

may dwell with equity, and co-exist with wisdom of deep invention. All that equity requires on behalf of "the rest," is, that they shall not be injured in any way by the means appointed for working out the designs of sovereign goodness. It demands that the machinery employed for the salvation of the elect, shall not, by any necessity of constructure, or of operation, add to their responsibilities, nor increase the judicial visitations of retributive displeasure by the imposition of new obligations, the value of which they are unable to appreciate, and for the observance of which their powers are wholly inadequate.* In short, equity requires that the excepted part of mankind be dealt fairly with; and that is all it does require in relation to them.

* Upon the broad principle of divine equity—to say nothing of some other principles—I have never been able to perceive either the truthfulness or the consistency, of offered grace and general invitations. This theory, which admits the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of an elect number of mankind, to the exclusion of all others, assumes that the blessings of salvation, designed exclusively for the elect, are offered to all mankind, and that all mankind are invited to receive them;—it assumes the reception to be a *duty*—a *new duty*—a *duty paramount* to all other duties;—it assumes that for these duties mankind have no appropriate *capacity*—that God will never give capacity to the *non-elect*, which it is certain they will never *ask* for, and which could not be granted if it *were*;—it assumes that notwithstanding their want of faith in Christ, which is the gift of God, and the faith of his elect, he is so angry with them for the sin of unbelief, as to make it the primary sin in the whole catalogue of crime, and to punish it in the non-elect accordingly;—it assumes that although the design of the gospel is the salvation of the elect, and of them only, it nevertheless treats all mankind as being in a condition either to be lost or to be saved—offers salvation to all, and marks the final refusal by retributive visitations; in one word, its assumptions are so multifarious, and—according to the frailty of my perception—so heterogeneous, that it presents one vast web, the tissues of which are most perplexing. There comes however, out of the complicated mass these clear deductions, viz. that the elect are saved at the expense of the *non-elect*, and that according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, it cannot be otherwise. For, in plain truth, the non-elect are all the *worse*, instead of all the *better*, for these offers and invitations. The grace is always offered to them, but never given; consequently they are never

If therefore, a scheme or contrivance be found to exist, which concedes fully and at once, all the requirements of equity, and at the same time secures all the benevolent intentions of sovereign grace,—that plan must be obviously unexceptionable, and consequently worthy of all acceptance.

Now this is precisely the character of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for that gospel is emphatically and essen-

saved, but on the contrary are punished for their obstinacy in not receiving what was never designed for them, and which it was impossible they could ever realize. Now, this does not appear consonant with the character and claims of *Divine Equity*. As far as reason, logic, and ordinary understandings are concerned, the theory is a mere nullity, creating no beneficial interests, adding no one blessing to the gospel, nor any converted sinners to the new covenant; but on the other hand, it tends to perplex the simplicity of gospel truth, to obscure the principle of sovereign grace, and to place the perfections of God—especially those which are concerned in his moral administrations among men—in *imminent peril*.

Had election been governed by a law which had its foundations in human nature, or had there been an absolute election of some, and a conditional election of others, the theory we are noticing would, under certain modifications, be intelligible. Were the gospel a scheme for converting the whole world to God, without any reference to an elect people, or, for converting all of *them*, and *as many more as would permit themselves to be converted by it*, it would be intelligible;—were the provision of the elect *super-abundant*, and the non-elect invited to participate the surplusage, or even to gather up the crumbs which fall from the children's table, it would be intelligible; but to admit essential and immutable discriminations—discriminations which mark and bound the dispensations of grace—which determine the conversion of every sinner that ever has been converted, or ever will—to admit *these*, and then to plead for an *economy*, which tears up the very foundations upon which they are built—which answers no beneficial end, nor ever can, but which involves the unrepenting sinner in a new species of criminality, and the moral perfections of God in doubt and uncertainty,—to act thus, and in cool determination, seems almost, at first sight, to require a verdict of *felo de se*. I do not, however, as some do, charge the propagators of this theory with perversity, imbecility, or insincerity: on the contrary, I award to them all those honourable feelings, and all those sterling qualities, which their wisest friends will claim for them; yet I cannot appreciate their logic, admire their consistency, nor receive the law at their hands.

