound ground. But he who by grace holds fast this doctrine, whatever evils betide, is not without a glorious foundation to rest upon,—nor a never-failing source of powerful consolation. I exhort the true seeker to turn a deaf ear to those who would undermine this soul-satisfying truth; to look to the written word, and to the invaluable teachings of the Holy Spirit. I exhort Zion's babes, who are rejoicing in Christ, to pay close attention to the testimony which the blessed Comforter is affording them to this prime article of our faith. I exhort young men to learn with joyfulness this great truth, which stands so closely connected with their comfort, and even with their safety. I most affectionately exhort you fathers, as the Lord shall enable you, to bear witness to this precious doctrine, upon which the Holy Ghost hath grounded you. You are drawing near to the Jordan of death, and will then feel your need of a divine basis to rest your precious souls upon. Then, my fathers, when your heart strings break, and your blood is curdling in your veins, fear not to venture upon this ground. Here is firm footing; here is solid rock. The Holy Trinity will be your support, and will enable you to sing your swan-song, when your old tabernacle is half way in the river. And you, my tried but beloved brethren in the ministry; a friendly word with you. Remember, your distinguishing characteristic in the present time is, that you are the ministers of the Spirit. You will not, for the glory of your Master's name, make a secret of the doctrine of the Trinity. Tell it out, though devils roar and men point the fore-finger and say, "Fie! fie!" I know that if you are led to declare the whole truth of God, you will be marked men. Your congregations will stand in an isolated form, and you will be esteemed the scum and refuse of your respective neighbourhoods. For we are as the offscouring of all things unto this day. Brethren, you cannot walk so as to please your Master and keep the good graces of nominal professors. They will cast you out, nay, they have done that already. They did those things in the green tree;

" Good God! defend the dry."

Do not lose heart, my brethren. You—shall I speak it?—you—stand by the Lord of the whole earth! Yes, with all the contempt that is poured upon you, you are the Lord's right

hand men. Therefore, be watchful, and "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," for

"Though few here esteem us, the Lord we adore,
He died to redeem us; what could he do more?"

II. View the making of the covenant of grace.

I will endeavour to trace this covenant through the Scriptures. Last words of good men are generally very interesting. "Now these be the last words of David. David, the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said; Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them is covenant." He will ever be mindful of his covenant. "I have found David my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him. The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him; and I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. My mercy will I keep with him for evermore; and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the greatest of them to the least of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. And I will cause you to pass under the rod; and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. For men, verily, swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is the end of all strife. Wherein, God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by

two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (See the 17th chapter of John.) Many other portions of the Word might be introduced to prove that there is a covenant of grace; but these Scriptures may suffice. God sees the end from the beginning. Before the universe was created—before the dust of Adam was fashioned into a man, or time had an existence—in eternity—before the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy—before a single angel was formed; when God, in his three coeval, coequal Persons dwelt alone; he, with whom there is no past, and with whom there can be no future; who enjoys his own everlasting now—determined, for his own declarative glory, to create angels and men. Incomprehensibly, infinitely, and eternally blessed, in the enjoyment of himself, he needed not the existence of creatures. For his pleasure they are and were created. God did not make man on purpose either to save or to damn him; but expressly for his own glory. He determined to form a pure, natural man, and to make him as was meet—the federal head and representative of all his natural posterity. He might have confirmed man in his original pure state had it pleased him, as he confirmed the elect angels. Some erring men think it would have been better if it had been so. The exalted Majesty of heaven thought otherwise. He seeth not as man seeth. For his own glory, he appointed the fall of man, and rendered the solemn event sure, above the reach of contingencies. God does not make men sin, and then destroy them for it. Man sins freely. The decrees of God lay hold of every event that shall ever take place; they rendered the fall of man certain; whilst they secured unto him the free exercise of his will. The event was as sure to happen as if the creature had had no will; and yet the will of Adam was as certainly free as if there had been no decrees formed; therefore, neither is God the author of sin, nor does his appointing it destroy man's accountability. In eternity, the omniscient eye of God surveyed mankind in the fallen state, and beheld the consequences; he might have righteously withheld from the whole race of them the least favour; he might have sentenced them to perdition, according to the law of works and then have left them to their apostacy—to their fate. But, wonder, O heavens! and be for ever astonished, O earth! instead of this, he determined to rescue a part of them from deserved condemnation, and ultimately to bring them to the enjoyment of himself. But, methinks, at that, the justice of God drew the glittering sword, bathed it in heaven, and vowed fearful vengeance, saying, If it

be so, holiness and righteousness must be met; the holy law must be paid; I must have satisfaction——. The bowels of mercy yearn over the rebels! The Wisdom of God drew up and presented the glorious plan, and the Sovereignty of God irrevocably fixed the purpose of salvation. The Holy One shall become incarnate, expiate their offences, and meet honourably every divine attribute, in accomplishing the stupendous work of their redemption. The Eternal Father lifted up his voice, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? The Eternal Word says, Here am I, send me; I will appear in their nature, I will be their substitute; lay their sins upon me, I will magnify the law by paying its demands. I will meet thy Holiness, and thy Righteousness. Justice, thou shalt be satisfied!! Then Grace steps out upon the righteousness of the Mediator, commences her sacred empire, and sways her sceptre gloriously, in the behalf of the chosen race. I will now try to open the scripture doctrine of election. The Lord's people were chosen before the fall; yet with an eye to it and its consequences. God the Father chose the Everlasting Word, as the Mediator—the Sent-One—the righteous Servant—the glorious elect Head: “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” Then he chose a portion of the human race in him: these were chosen freely, irrespective of their own works, good or bad. they were chosen sovereignly. He did not choose all mankind, but a part of them: therefore it is written, “I know whom I have chosen.” He would not have chosen any if he had taken all. Many of the elect were foreviewed, as being in their unregenerate state, the very worst of mankind. He chose them “because he would choose them.”

“What was there in you, that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?

'Twas even so, Father, you ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in thy sight.”

He chose them in Christ, binding him to them, and them to him, in an everlasting union bond. In him, he set his eternal love upon them. Election secured unto the Lord's people the means, and the end. The means are the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth; the end is everlasting glory. Thus, as for full and free salvation, “the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” The people of God are spoken of as being few, a remnant, a little flock, the handful of Christ. God promises to take one of a city and two of a family. Two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough. Zion, in her low estates, presents but here and there a traveller. Such sayings are recorded for the en-

couragement of the Lord's poor twos, threes, and fives. God knoweth the precise number of his elect. All the exertions of men can never increase them; and all the resistance of men can never diminish them, by a single unit. Yet who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? I do not wish to make them appear either more or fewer than they are. I greatly rejoice that when they are fully gathered, they will be a vast multitude that no man can number. Millions upon millions, that no man can count. "I saw ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."