tially one of *sovereign grace*. Sovereign grace is the source of all its distinctions, the principle of all its arrangements, and the germ of all its developments. Its doctrines, its promises, and its invitations, are all founded upon this transcendent principle, and are conformable to it. The end, the scope, the spirit, with all the sublime tendencies, efficacious agencies, and glorious results of this grand contrivance, are observable in this description of it. Nor would it perhaps be too much to assume, that whatever tends to shade this radical principle from the eye, to disturb the harmony of its arrangements, or to misapply its provisions, is not of God, but of man. There have been additions made to the gospel, for man is never satisfied with what God does; but the supplementary matter has neither enriched nor improved the original conception. Codicils have been added to the will, but they are attested by human signatures, and are all spurious. There have been accumulations and accretions, but they are all apocryphal, and serve rather to smother and overlay the vital spirit of religion, than to nourish and invigorate it. We therefore turn away from all scholastic glosses, from all human inventions, and from whatever has a tendency to obscure the determining authority of sovereign grace, or to divert its provisions from the original intentions of its author, to hail with unmixed delight the procreative principle of all religious distinctions—the *sovereign goodness of God*.

With grateful admiration we dwell for a moment upon a plan in which divine sovereignty is exalted in the benefactions it pours forth: upon a contrivance which is glorified by the resources it employs. We rejoice in a gospel which blesses, but curses not; which magnifies the objects of its regards without injury and without insult to others: a gospel which comprehends many, but which cannot by reason of its superlative worth, be comprehended by any—which apprehends because it comprehends, and comprehends in order that it may apprehend: a gospel which seeks and which saves—which does not save without seeking, nor seek without saving, but which seeks and which saves its *own* because it has

its own *to seek and to save*: a gospel not subordinated to the will of man but to the will of God, and which therefore determines the conduct of its recipients, instead of being determined by it: a gospel not proposing, but proclaiming—not offering, but imparting the unspeakable blessings of its salvation. *This* is “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” which is not “yea and nay,” but in him yea. “For all the promises of God in him (Christ Jesus) are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.”¹ Blessed be God, the promises of salvation are as full as they are free, and as free as they are full; and more free or more full they cannot be:—for they are full of grace and truth—full of God, and of God’s salvation. Redemption *knows* all its objects, and *owns* as well as *knows* them. The gospel of the grace of God says nothing about a ransom that does not release, a redemption that does not purchase, or a salvation that does not deliver. He is no ransomer who does *not* ransom, no redeemer who does *not* redeem, no saviour who does *not* save. But Christ is all these,—essentially and practically. His right, his ransom, and his reign, are co-efficient and co-extensive. His right (by gift) ruled his ransom, his ransom rules his reign, and his reign rules his power. The foundations of his spiritual kingdom are laid in his priesthood, his priesthood is founded upon the covenant of grace, and the covenant of grace upon the determining will of God. The salvation announced in the gospel is sovereign in its origin, complete in its merits, and discriminating in its objects. It is moreover abundant in its provisions, comprehensive in its claims, free in its communications, and beneficial in all its effects. Efficacious in the agency it puts forth, brilliant in the distinctions it creates, and dazzling in the future glories it reveals, it may well be admired and extolled. In its worth it is inestimable, in its grandness it is unparalleled, and in its resources infinite; while, as if to crown the whole, and to encourage the worthless, its ten thousand blessings are all dispensed

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 20.

“without money and without price!” *This* salvation was contrived by the Father, is contained in the Son, and revealed and applied by the Spirit. A triune Jehovah appears in the covenant of this salvation, while each of the redeeming persons in the nature of God, shines out in the mercy and grace of his official relations, covenant engagements, and divine remembrances. God is *love*,—essentially and emphatically *love*. We repair to the *cross*—the sign and secret of divine love. We look up to the streaming victim, and, asking ourselves *why* he died, *how* he died, and for *whom* he died, exclaim with fixedness of gaze,—

“Nothing but *love* is written *there*.”

In this consecrated spot, hallowed by a thousand recollections, a fountain flows for the filthy, a seamless robe is unfolded for the naked, and the cleft heart of the dying Saviour presents itself for a refuge. *Here* mercy meets the miserable, pardon comforts the guilty, and the love of God in Christ Jesus breathes its odours all around. The lashings of the law end here; and here the voice of oppression dies. The slave here stretches into the measure of a man, receives a freedom chartered in blood, and throws the last badge of his bondage to the winds. Here love reigns in its omnipotence, grace triumphs in its distinctions. The Son of God in his person, fulness, love, blood, obedience and death, is all and in all. *All* that justice required at the hands of the Surety, at the hands of the Surety it received; and satisfied with the price once paid, Mercy says, in relation to the enthralled penitent, “Loose him, and let him go.” *Here* the provision is abundant, and the *worst are welcome*.

Here, then, we have a provision adapted to the condition of man as a *sinner*; for what he may be as a creature, endued with intellect and moral sentiments, and to what extent he may cultivate his natural faculties, and raise himself by that cultivation, is no part of the inquiry. The light in which both the law and the gospel view a man, is not as an intellectual being but

as a sinner against God. Here the dust of degradation is his place. Polluted and deformed, when convicted, he stands like the leper, with his clothes rent and his upper lip covered. He is nothing, *has* nothing, and can do nothing towards meriting, deserving, or procuring the salvation of God. He is alienated from the life of God, darkened in his understanding, depraved in his passions, dead in trespasses and sins, being without hope and without God in the world. It is thus men live naturally, but not spiritually, and are, therefore, dead while they live. They may have *feeling*, but it is not the feeling of divine life; and with some it is a *principle* to have no feeling at all. They may have *light*, but it is not the light of life—it is the light of that region where the “light is as darkness.” They may have *peace*, but it is the peace of the grave, where all is corruption and death. And they may have firmness in relation to certain doctrinal truths, or ceremonial appointments; but their fixedness is immobility—the stiffness of a man dead and laid out—and this is death also; for life is free motion, and this they have not. Death reigns from the head to the foot, even over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Manasseh and Magdalen.

Redeemed and converted sinners differ from others; and they differ in very important points too. But *who* makes them to differ? It is clear they cannot make themselves to differ, for they are dead; it is clear that to produce this difference *agency* must be employed, because life must be communicated; and it is equally clear that an agency capable of quickening the dead must be a *divine* agency, and to a divine agency the scriptures invariably ascribe it.

Do they differ from others, and from their former selves, by a principle of spiritual life? “You hath *He* quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.”² Is the difference marked by a new formation of mind? “*I* have created him for my glory, *I* have formed him; yea, *I* have made him.”³ “For we are *His* workmanship,

² Eph. ii. 1.

³ Isa. xliii. 7.

created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which *God* hath before ordained that we should walk in them."⁴ All men have not *faith*. Do believers differ from others in this respect? their faith is of the "operation of *God*."⁵ Do filial dispositions create a difference? "Because ye are sons, *God* hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba, Father*."⁶ Is a divine illumination the form in which this new life appears? "*God*, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of *God* in the face of Jesus Christ."⁷ Are they distinguished by spiritual emotions and gracious habits? these are the "*fruits of the Spirit*,"⁸—produced as naturally by the Spirit as fruit is by a tree. Are they washed, and sanctified, and justified? these acts have been performed "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the *Spirit of our God*."⁹ The same may be said of every other particular, where *agency* is concerned; for "salvation is of the *Lord*:"¹⁰ *He* planned it—purposed it—promised it—proclaims it—and effects it.

To amplify this subject a little more. Do they differ in *state*? "It is *God* that justifieth."¹¹ In *character*? They are "called to be saints."¹² In *association*? *God*, even the Father, "hath delivered us from the kingdom of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."¹³ Is it *position*? The prince of the kings of the earth, "hath made us kings and priests unto *God* and his Father."¹⁴ Is it *pedigree*? They are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of *God*."¹⁵ Is it *interest in Christ*? "*Thou* hast given him power over all flesh, that *he* should give eternal life to as many as *thou* hast given him."¹⁶ Everywhere, and under all the relations

⁴ Eph. ii. 10.

⁵ Col. ii. 12.

⁶ Gal. iv. 6.

⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

⁸ Gal. v. 22, 23.

⁹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

¹⁰ Jonah ii. 9.

¹¹ Rom. viii. 33.

¹² Rom. i. 7.

¹³ Col. i. 13.

¹⁴ Rev. i. 6.

¹⁵ John i. 13.

¹⁶ John xvii. 2.

of gospel truth, we observe the official agency of Jehovah, exemplifying itself through appointed means, for the attainment of certain ends rendered visible in the salvation of sinners, the exaltation of Christ, and the glory of divine grace.