I will now try to explain the *ground* of Christ's engagement to perform the work of redemption. The Father presented the whole of the elect as a gift to the Mediator. They are the jewels that shall stud his mediatorial crown; "and the Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flock of his people, and ye shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land." They were his reward that was with him, when his work lay before him. Thus in eternity his delights were with the sons of men. Then the interests of the elect are secure. The Father depended upon Christ for the fulfilment of his law, and Christ leaned upon the Father for the fulfilment of his promise and his oath. For, because the Father could swear by no greater, "he sware by himself," even by his own Holiness, that he would not lie unto David, that is, Christ. His seed should endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. Then Christ is sure of his seed. Under the old dispensation, the Father forgave the sins, and justified the persons, of the true circumcision. He that is Surety for a stranger, shall smart for it. The elect are the church, the church is the stranger. Christ, as the Surety, stood for this stranger, and he did smart for it. If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame unto my Father for ever. Therefore, in the fulness of time, the eternal Word appeared in human nature, to finish the greatest work that ever God accomplished. Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, is one with the Father and the blessed Spirit. He is verily and essentially the Lord of Hosts, wearing the incommunicable name, Jehovah—the true God and eternal Life, possessing, as his own nature, eternal and underived, all the perfections of Deity. He is the self-existent I AM. He created the universe, bears up its pillars, turns the grand machine of universal providence, and directs the course of events. He searcheth the hearts of all men, and understands all their thoughts against him. He is God, and devils tremble at his word. He is God! Saints trust in him, and pray unto him, and he

relieves and delivers them. He is God, and the holy angels are commanded to worship him. The Father, before the whole creation, proclaims his essential Deity. For, "to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The Word has taken into union with his divine nature, humanity. He is bone of the church's bone, and flesh of her flesh. His human nature was produced in the womb of the virgin Mary, by the overshadowing influences of the Holy Ghost. That nature is free from all taint or defilement. He was that "holy thing" which should be born of Mary. In his glorious person, these two extreme natures meet—Godhead and humanity. He became man that he might be able to suffer, bleed, and die, because the law demanded life for life, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. Had he not assumed human nature, he could not have been a suitable Mediator; he could not have appeared a glorious High Priest. The humanity of Christ is a most safe, sweet, and suitable medium through which the glory of the divine perfections are revealed. No sinner could behold the glory of the Deity immediately, and derive comfort from the sight; for our God is a consuming fire. The humanity of Christ tempers the rays of the uncreated Majesty to the eye of faith. The believing sinner gazes upon the fair form of Christ, whilst the rays of indwelling Deity burst through his sacred person; the humble worshipper falls prostrate, and exclaims, "My Lord and my God."

The humanity of Christ qualified him to endure affliction and temptation, and to exercise bowels of tenderness and compassion: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." The indwelling Deity supported his humanity under his awful sufferings, and enabled him, as Mediator, to bear the weight of his people's transgressions, to walk through the field of temptation, to wade through the gulph of tribulation, to grapple with the powers of darkness, and to receive, unmoved, the tremendous shock of that divine wrath which was due to the sins of his people. His divine nature threw a glory over all he did, and all he suffered; it gave weight to his high character, and immense value to his atonement. By this, he "travelled in the greatness of his strength," and showed himself "able to save to the uttermost." In this glorious character he made his appearance; and, though sinless in both his natures, received the transfer of all the church's guilt; so that he became their Sin-bearer: "And he hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—that is, of all the flock. If it be asked, for whom Christ died, the answer is, for the elect only, whose

sins he bore ; for he bore all the sins of all the elect. Christ calls one part of mankind sheep, and the other part goats. He says he will, in the day of judgment, place the goats on his left hand, and say unto them, "I never knew you." Now, if Christ never knew those whom he denominates goats, if he knew only his sheep, as he has said, "I know my sheep," must it not be evident that he died not for any of those who perish, but for the chosen sheep only? Should any ask him for whom he died, his twofold answer is ready : "I lay down my life for the sheep;" "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Some of our modern teachers say, that the Father has a chosen people, who alone shall be saved, and yet, say they, Christ died for all mankind. Now what is this but to represent that the Father and the Son are differently minded?—the one is for saving a part only, and the other wishes to save the whole, but cannot, because some men will not be saved.

Modern Calvinism sets the Trinity at variance, and represents Christ as being unable to do what he would. Are not these fair conclusions, from such premises? And are they not monstrous absurdities?

Christ died for the very people whom his Father chose, and for none else. For them he passed through the depths of tribulation, took their place under the law, and, in his own person, fulfilled its principles and precepts, jots and tittles; for in his life the law appears drawn out in "living characters." He went to the end of the law, and "became the end of it for righteousness to every one that believeth." He was born in a low condition, and endured all manner of contumely from the rich and the poor, the mighty and the mean, the Jew and the Greek.

The Prince of Life was born in a stable, and laid in a manger. Two inveterate foes, Herod and Pontius Pilate, united to persecute him. Herod issued his cruel edict to slay all the children in Bethlehem from two years old and under, whilst his malice was directed only against him that was born King of the Jews. The good providence of God his Father saved him from all this rage. Ere he enters upon his ministry, he suffers hunger and thirst, and is led into the wilderness, there to be tempted of the devil. He is tempted to worship that foul fiend. The bribe held out to induce him to do so, is an alluring world. He is tempted to question his sonship, and is urged to fall in with the temptation by the pinchings of hunger. He is tempted to distrust the providence of God his Father, and presumptuously cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple. But out of this field, without a scar, he

came victorious. He endured much from the contradiction of sinners against himself. Man exhausted his powers of invention to find out new modes of torture, that he might inflict them on the Son of God. Man then proved his heart to be amazingly hard, and more cruel than that of the ostrich. They called Jesus a madman, a Samaritan, yea, a devil! They pursued him like a partridge, or a flea, upon the mountains. How often did they take up stones to cast at him! Fainly would they have thrown him down headlong from the brow of the hill, when he was maintaining the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty. At his apprehension they came out with staves against him, as though he had been a thief. He was betrayed into their hands by a kiss. They dragged him about as the city police would a common felon. They made many long and cruel furrows on his back by scourging. They platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head. With a reed they smote him, until they drove the thorns deeply into his temples. They did even spit upon him, until his visage was completely marred. They insulted him, by putting a reed into his hand, and a gorgeous robe upon him. They bowed the knee before him, and most grievously mocked him. They who had so lately shouted Hosanna, now cried, Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him! They had rather his blood should be upon them and their children than allow him to escape. They condemned the guiltless, and then led him out to do unto him according to their law; and a cruel law it was in his case. They laid his heavy cross upon him, and arrive at the place of execution.

“Vengeance this victim will pursue;
He undertook, and must go through.”

They nailed him to the cross. See how those cruel nails pierce his hands and his feet! They erect the cross. What a spectacle! He is lifted up between earth and heaven (as Mediator), and is made a spectacle of cruelty before God, angels, and men. Many bulls, of the breed of Bashan, have beset him round—the stern Roman soldiers, the murderous Jews. His disciples have forsaken him: even Peter is gone.

“For when the Chief to battle led,
That moment every soldier fled.”

Hell poured out her sable legions, and quite emptied her entrails. Old Beelzebub drew up his dismal hosts around the cross. They were ranged in principalities and powers, the rulers of this world, with all their spiritual wickednesses, every one of them meditating the certain destruction of the church's head. Was ever lamb surrounded by such vultures? Every hand was lifted against him, and every quiver was emptied upon him.

“ All hell and its lions stood roaring around;
His flesh and his spirit with malice they tore ;
While oceans of sorrow lay pressing him down,
As vast as the burden of guilt which he bore.”

From his dear humanity his Father hid his face. The Sun of Righteousness endured an awful eclipse ; the natural sun veiled his face, as if ashamed of the deed ; and old Night drew his sable curtain over the convulsed earth. Jesus cried with a loud voice, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” But no ; the penal wrath of God had awoke against him. The whole weight of that infinite and almighty vengeance which, according to the law, was due to all the sins of the people whom he represented, fell upon him. But he endured it all, and got into the winepress, treading all the powers of Antichrist under his feet. He came upon princes as upon mortar, and stained all his raiment. The day of vengeance was in his heart, and the year of his redeemed was come. He dyed his robes in Edom’s blood ! He stooped to conquer—he died to obtain the victory, and that victory was complete ! The legions of hell had laid their plan, intending to ruin him and his cause for ever ; but he seized “ the strong man armed,” bound him, broke his head, and cast him down like lightning. He made principalities and powers into crouching heaps of confusion. He overthrew the horse and his rider, and none of the men of might found their hands. He, like another Sampson, carried away the gates of Gaza, and led captivity captive. As he fell into the arms of death, he deprived him of his sting. He lay a part of three days in the grave, to prove the certainty of his death, and for a sign to an evil and adulterous generation. He did not see corruption.