Again: Do believers differ from one another? *Who* maketh them to differ? In gifts, in position, in office, in dispositions, in energy, in experience, in usefulness, and in many other particulars,—there are obvious and striking differences. “But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . And there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”¹⁷

While in a state of unregeneracy man has no spiritual excellencies, nor can he originate any. He is not naturally an evangelical animal, neither can he make himself one. In point of merit, religious principle, or spiritual blessings, he is neither a prime agent nor a co-efficient. He is not at the head of the establishment. He is not even a partner in the firm. He is a consumer, not a manufacturer,—a receiver, not a producer. For *what* is it that he has not received? If there *is* anything, let us know what it is, that we may examine it, prove it, and hold it fast as that which is good; but if there is *not* anything, then let all our privileges, distinctions, salvation and happiness, be ascribed to the free and sovereign grace of God.

Have we spiritual *food*? “*I am the bread of life.*”¹⁸ *Drink*? “If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink.”¹⁹ *Clothing*? “*He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.*”²⁰ *Gifts*? The man who had but one talent is said to have *received* it.²¹ Are we blest with *consolations*? “We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now *received* the atonement;”²² or enriched by an enlightened experience

¹⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 11, 4, 6.

¹⁸ John vi. 48.

¹⁹ John vii. 37.

²⁰ Isa. lxi. 10.

²¹ Matt. xxv. 18.

²² Rom. v. 11.

of divine things? "We have *received* not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of *God*; that we might know the things that are *freely given* to us of God."²³ Is a consecrated standing in the truth maintained? "The anointing which ye have *received* of him, abideth in you, and teacheth you of all things, and is truth."²⁴ Are our necessities supplied? "My *God* shall supply all your need, according to his *riches* in Christ Jesus;"²⁵ "and of his fulness have all we *received*, and *grace* for *grace*."²⁶ Nor is there any "difference between the Jew and Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."²⁷ The condescending instruction, long since supplied to all who seek God is,—“Ask, and it shall be *given* you.”²⁸ Surely this must be explicit enough.

Yet this is not *all*; for these passages stand not out as *exceptions* to the rest part of the word of God—but, on the contrary, they are in perfect keeping with the entire scope of the gospel of salvation, which represents the blessings of eternal life, flowing as freely and as naturally from the benevolence of God, as water from a spring, or as light from the sun. "Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ," was the apostolic mode of address. In this recognition of sovereign grace, as the true source of gospel blessings, they opened and closed most of their epistles. Their benedictions and valedictions, invariably embodied this sacred principle of distinguishing grace. Their prayers did the same. Even their own experiences were adduced in proof and illustration of the blessed truth. In this view of the subject Paul said, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in me, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." For this cause he obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should afterwards "believe on him to life everlasting."²⁹ And who-

²³ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

²⁴ 1-John ii. 27.

²⁵ Phil. iv. 19.

²⁶ John i. 16.

²⁷ Rom. x. 12.

²⁸ Matt. vii. 7.

²⁹ 1 Tim. i. 14, 16.

ever has candidly examined, even with the slightest attention, the apostolic writings, especially the epistles of Paul, must have observed how strongly they believed the doctrine of free and sovereign grace, and how deeply they were penetrated by it. Nowhere do we find them drawing the attention of believers from this cardinal point, or obscuring the glories of that grace by which they were so much delighted, and to which they were so much indebted. Their exhortations were various and cogent; but they never concealed the source of spiritual distinctions, or fostered a spirit of legal dependence. They represented believers as capable of acting under the law of Christ, and as bound to glorify him with their bodies and with their souls which were his; but they also laid open the secret of their relations, and the source of their supplies. They even enjoined them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, *because* God was working in them “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”³⁰ It is true they never excused either their sinning against God, or their not serving under Christ, upon the ground of their being merely machines, or patients, and therefore incapable of acting only as they are impelled or moved. They represented believers not as *patients*, but as *efficients*,—not as machines, but as *christians*,—not as what they were by *nature*, but as what they were by *grace*. We are free to admit, that they measured the obedience of the believer not by his weakness but by his strength,—not by what he could not do of *himself*, but by what he might do through the *Spirit*. They did not, it is true, confound the *christian* with the *creature*, and then sneeringly ask, “What can the *creature* do?” We grant they did not thus blaspheme common sense, and we should have marvelled greatly if they had; but what is important, and what cannot well be denied, they *did* address them as persons “alive from the dead,” and as “not under the law but under *grace*.”³¹

The most important blessings in our salvation, are described as *gifts*. Now a gift is a *present*; and hence

³⁰ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

³¹ Rom. vi. 14.

all our possessions are made up of *presents*. As presents we *receive* them, as presents we *hold* them, and as presents they are *endeared* to us. Even Christ is called the "*gift of God*:"³² God's present—his "*unspeakable*"³³ present to the church. "For God so loved the world"—on account of the church which was to come out of it—"that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,"—as by transgression he deserved to do, and as by apprehension he concludes he must—"but have everlasting life."³⁴ "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the *free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life."³⁵ The Holy Ghost is a gift;³⁶ and "Unto you," said Jesus Christ, "it is *given* to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables."³⁷ "Do not err, my beloved brethren. *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." Thus wrote practical *James*.

Whatever relieves and comforts our minds, improves and raises our condition, or enriches and enhances the gift of life, is a *blessing*. Happiness implies an assemblage of blessings, and it is presented under two aspects—temporal and spiritual. Temporal blessings make temporal happiness; spiritual blessings make spiritual happiness. The former relate to this world, and are restricted to it; but godliness has the promise, not only of the life that now is, but also of that which is to come. Spiritual blessings, therefore, are superior to temporal—inconceivably and infinitely superior. In their nature, their ends, their uses, their relations and their consequences, they gloriously and immeasurably transcend the most costly and desirable of earthly blessings. They differ in their relations, residence, medium, objects, tenure

³² John iv. 10.

³³ 2 Cor ix. 15.

³⁴ John iii. 16.

³⁵ Rom. v. 18.

³⁶ Rom. v. 5.

³⁷ Mark iv. 11.

³⁸ James i. 16, 17.

and influences. Besides which, they are higher, purer, richer, nobler, firmer, and constitute of themselves an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. Yet, concerning these blessings, what do we read? Just this: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Christ Jesus, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."³⁹ Here let us for a moment pause, reflect, admire and bless. These are the "true sayings of God,"—the odours of life in the breathings of eternity, and the wells of salvation in the valley of Baca. They are the precious lights of immortality, streamed upon that oasis in the moral desert of this world—the church of Christ; and by that church reflected upon the surrounding world. Let us *breathe* over this blessed passage, bask in these heavenly rays, and drink at the spring here opened for us, till we are thoroughly renewed in the spirit of our minds, illumined in our judgments, and satisfied in our desires.

Bearing the passage steadily in view, we inquire, by what *name* are these blessings called? and the answer, rendered easy by reference, is, "spiritual." Who is the *author* of them? "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." How came we to be *possessed* of spiritual blessings? *He* "blessed us" with them. How *many* of them? "All." *When*? "Before the foundation of the world." What *motive* had he for doing so? "That we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Cannot men then be faultless *without* all spiritual blessings? It appears not. By what *rule* were these blessings distributed? "According as he hath chosen us in him." *Why* did God desire the objects of his choice to be pure and

³⁹ Eph. i. 3, 4, 5, 6.

blameless? Because they were to be his children. Upon what *ground*? "Adoption." But *why* did he adopt? He had predestinated us. Done *what*? *Predestinated* us. What is *predestination*? An appointment beforehand. Is not this a *dangerous* doctrine? Not in divine estimation. Then God *predestinated* his chosen to the adoption of children? Yes. To *whom* was it purposed the family should be brought? "To himself." By *whom*? "By Jesus Christ." What was the *determining cause* of all this? It was all done "according to the good pleasure of his will." *Whose* will? The will of him who is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is meant by *good pleasure*? Divine benevolence. And what by *will*? Divine sovereignty. Were then, the *exercise* and the *objects* of divine benevolence, determined by *divine sovereignty*? Certainly. And *before* the foundation of the world? Yes. To what *end*? "To the praise of the glory of his grace." *Who* says all this? An *inspired apostle*.

In accordance with this apostolic view, God is called "the God of all grace;"⁴⁰ his throne is styled "the throne of grace;"⁴¹ and he who "stands between," is the "express image" of his Father—"full of grace and truth." In harmony with the same principle, we read of electing grace,⁴² adopting grace,⁴³ pardoning grace,⁴⁴ justifying grace,⁴⁵ reigning grace,⁴⁶ abundant grace,⁴⁷ &c. Designating this grace by the relations in which it stands, the aspects under which it appears, or the function with which it is blended, we speak of the covenant of grace, the doctrines of grace, the promises and blessings of grace, and the connexion between grace and glory. We think and talk of a state of grace, a principle of grace, a work of grace, a kingdom of grace, a religion of grace, and so on. We lay the material world under contribution for the purpose of illustrating the grace of God in one form or other; hence grace is frequently compared

⁴⁰ 1 Pet. i. 10.