On the morning of the third day, the Holy Ghost raised up the body of Jesus. In vain are the stone, the seal, and the watch. He rises !—he appears as the first fruits of them that slept. He rises !—as the Resurrection and the Life ; and thus he and his people were justified of the Spirit. When he arose, they virtually arose in him : “ Thy dead men shall live ; together with my dead body shall they arise.—Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead.”

Thus the redeeming work was sealed by the Holy Spirit.

On the Cross, an end was put to the Church’s sin ; her “ old man ” was penally crucified with him. The great work of redemption was complete, the powers of hell were destroyed, the validity of the atonement was acknowledged by the Father, and an everlasting righteousness was brought in. Jesus, “ by

his one offering, hath for ever perfected" all who were set apart by the Father in eternity.

The pierced heart of Jesus Christ is the channel of mercy through which the gracious influences of the Spirit, like living water, issue: "All my springs are in thee." Upon the ground of the Saviour's atonement, everlasting forgiveness, everlasting peace, everlasting life, everlasting righteousness, everlasting salvation, everlasting grace, and everlasting consolation, flow out in rich abundance, in the behalf of the heirs of salvation. All these invaluable blessings are secured unto God's elect, with the certain possession of everlasting glory. Not one of the chosen race can perish, nor even fail to obtain a single blessing. "Behold, before God, I lie not."

So far, Jesus Christ had gloriously fulfilled his covenant engagements. He then showed himself, by many infallible proofs, unto his disciples; comforted them, and commissioned his holy apostles to preach in his name. He promised the Holy Spirit unto them, as their Teacher and Comforter, and directed them where to wait for his coming. He promised them his sweet peace and blessed presence, poured out his blessing upon them, and then ascended to his God, and their God—to his Father, and their Father. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?—I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.—Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle." Thus arose the sweet conqueror, fresh from the battle-field. "Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, and majesty, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever." And let the new creation, as one heart and voice, say, Amen. Amen! saith my redeemed soul!

The Holy Ghost, for himself, in eternity, entered into the most solemn covenant engagements. He was appointed agent for the accomplishment of the great work to be wrought in every elect vessel. Moreover, he, in the council of peace, bore his solemn witness to the making of the covenant of grace. By nature, the elect are, as others, under unbelief and sin. They cannot do a spiritual act, nor perform any of the functions of spiritual life, because they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They can neither will nor do, until the Holy Ghost works in them, and enables them to both will and do. He breathes upon the dry bones, and they live. He completely fills his high office, and performs his own work. He will work, and who shall let it? There is a set time to

favour Zion. Her dead men shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.

The north wind shall awake, and the south wind shall blow upon the garden of Christ. The Holy Ghost will convince every elect vessel of sin. The sinner shall hear from the Father, and learn his own lost condition. The Holy Ghost will quicken him; he will drive him from under a covenant of works, and at length out of himself. He will draw him to Christ with soft but strong cords, and will unfold unto him the beauty and glory of God incarnate. As a Spirit of grace and supplication, he will pour out his influences upon him, and will incline his heart to seek the Lord. He will give him an understanding, lead him to the written word, shine into his soul, open unto him the plan of salvation, bestow upon him true faith, hope, repentance, and humility; build him, as a poor sinner, upon Christ as a foundation, and so place him upon the rock Jesus, and his finished work, helping him to believe. He will teach the sinner to crown the blessed Saviour, and the Saviour will crown the poor sinner with his loving-kindness.

The Holy Ghost will baptize the elect sinner in the precious fountain of the blood of Jesus, and take off the man's patchwork and put on him the best robe, that is, Christ's righteousness. He will grant the sinner a sense of divine forgiveness, show him that in Christ he is freely justified, indulge him with a peace that passes understanding, render Christ very precious unto him, and fill his soul with light and life. He will lead him into the superabounding grace of the Father, fill his cup brimfull of blessings, and his heart with joy, gratitude, and praise. The poor sinner will then heartily say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." He will bless the Father for giving his Son; he will bless the Son for performing the work of redemption; and he will bless the Holy Spirit for bringing the sweet Gospel-tidings into his heart. The Spirit stamps upon this man's soul the image of Jesus, and gives him the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He sets him apart to the word and the worship of God, and causes him for a time to "run without weariness, and to walk without fainting." During the trial of faith, he supports and delivers him; purges his dross, and removes his tin. When the elect sinner declines, the Holy Ghost revives and strengthens him, comforts him in his sorrows, restores him from all his wanderings, shows him a little of his vileness and corruption, but still leads him to Jesus.

Under his divine Teacher, this man grows in Christ, in grace, in true knowledge, in a rich experience of God's

mercy. In a word, he proves that "the eternal God is his refuge, and that underneath him are the everlasting arms;" that "the righteous shall hold on his way;" and that "as his days, so shall his strength be."

The Holy Ghost is engaged to bring every elect vessel safely through to glory—his sweet and everlasting home. The bodies of the saints will, in due time, be raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit: "This mortal shall put on immortality." He shall gather, in a state of perfect holiness, the whole church into Christ, and Christ shall present that church unto the Father, saying, "Behold, here am I and the children whom God hath given me." Every one of them shall appear at once a miracle and monument of grace.

Thus each person in the Godhead performs his part in this great work of redemption. Man's natural freewill and merit are eternally done away. Where is the freewiller's boast? It is excluded, and God is all in all.

III. View the nature of this covenant.

What I here intend, is to speak of this covenant more particularly.

In doing this, I will say a little upon the decrees of God.

Nothing comes to pass in time which was not foreappointed before time began. What transaction could be more wicked, so far as man was concerned, than the crucifying of the Lord Jesus? His enemies were obliged to acknowledge that he was a just man, and had done nothing against the laws of the Jews; yet certain men put him to death, thereby actually murdering him; and in doing the foul deed, put him to the most excruciating pain and the most lingering torments. But even this event took place exactly according to the appointment of the Father: "Him, being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, with wicked hands ye have crucified and slain." Many events are set down in the Scriptures as proceeding from the special appointment of God.

Some men seem to admit that great events may take place according to the purposes of God, but deny that lesser events are subject to his appointment. If I assert that God, from eternity, foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, they deny the statement, and reject the sentiment with abhorrence. But suppose even a single grain of sand could be removed one inch of space without the divine recognizance, then two grains might, and so on, in infinite succession, until a mountain might rise on one hand, and a frightful chasm sink on the other, which might lead to the destruction of an army, yea, even to the annihilation of an empire. Destruction might then enter by a thousand avenues, and spoil the whole earth.

How many great events depend upon the smallest incidents. Sever them, and the connecting link is gone. To resign small events to a peradventure, would be to relinquish the great ones. To give up the smallest event, would be to resign the government of the world into the hands of—what? Why, of chance. And what is chance? The Atheist's favourite nonentity.

“ All this dread order break! for whom?—for thee,
Vile man?—O, madness, pride, impiety!”

For ever blessed be the name of the Lord, there is a despised people, who believe that the whole chain of events is held in God's hand, and who heartily despise the doctrine of chance; whose sublime song is, “The Lord reigneth.” They know that he “doeth as he will in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of earth.” It is written, “The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked, for the day of evil.” His Wisdom formed the plan, his Decree laid the line, and his Providence fills up the blank. Nothing crosses his purposes; no event, however small or great, however good or bad it may in itself be, can take place contrary to his sovereign pleasure. Not to know this, is sheer ignorance: to deny it, is infidelity. The decrees and purposes of God are one united whole. They are every way worthy of himself. They must all be completely fulfilled, and for ever reflect his highest praise.

I shall next consider the decrees of God, as to the appointment of whatever is intrinsically good. All natural, moral, temporal, spiritual, or eternal good, comes from God. He is the Author and immediate fountain of the whole. James says, “Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” There are some things which are not good in themselves, yet God makes a good use of them, namely,—losses, crosses, afflictions, trials, temptations from Satan, and inward, and even outward falls. A certain soldier pierced the side of Christ; that act was horribly sinful, and yet God, in his sovereignty, holily took hold of that act to bring about the greatest good. He thereby opened a fountain to the “house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Perhaps that action was the worst, and the best, that ever was done: the worst, as applicable to man; the best, as applicable to God. It produced a large sum of good.

There is God's appointment of sin. He hath sovereignly willed the permission of it, for his own glory. That God permits sin to be done, no man with a spiritual understanding will deny. He could have prevented the fall both of angels and men. He did not; then, of course, he must have per-

mitted it. God could prevent the commission of any sin whatever; then all sin that is done must be permitted to be done. To allow that he permits it now, but did not decree the permission of it from eternity, is to deny that he is of one mind. Therefore, whatever sin has been or shall be committed, is subject to the divine appointment. For wise ends, that are perfectly understood by none but himself, he has, from eternity, holily willed the permission of every sin that ever was or ever will be committed. Is there any thing under the sun of which it may be said, See, this is new? I answer, No. It would be as easy for a man to prove that there is no God, as that there is any sin committed which God would prevent, but cannot. But still God is not the fountain, or the actual doer of sin. The devil is the author and the fountain of sin. In him it was first hatched, and by him it was produced. He is the "father of lies," and why not of all sin? Sin is in the world; from thence we trace it to the heart of man; from the present generation to Adam the first; from him to the devil. There the Scripture lays it; there I leave it.

That God is the Author of sin, is no part of my creed; nor is it contained in my sentiments. I account it dreadful blasphemy, and hate it at all times. I seriously protest, that I believe he is neither the Author, nor the doer, of any sin whatever. The Judge's hands are clean! There may, for ought I know, be some few who hold this vile tenet; but if there be, they are strangers to me. I will touch upon one or two texts of Scripture, which, it is said, are usually brought forward by them to support their notion: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" But if, by the word evil, sin were intended, what would be the consequence? Why, it would at once make God the doer of all the abominable wickedness done in the city—an idea from which my soul starts with horror! But he that will take the trouble to read the chapter will see, that war, and its train of evils, namely, famine, the pestilence, &c., are there intended by the word evil. Certainly God has a hand in all wars, for "every bullet has its billet." By war, God scourges sinful nations for their pride, vanity, and rebellion against him. He dashes the potsherds of the earth in pieces, one against another. A great tyrant, or a great warrior, is God's rod; with these, he scourges the nations: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand, is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart

think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." The Assyrian was something like our modern free-willer. He turns his back upon the doctrine of the divine decrees, and fulfils those very decrees in doing so.

"If plagues or earthquakes break not heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?"

But did not God "harden Pharaoh's heart?" God can holily harden a sinful man's heart. Was not Pharaoh's heart hardened by consequence? The sun melts wax, and hardens clay; but who blames the sun for hardening the clay? Providences which, according to their nature, would soften a contrite heart, will harden that of a presumptuous man: "God hath made even the wicked for the day of evil." He hath made them as men, not as sinful men. Their sin is all their own. They sin freely as the water finds its level, yet their disobedience breaks not God's decree. It was the subject of his appointment, as it is the object of his hatred. He hath appointed an evil day for them, and he will bring them into judgment. Adam the first sinned freely, and so does every child of Adam. In sinning, man is, to a certain extent, a freewiller. Though the will of man was originally pure, it turned out of the path of rectitude, in a voluntary manner, at the first solicitation. Now the will of man is in bondage to sin, not free to good, but to evil only. It is hard for a bowl to run in a direct line that has a wrong bias. So, when a man's will is crooked, how can his ways be straight?

A part of mankind, namely, the elect, were put into the covenant of grace, while the rest were sovereignly left out: "Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them." He does not deal with these persons according to his grace, but according to his holiness, righteousness, and justice. Their being left out must be wholly ascribed to his sovereignty; their punishment, to his justice. These are facts, and facts are stubborn things. Erring men (and by nature we are all liable to err) may be ready to call in question the justice of the divine procedure; but stay awhile, for there is nothing mysterious about his government that shall not be cleared up. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" And what living man has a right to conclude he is a reprobate? Does not God save, occasionally, at the eleventh hour? He who feels himself to be a lost sinner, who longs for a free and finished salvation, and who is desirous of looking to Christ alone for it, and of bringing forth the fruits of true holiness by a vital union to the Saviour, has no Scriptural ground to despair of the mercy of God. But how secure, how unspeakably blessed, must they be, who were, in eternity,

taken within the pale of this covenant, and who are favoured, by the teachings of the divine Spirit, to read their title clear to the heavenly inheritance! Their persons being, ere time began, chosen in Christ by the Father, having their names written in the Lamb's book of life, Christ came and shed his precious blood for them. The Spirit of God has made his glorious descent to work in them the good pleasure of the Father. By his inspiration, the written word was given for their comfort. The powerful voice of the Holy Ghost brings the glad tidings of the Gospel to their hearts; and for their consolation the ministers of Christ are raised up, and sent into the fields of labour.

Happy souls who are manifestly numbered amongst God's new-covenant children! The minutest circumstances of their lives here below were set down in this well-ordered covenant. The parents from whom they should come into the world; the exact time and all the circumstances of their birth, with all the scenes of their state of childhood; the number of the days of their unregenerate state; the hour of their arrest; the period of their conversion; the joyful time of their espousals; and all the means necessary for their edification, were laid out, with all their times of darkness and light; desertion and communion; heaviness and joy; weariness and rest; conflict and peace; bondage and liberty. Their declensions and revivals; backslidings and returns; fastings and feastings; inward sinkings and soarings; temptations and deliverances; fears and foes; doubts and hopes; and all the innumerable variety of scenes, frames, feelings, and changes with which they were to be exercised, were appointed before the world was. The bounds of their habitation were fixed—the time of their sojourning here, and the period of their dissolution. Their losses and gains; their times of prosperity and adversity; their sickness and health—

“ All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please their heavenly Friend.”

Their trials were measured and weighed, and a proportionable degree of strength, or a suitable measure of divine grace, was appointed for them.

Their Father's rod was laid up in this covenant, and none but bastards ever did, nor ever will, escape it: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

This rod administers no penal chastisement. Christ endured all that, in the stead of his people. God chastens his children to mark their wanderings,—to teach them discipline; to learn them good behaviour in the house of their Father; to free them from a light and frothy spirit; to bring them to their

right minds and into the right path; to soften them; to bring down their high-mindedness; to humble them; to make them patient, tractable, and child-like; and to prove his love to them. However he may frown, every stroke goes to his heart. How tenderly he pities them! When my heart has been set upon some foolish toy, how often has he taken it from me, lest I should cut my fingers with it; then he has given me a light stroke with his hand, to mark his displeasure at my vain regard for trifles.

The rod of God is composed of many twigs. He can indeed soon make a rod of almost any thing. His hand is heavy; he knows when, where, and how to strike: he has a good memory. The Mourner in Zion says, I could have borne any thing but this! Our heavenly Father knows how to find the quick, and where the proud flesh lieth. Afflicted saint, try to give up the contest, hold out no longer, clasp thy Father's knees, and kiss the rod. He who numbers the hairs of his children's heads will not be unmindful of their condition; he who feeds the ravens will not starve his own family. He who clothes the fields with verdure will find a covering for the backs of his own dear children.

“ Can a woman's tender care,
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may ungrateful be,
Yet will I remember thee.”

O believer, is not the kind providence of thy God as one vast and mighty machine, invented and put together by the Holy One of Israel?—It is directed by the eye, and set in motion by the hand, of Christ; guiding, feeding, clothing, and sustaining, millions upon millions of creatures, each one receiving as much care and attention as if there were but one. What wheels, bolts, pins, wires, and weights there are in this huge machine! Some great wheels, some lesser, and others so small as to be imperceptible to the naked eye of man. Some wheels working perpendicularly, others horizontally; some wheels displaying a rapid motion, others moving slowly; some appearing to stand still, and others having a retrograde motion; and, behold, the wheel in the middle of a wheel! A careless inspector is ready to say, “ Mark the reign of confusion and disorder.” O how greatly is he mistaken! It is the reign of order and harmony. How easily human reason is lost amongst the lower part of the machinery,—men, means, and instruments! But lo! the hand of God is behind, and works the whole. “ It is the Lord,” says faith, “ let him do what seemeth him good.” “ All things work together for good, to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.”

What can prevent the coming down of a single blessing which God has determined to give? Does he not order the occasions, and then bestow the blessing? All the believer's times are in his hand who changes not. Are not all the saints held in Christ's hand? And who shall separate them from his love? They may have their trials and temptations, but relief and deliverance are sure; they may have the rod, but they will not be turned out of the house; there may be some bitterness in their cup, but there is sweet mercy at the bottom. Persecutors shall be as the thorn in the nightingale's nest, to keep them awake, that they may have songs in the night. Corruptions must be brought down, and grace must reign. Captain Good Hope shall defeat the army of doubters. Not a dog can wag his tongue against them, without the divine permission. They might as well bay the moon as bark at the church. Afflictions are the servants of Christ, to come and go at his bidding. The winds and the waves are under his control. The winds he holds in his fist, the clouds are his close carriage, and the sea is his promenade. What aileth thee, O believer? O child of God, what can come amiss to thee? May you and I learn obedience and resignation to our Father's will by the things that we suffer. Every providence must ultimately work our good and our Father's glory. We do not know what God intends to do in us, for us, or by us. We want eye salve. This trial, this frame, this feeling, or this trouble, is the best for us at the present. We should see this if we could see its bearings, dependencies, and connexions. Many a rich present has been sent in a coarse wrapper. God secures the glory to himself, by putting his treasure in an unsightly vessel. He hath occasionally dropped a gracious word from the tongue of a stammering servant. Eat then thy spiritual bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works.

IV. This leads me to view the manner in which the Holy Ghost brings the vessel of mercy to know his interest in this covenant.

Perhaps some will be ready to say, "I can at once discover that this is a blessed covenant to those who have a standing in it. I acknowledge that the blessings it contains are very great. But I seriously ask myself, am I interested in this covenant? Do its precious blessings belong to me?" I answer, no man ever did, nor ever can, know his interest in this covenant, save as he is taught by the blessed Spirit. Then the work of the Spirit must be invaluable; and as this work is, in the present time, very much slighted, it becomes those who know a little of its value for themselves to lay the greater stress upon

it. I do not desire any man to rely on my bare word. It is the privilege of the believer to try every man's testimony by the written word and the teachings of the Spirit, and to receive or reject the testimony of man, as it agrees with, or deviates from, these. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." However, I will give my judgment as one that has obtained mercy. Then, there is first a work of conviction: "He shall convince of sin." Where there is no sound conviction for sin—there can be no real conversion to God. God says, "I wound and I heal; I kill and I make alive.—They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Can any man prize the good Physician who has never been sick? Or can any man be sick of sin who has never been convicted of sin? There is some difference in the operations of the Spirit, in different persons. One man is brought by a slow and gradual process to the knowledge of his state;—this is the case with a many of the Lord's people;—while another man is brought down at once, as the Philippian gaoler was. That man experiences most powerful and cutting convictions, whilst the convictions of this man are far lighter. Some come in by the north gate, others by the south gate. Here and there one can look back at the work of conviction wrought upon his soul, and see that work as plainly as he can see his own right hand; whilst another, especially at times, finds some difficulty in tracing the steps and gradations by which he was brought to a knowledge of his state, even although he has at this moment the sentence of death within himself, not to trust in himself. God's work is plain when he makes it plain. We can only see it to our satisfaction when he shines upon it. One comfort is, God can see his own work when we cannot, and he will never desert it.

When the Holy Ghost convinces a man of sin, he teaches him feelingly the spirituality, breadth, authority, and killing sentence of the law. Its spirituality—that the law demands true obedience in the inward parts, and, consequently, that a mere outward observance of it will not stand. Its breadth—that it demands inward, outward, perfect, and perpetual obedience; that its principles are, supreme and perfect love to God, and perfect love to man; and it requires all that obedience which is contained in these two great principles. Its authority.—The truly awakened sinner acknowledges that between God and natural men this is the universal law; and that all such characters are under it. Then the law demands perfect obedience; it cannot require more, nor take less; showing no mercy—making no abatement. Though one sin is in its

nature greater than another, the law damns a man as certainly for one sin as for a hundred sins, and for one short-coming as for a number; yea, for one heart-sin as for many open sins. Look to it, sinner! Though the man has lost his power to obey, the law shows him it has not lost its power to demand. The killing sentence of the law.—As to the works done before the man comes to Christ, the law cuts them all up—all his fine morality, and piety, his vows, promises, holy resolutions, prayers, tears, strivings, and supposed good deeds; his free-will, best endeavours, legal hopes, legal works, his natural or fleshly obedience;—all that a man can do, with intent to justify himself, the law destroys. The sentence goes out against his dead works and him too: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Now, this man has learned that he is guilty; he has felt a guilty conscience, and that he cannot get this guilt off; it is his burden. His own obedience is seen and felt to be filthy rags, and he knows this patchwork must come off, or he is undone for ever. “Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts as of woollen and linen together.” He is taught that he is unholy, for the law stirs up in-dwelling sin, and makes it manifest unto him, and now he begins to see that he has within him a black heart. “The law wrought within me,” says Paul, “all manner of concupiscence.” He is now a lost sinner; he can neither will nor do; he hath ceased from his own works; he feels that he cannot believe in Christ, unless it be given him from above. Some say, “Repent;” but this man, under the law, has got a stony heart, from which no repentance can proceed. Some say, “Believe;” but that is like saying to a child that has fallen on the floor, and cannot rise, “Come here, and I’ll help you up.”

This is a drowning man; and as he is sinking, the Lord puts a cry into his heart, “Lord, save, or I perish.” His boasting mouth is stopped. Every man, in his natural state, is a vain-boaster about what man can do, what he ought to do, and so forth. Moses, however, has stopped this man’s mouth; as it is written, “Every mouth must be stopped.”

Now, my reader, has God brought you to know and feel that your natural wisdom is folly, that your legal obedience is rags, and that your native holiness is corruptiour? Has God stopped your boasting mouth, or are you still asserting that God would be unjust if he did not give all men a chance of being saved? If you are thus boasting, and live and die in that spirit, you will never see the face of Jesus with pleasure. Beware, therefore, “Be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong.” But come, poor sin-burdened soul; come,

poor self-despairing sinner, thy case is not desperate; there is hope in Israel concerning thee. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail."

The Holy Spirit quickens the dead. By his power, he implants a spark of life or grace in the soul of the vessel of mercy. This is an instantaneous work, but it shows itself gradually. Every fruit of the Spirit, the whole image of Christ, is contained in that little spark, only it wants blowing upon, or drawing out, by the blessed Spirit. This man now begins to think of Christ, his desires at times going out towards God. He has some distant discoveries of the blessed Saviour. To him the name of Jesus becomes precious, and in it he finds both music and savour. He begins to see a little of the beauty, suitableness, and glory of Christ. There is a cry put into his heart, and, relying on the Spirit's teaching, he begins to pray. His prayers are neither very long nor very fine; they are a cry for help: "God be merciful to me a sinner;" "Lord, help me;" "Lord, remember me."—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." The invitations are now as silken cords, to draw him to Jesus; the promises afford him a little sweet encouragement; the plan of salvation is gradually opened to his understanding; his frames and feelings change frequently; but, driven by necessity, and drawn by love, in due time he ventures on the foundation, and stands there; but previously to this, the Spirit of God has raised him to hope in Christ.

Many suppose that the mercy of God is equally extended to all men. If that were the case, it must once have extended to Judas. Now this poor man cannot hope in the general mercy of God, for he well knows that that kind of mercy which let Judas slip will never save him. Some persons lay a foundation of supposed good works, and then build their hope upon it. But this man cannot build on the sand; he cannot hope upon what he has not. The hope of others is placed partly on Christ and partly on themselves—Jehovah and a poor sinner pulling in the same yoke to accomplish the man's salvation. But for the truly enlightened soul, this will not do; he would blush to think of it. His hope rests not there. Surely God will not allow himself to be put into such a yoke as that, when he would not, in oldtime, suffer an ox and an ass to plough together. Some persons possess such a store of Gospel knowledge that they make a foundation of it, and build their hope there. These persons are not much like a good young lady, whom I once conversed with, who told me she had a sufficiency of head-knowledge to stock a parish, but all

her concern was to possess some heart religion. I told her that was right. This man's hope takes its rise in the sovereign, special mercy of God, and rests alone upon Christ and his finished work. Once, when he was desponding, this hope sprung up in his conscience. It might be very small—a feeble, glimmering ray, a peradventure, or a Who can tell? Yet it saved him in his extremity, melted his frozen affections, and rendered the name of Jesus precious. Sometimes he thinks his hope is gone; but it springs up again, though he can hardly tell how. He hopes against hope. When, according to appearances and his fears, everything makes against him, this hope is an anchor to the soul. When the main of tribulation runs mountains high, and that fierce wind of temptation called Euroclydon, blows hard; when neither sun, moon, nor stars appear; the poor mariner, seated in his brittle bark, casts out his anchor, and wishes for the day. The two flukes of this anchor fasten in the proper Deity and real humanity of Jesus Christ; and thus, love being his cable, the little vessel is tolerably steady. We are saved by hope. This hope purifies the man's affections; he loves Christ more, and the world less. It cheers and comforts him, and sweetly influences his life and conduct in the path of true holiness. This hope will, in one hour, produce more evangelical obedience than the lash of the law would produce in seven years. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." This hope proves your interest in this covenant.

I might compare the believer, in his first coming to Christ, to a drowning man, who eagerly catches hold of the rope that is thrown out to draw him to land. His is the case of a perishing sinner; the faith which God gives him is as a hand, by which, through the grace of God and the operations of the Spirit, the man lays hold on Christ; as St. Paul says, "Laying hold on eternal life." Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life.

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Reader, if you have in this manner laid hold of Christ, you have taken hold of this covenant, and you shall find it to be a covenant of peace. Such a person may have many doubts, difficulties, and discouragements; but now he believes. He has the faith of humble reliance, and to this the promise of life is made: "It shall be well with him.—Yet would I speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Wait upon the Lord, in humble and earnest expectation, and pray to him to fill your soul with joy and peace in believing.

O! how sweet is the season when the blessed Spirit brings the sinner manifestatively within the bond of the covenant; sprinkles his conscience with the blood of Jesus; puts the heavenly robe of Christ's obedience upon him; makes the gospel word the power of God to his salvation; removes his darkness, doubts, and fears; scatters the clouds of dejection, and turns the shadow of death into morning; gives him to prove the superaboundings of grace, the rich streams of everlasting mercy, and sheds the love of God abroad in his heart; silences all his accusers; grants him a sense of forgiveness, full and free; proclaims peace in the conscience; lifts him out of his difficulties; plants him upon the rock, and makes his heart the seat of spiritual melody, and his feet like hinds' feet.

" Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,

And sing his bleeding love."

How he weeps, wonders, admires, loves, and adores! Much is forgiven and he loves much.

To be truly established in the knowledge of this covenant, is a work of time. Rome was not built in a day. The Christian is not established until he has suffered a-while.

Zion's babes know little of this blessed covenant. He who, by the grace of God, finds establishment in the knowledge of this covenant must go through many difficulties to obtain it. He must be weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. He must undergo the trial of faith, and live a-while at the sign of the Chequer. He must experience many changes of frame and feeling, and be tempest-tossed on the ocean of Much-Tribulation. He must undergo long nights of darkness and desertion, and learn to know his own weakness, and how little faith he has got. He must go down Jeremiah's winding staircase, and survey the chambers of imagery. He must see, and feel too, the law in his members, and be often, like Gad, by a troop overcome. He must painfully witness inward declensions and heart backslidings. He must have fightings without, and fears within. He must be weaned from sin, self, the world, and the church. He will learn the meaning of Mr. Hart's words—

" From sinner and from saint,
He meets with many a blow."

The following is the diary of the tried believer: "Plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning." Thus such an one must travel, seldom finding a spiritual companion. Carnal professors cry after him as after a thief. He must be annoyed by the world, and neglected by the church; perching,

like a solitary sparrow, upon the chimney top, or else hanging in the chimney, like an old leathern bottle in the smoke. He must feel as solitary, and as pensive, as the Pelican in the wilderness. His heart within him will be desolate. He may hang his harp on the willows, sit down by the rivers of Babylon, and weep over his beloved city "in ruins." Methinks I see this child of the true circumcision; his tearful eyes are raised to heaven; I hear him say, "Return, O Lord! how long?—Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities.—Turn again our captivity, O Lord!" It is the prayer of the destitute, and will be graciously regarded. "The Lord will build up Zion, and appear in his glory." They also, that erred in spirit, shall come to understanding. God the Holy Ghost, now and then, lets down this precious covenant into this man's heart. This is the sheet which Peter saw in a vision. It comes down from heaven, and is taken up again into heaven, with all its contents. It contains all manner of four-footed beasts, creeping things, and flying fowls. It is knit at the four corners. Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other: so that the beasts cannot leap out, the fowls cannot fly out, and as there is no rent in this glorious sheet, the creeping things cannot creep out. Its contents are lions, bears, worms, moles, dragons, owls, and bats;—or, elect sinners, by nature strong and fierce as lions and bears; insignificant and grovelling as worms; burrowing in the earth like moles; cruel, tyrannical, and terrific, as dragons; as unable to bear the light of the gospel as owls are the light of the natural sun; nocturnal nondescripts like bats: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." These were once too indelicate a dish for Peter's stomach; and so they will be now for my reader, if he has not been tumbled backward into Job's ditch. These beasts and birds were unclean, according to the law of Moses, and in the eyes of the Pharisees; indeed, they are so unto this day, and in the eyes of all self-righteous persons. Do you ask me, if there are any of these strange creatures upon earth now-adays? I have no doubt of it. The universal charity men call them Antinomians. So it seems, pious gentlemen can call names. It is most easy, and seems very convenient, to pin this ticket upon a man's back. If he be a private character, who would deal with such a man? If he be in the ministry, who that has a character to lose would go to hear him? When I have heard they have given me that gentle epithet, I have sometimes taken comfort from the consideration that many, who are now in the realms of bliss, have carried the

same badge before me, of whom the world was not worthy. Then I have rejoiced to see myself in the way the Father's trod. At such times, I have solaced myself with the hope that I shall soon be at home—that this brittle tenement will soon be “where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest.” There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.

Here is a word of comfort for my suffering fellow-travellers; “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren (as they called themselves) that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified! but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.”

The reader will be pleased to excuse this digression. Elect sinners were in their natural estate unclean, according to the principles of the law; and if we could separate such of them from Christ as are now pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, they would be most unclean unto this day. But God in Christ hath cleansed them.

In eternity, God the Father sanctified his people by putting them into Christ; God the Word hath virtually cleansed them by his atonement; and God the Holy Ghost will manifestly cleanse them by his power and influence. They shall all pass the spiritual birth, and walk, in the way of true holiness, to their Father's house of glory; where they shall appear, “a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” I have no doubt there are, at this time, thousands of living witnesses to this truth. The Spirit has sprinkled the blood of Jesus upon their consciences. They have heard the voice of Christ in the gospel, saying unto them, “Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.” They who have experienced *this* cleansing, may well bear the reproaches of men, calling them common, unclean, or, if they please, Antinomians. Be it your daily prayer, O believer, that God may show you his covenant; that you may very often be brought to close self-examination; that, as a poor sinner, you may daily look to Jesus—take hold of him, as being the Head of this covenant; that you may have this blessed covenant more and more opened to your spiritual understanding; and experience its strong consolations, and enjoy the solemn witness-bearings of the Holy Ghost, to attest your adoption.

May the Lord keep your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears; and may you approve yourself the son of God without rebuke, amidst this crooked and perverse generation.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE LORD GOD
ALMIGHTY.

MAY grace, mercy, and peace, be with you, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this day of great profession, when there are many "itching ears," and heaps of teachers who never had a divine warrant for their employment; when natural talents and the charms of eloquence are intended to supersede the use of spiritual gifts, and the power of the blessed Spirit; when the congregations of the dead are large, numerous, and wealthy, and the folds of Christ are generally small, lean, and lank; when truth is a libel; when the doctrines of grace are accounted blasphemous, and the work of the Spirit is deemed enthusiasm; when Religion walks out in her silver slippers in sun-shiny weather: at a time when a man is hardly accounted worthy of a place in civil society, unless he belong to some religious fraternity; when the bulk of professors, though divided, and subdivided, into numerous sects, are so blended in their doctrine and spirit that they appear as a self-moving mass, using their united power and influence to remove the ancient landmarks, and to render contemptible the Lord's poor and afflicted people; let every lover of truth say, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people." O my companions in tribulation! Do we not feel ready to unite, as the heart and voice of one man, in a mournful address to Israel's God, saying, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory; where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards us? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou, O Lord! art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. O Lord! why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear? Return for thy servant's sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while; our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." The Arminians, and the Modern Calvinists, frequently say, "Look at our numbers and respectability, when compared with the few who profess your doctrine." Our answer is this;—admitting the smallness of our number, and the largeness of theirs, the unpleasant contrast will by no means prove them to be right; because, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It is no good sign of the solidity of an argument when the sayings of Christ have to be reversed to support it. I am ashamed to see men go about to prove the soundness of their creed, and the superiority of their profession, by their worldly respectability and numerical strength. I repeat it (with the Bible in my hands), I blush for their conduct in this matter. Besides, the argument proves too much for *them*. As (in christendom) the Papists are the most wealthy and nu-

merous, the benefit of this fallacious reasoning must be theirs. Would not our opponents reject such a mode of reasoning if used against themselves? Then why do they use it against us? Is it not because it serves to keep their classes and bands together? If that word in Matt. vii. 14, were reversed, *we* might quail under it. This alteration would suit these men to a hair's breadth. Therefore, my tried brethren, be not discouraged at the comparative smallness of our number; "For many are called, but few are chosen." And as for worldly respectability, the true church of God has seldom been overloaded with it. Hear St. Paul's affectionate appeal to the church at Corinth: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty," &c. This is ours. We can bless God for every line of it. No cap ever fitted a head better, than this passage doth that people now vilely traduced as Antinomians.

I sincerely rejoice that when all Israel are gathered together, there will be a goodly number, a vast multitude. Whenever I have seen a man of genius, rank, wealth, or influence embrace the truth of God, cordially support it, and live a life of holy obedience, it has afforded me real pleasure. I acknowledge, however, that poor and rich are but relative terms.

Now to the babes and weaklings in Zion I would say a few words. Be not deceived by outside appearances, look well to your goings, and ponder the path of your feet. Do not set up for judges or critics, but as newborn babes receive the sincere milk of the word. In the choice of a ministry, pay some deference to the judgment of aged Christians, especially of those of them who are more savoury. You know, if little children were left to the choice of their own food, they would soon make themselves sick. In all your ways endeavour to acknowledge God; in difficulties pray to him for direction, and lean not to your own understanding. I recommend to you not to take notes of the discourse when you are under the word, but sit and hear, and pray to the Holy Spirit to write his truth upon your hearts. His is the best hand-writing, and he is the best remembrancer. Mind most especially the affairs of your own soul, lest you should have to say with the church, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept." Flee youthful lust; shun the company of trifling professors; endeavour to think twice before you speak once; and be it your daily concern to be sensibly folded in the Saviour's arms; and may the Friend of sinners bless and prosper you.

I write unto you, young men, with feelings of true affection. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." You are learning doctrine. The day of your espousals to Christ is over, and the trial of faith is just coming upon you. Should the roaring lion come against you, beloved, think it not strange at the fiery trial which is to try you. When the powers of darkness assail, fly from them to your Redeemer's feet, and entreat Jesus to rebuke your adversary. Are you called to bear the yoke of affliction? You cannot do so at a better time. "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." You will find it better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth. Has the Lord begun to show you a little of the badness of your hearts? That experience is very trying, and, through mercy, very profitable. If, in your feelings, you get inwardly worse, I must say, it is all the better, you will thereby learn your own weakness, and the power of Christ. You are to be strong in the grace, not that is in you, but that is in Christ Jesus. Pray to be made sound in the faith. What think you of the doctrines of grace? In humble dependence on the Spirit's teaching, search the Scriptures; be

careful to receive no doctrines or notions that agree not with the written word. Pray to the Lord to bless you with a teachable spirit. Do not prostrate your understanding before any master or father upon the earth. When you are led to discover that the doctrines of grace are true, receive them in God's name, and modestly, but firmly, avow them. If men (in derision) call them "high doctrines!" you will have the pleasure of seeing that they are no higher than the written word. If others call them "dry doctrines!" entreat the Lord Jesus to wet them for you by the influences of his Spirit. It is written, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." If men say these doctrines lead to licentiousness, watch the effects the experience of them produces upon your own conduct. Take no man's word in this matter. Prove them for yourselves. If I were sure this was my last hour, I would say that the doctrine of free, eternal, distinguishing grace powerfully promotes true holiness. Our blessed Redeemer prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." When you have fully received the form of sound words, use it as a seive. Try what you hear in this seive. Whatever bears the twofold test of doctrine and experience is wheat; it is the bread of life. Feed thereon and grow. Whatever will not bear that twofold test is chaff; throw it out to the fowls. If in your hearing, a minister make a common practice of exhorting the unconverted to believe, repent, pray, turn to God, &c., ask yourselves if in your unconverted state you could have done any of these things? I think you will then see you are at the sign of the "Labour in Vain," where they try to wash the black moor white. Or if he say that "Christ died for all mankind," or that "all men may be saved if they will," when, upon due examination and prayer, you are led to see these to be erroneous sentiments, hurl them upon the dung-hill. You are in the land of famine. How can you think to satisfy yourselves with these husks? If the preaching of Moses' law to the believers makes you a raw back, and leaves you an empty belly, is it not high time to look out for a minister that preaches the word? You will find that that testimony which minutely describes your frames, feelings, and soul-exercises, is at once the most savoury, comfortable, safe, and profitable, to Zion's young men. The true Gospel is a creature-abasing, Christ-exalting word, that separates the precious from the vile; a word that contains sound doctrine, insists upon sound experience, and requires sound practice. Such a testimony, possessing a rich vein of genuine experience, is, in my opinion, one that, with God's blessing, will do the true believer good. Any man who delivers such a testimony, whose life is blameless, should be received as a minister of the Spirit, let men call him what they will. You who sit under such a ministry, be thankful; yours is no mean or common privilege. Endeavour, by the grace of God, to be much in prayer, and carefully watch over your own conscience, conversation, and conduct. Keep the society of the godly. Examine the New Testament, and see if there are not two standing ordinances—the believer's baptism by immersion in water, and the Lord's supper. Is it not your duty and privilege to attend to these ordinances? If you have an opportunity, give yourselves up without delay to the brethren, and cheerfully acknowledge your blessed Lord, in the order and ordinances of his house. The Lord enable you to walk worthy of your high vocation, and confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless at the coming of our blessed Lord.

I beg leave to say a little to the fathers in Christ Jesus.

You well know that the pilgrim's path generally lies up the hill. You have passed through many scenes and vicissitudes, which you do not wish to pass through again. There are times in which you are well satisfied with the way in which your covenant God has led you. To you this vain

world can turn up nothing new; you begin to grow tired of it; for now the lighting down of a grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails. The days of your pilgrimage have been "few and evil." You begin now to want to go home, and find everlasting rest. O what have you not experienced, my brethren, from the allurements, the frowns, or the cares of the world; from the bold temptations of the enemy, as well as from the treachery, corruption, and wanderings of your own hearts? What have you not felt from the chastening hand of God, and from the men of the world; from nominal professors, and even from Sarah's own children! Yet, how kindly has your heavenly Father watched over you, and preserved you in all your troubles. Though you have sometimes been ready to say, "All these things are against me," those were only fainting fits, from which you were relieved by some heart-cheering cordial, administered by the hand of your heavenly Father. However, if your path has lain through much tribulation, you have had many and great consolations. Your souls have now and then been filled as full of comfort and peace as you could hold. Methinks I see you leaning upon your staff from very age, and uttering this holy ejaculation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" When your frames and feelings have been most uncomfortable, how often have you ventured upon the finished work of Christ: when a few gleams of the blessed sunshine of God's glory have broken in upon your souls, you have been sweetly melted down with love and gratitude to your divine Benefactor. My venerable fathers, none can debase the creature too much, or exalt Christ too highly, for your hearing. You love the doctrines of grace, and relish nothing more than strong cordials extracted from them by the Spirit of God. You have long since learned to receive, and inwardly digest, God's precious body of divinity; the form of sound words. You delight in a testimony full of Christ, power, and savour. Sometimes the blessed Spirit has let down the covenant of grace into your souls, which has lifted you up above your troubles, and you have blessed the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God has taught you both law and gospel, and you cannot bear another Jesus, or hear another gospel. The ordinances of Christ are sometimes delightful, and his precepts sweet unto you. You cannot but love a searching testimony that gets into your consciences, and you even prefer reproofs and rebukes to a lukewarm state. You greatly prize the teachings and the unction of the Holy Spirit. Sanctified tribulation occasionally brings down in you the pride, legality, lusts, and abominations of your hearts; and the comforts of everlasting love keep you from sinking into despondency. Thus your souls are ballasted, and your frames are balanced. The power and grace of Christ alone keep your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears; and you know it well. My brethren, may you live and die like the holy martyr, who, "at his burning," cried, "None but Christ! none but Christ!"

Will my brethren in the ministry allow me to say a few words to them? You are neither legal men, nor letter-men. Poor as I am, I do not call either the taskmasters of Egypt, or the clouds without water, my brethren. If men of great natural gifts could content themselves to remain out of the ministry until they received a divine commission to enter it, some of the poor of God's flock would like it better. But these men must and will do their work. In Paul's time there were false apostles, and deceitful workers. Satan did then, and does now, transform himself into an angel of light. Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John, have, in their several epistles, borne a strong testimony against such deceitful workers. The real servants of God can truly say, necessity is laid upon them. They have been sifted as wheat; they preach the truth of God, as far as they know it, and depend upon the teachings of the blessed Spirit to

furnish them for their work. They endeavour to set before their flocks a godly example, although their names are by mere nominal professors, cast out as evil. Precious hearts! God has set you where David set Uriah, in the forefront of the hottest part of the battle. You are a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men; being accounted the filth, the scum, and the offscouring of all things unto this day. You have been cradled between two mountain billows upon the stormy main of much tribulation: I need not tell you, however, that you have not had one affliction too many, or too heavy. Were it possible for us all to meet together and compare notes, we should, I have no doubt, be surprised at the similarity which would appear in our trials and ministerial exercises. Do you not think this is the darkest night that ever came upon the church of God? Is there not an alarming deficiency in the life and power of religion? Is it not a hard matter to keep the thrashing floors clean? What madness there is amongst general professors! And, alas! what deadness there is amongst the lovers of truth!

“Send help, O Lord! we pray,
 And thy own gospel bless;
 For godly men decay,
 And faithful pastors cease;
 The righteous are removed home,
 And scorers rise up in their room.”

Yet what a mercy it is that there is no new thing under the sun. We know that, ere time began, our heavenly Father foresaw and appointed the present state of things, and made suitable provision against it. What a mercy it is that, in the worst of times, God will have his own elect, and will not leave himself without a witness!—Although Zion is afflicted with wave upon wave, she is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. Though she is somewhat down now, the everlasting arms are underneath her. Even this state of things is the most direct way to exalt the declarative glory of God—to establish the praise and the fame of him whose we are, and whom we serve. We have many little streams of consolation, all flowing from the Immortal Fountain, being assured of the truth of the following things. When our covenant God has sufficiently tried Zion, she shall come forth as gold; and the worse things get, according to appearances, the nearer she is to deliverance. At this time, she has watchmen set upon her walls, who are not permitted to hold their peace, day nor night. Low as things are, there are many quickened souls, and not a few who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in Jerusalem. In many places, through the goodness of God, the light of the gospel shines clearly. However uncomfortable our estate is, we are in good hands.—“Glorious things are spoken of the city of our God.” Whatever changes take place, our God knows no change. What a mercy it is that we are favoured to love the church, and pray for her! The shadows of the evening are stretched out, yet at evening tide it shall be light. The prosperity and the safety of the Lord’s people are not grounded upon human may-bes, ought-to-bes, or should-bes, but upon his own firm word: “I will and they shall.” Although Satan is now bringing out his master plot against the church, the train is laid that shall blow it up. If the hosts of the Assyrians have encompassed the beloved city, and we are ready to cry, “Alas, Master, how shall we do?” let us lift up our eyes and see the horses, and the chariots of fire, by which we are surrounded, and exultingly say, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

“Our God is above men, devils, and sin;
 My Jesus’s love the battle shall win;
 So terribly glorious his coming shall be,
 His arm all-victorious, shall conquer for me.”

Dearly beloved brethren, may the Lord strengthen us, and may we, by grace, "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." The Lord make us faithful unto death.

May we not be too tame! The Lord help us to wield the two-edged sword of the blessed Spirit, to hew error into pieces, as Samuel did Agag. I live in hopes that we shall not die in the shell.—It is much too soon to go into winter quarters, when the foe is so numerous in the field. The enemies have consulted together with one consent, the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, and the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot. They have raised the war-cry against God's heritage; their motto seems to be, "Union is strength." Let ours be, the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. We wish not to hurt our worst enemies in their persons or estates. We are not for calling fire down from heaven to consume them. We disallow all carnal weapons;—the only weapon of offence that we would use is the sword of the Spirit. Like a certain Spanish general, Velasco, may we draw our swords, fling away the scabbards, wrap each man his standard round his arm, and fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil; giving no quarter to pernicious errors, until our eyeballs close in death. It is not enough to preach the truth in a direct sense, and leave abounding errors alone. That method is like sowing or planting a garden over, but leaving all the weeds in. Or it is like building a new house on the top of an old one. What if they say, we are men of a bad spirit? They do not know a bad spirit from a good one; they are no judges. It is well for Elijah and John the Baptist that they are not here. Were Elijah here, I believe in my conscience, Ahab and Jezebel would either have his head off or he must run for it; and were the sturdy Baptist here, I should be afraid that some romping miss would dance his head off. Now in the Scriptures, the most honourable mention is made of these two men; the former was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, and horses of fire; the latter received from the Master of the house such a character as we should individually covet. He was a "burning and a shining light."

May we sensibly live in the sweet presence, and die in the gracious arms, of Christ, who is our adored and most adorable Prince.

Now, my dear brethren, "unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour; be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now, and ever, Amen."

MANCHESTER:

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