⁴¹ Heb. iv. 16.

⁴² Rom. xi. 5, 6.

⁴³ John i. 3.

⁴⁴ Eph. i. 7.

⁴⁵ Rom. iii. 4.

⁴⁶ Rom. v. 17.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 15.

to oceans, fountains, rivers, springs of water, trees, plants, seeds, germs, &c. By a prosopopœia we even personify it, and then it is made to appear, wherever *agency* is concerned in our salvation; for this reason we speak of electing, adopting, redeeming, calling, justifying, and sanctifying grace; and for this reason it quickens, regenerates, subdues, exalts, triumphs, and saves. Yea, it waits, hopes, strives, reigns, and is crowned and glorified. We also ascribe to it properties of nearly every description:—mathematical, astronomical, chemical, medical, &c. It has height, depth, length, and breadth,—wealth, splendour, efficacy, and grandeur inconceivable. We make it an ornament, a throne, a crown, and a potentate. It has honors, titles, offices, virtues, glories and excellencies, unknown. It resides in our hearts, rules in our affections, and rises in our praise to God. It stands in our covenant head, is secured to his chosen seed, lives in his quickened brethren, and is seen in all who love him. In all the perfections of God, in all the branches of salvation, in all the spiritual family, and in all the institutions of the gospel, the sovereign grace of our God is displayed. Language itself is tortured and agonized, and its laws made to do homage to the honour of his grace. We must have double compounds, and double superlatives, in our descriptions of his grace. *Grace* itself, as a descriptive name, will not suffice; we want *rich* grace, the *riches* of grace, and the *exceeding* riches of his grace, or we are not satisfied.

In this way are we accustomed to speak of the grace of God, and for all this there is a warrant from the authority of scripture. Nor is there danger of excess, so long as the exercise springs from implanted grace, is the appropriate expression of inward holiness, and relates to christian edification.

This grace, in the amplitude of its fulness, the multitude of its blessings, the sacredness of its distinctions, and the sovereignty of its designs, we have in Christ; “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.”⁴⁸ All the fulness of nature, of grace, and of

glory, dwells in our beloved Lord. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily."⁴⁹ The fulness of creation, the fulness of redemption, the fulness of the church, the fulness of government, and the fulness of all things—all fulness has its residence in the great Mediator. Whether by gift, or whether by right superior to gift, there it is, and *there* we rejoice to think it will be.

We are also said to be partakers of Christ; that is, we share in the blessings of his salvation. *How?* By virtue of our *union* to him, which may be viewed as matrimonial, federal, vital, and political. And as is the union, such is the participation. By the first we partake of his name, his inheritance, his honours, and his residence. The second interests us in his righteousness and blood, through the medium of a legal bond; the third quickens us into fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and is the ligament of life between believers and Christ; while the fourth shows a relation between a gracious sovereign and a spiritual people, and gives a right of participation in all the privileges, distinctions and advantages, of his kingly administration.

More upon this subject, by way of illustration especially, may seem superfluous; otherwise we would just remark, that the apostles put a broad intelligible difference between grace and works—in *election*, in conversion, in justification, and in salvation. They treated the subject declaratively and argumentatively, positively and negatively. Twice in one chapter, Paul affirmed the general proposition: "by grace ye are saved."⁵⁰ While his epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians, are remarkable for the manner in which he has treated this all-important subject. The variety of his arguments, the richness of his illustrations, the obviousness of his conclusions, added to the liveliness of his manner and the energy of his zeal, all tend to impress deeply upon our minds, what were *his* views and feelings upon the subject. When writing to Timothy, his "own son in the faith," he remarked, "who hath

⁴⁹ Col. ii. 9.

⁵⁰ Eph. ii.

saved and called us with an holy calling, *not* according to *our works*, but according to his own *purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."⁵¹ And again, in his epistle to Titus, we find him exclaiming, "*not* by works of righteousness which *we* have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through our Lord Jesus Christ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."⁵² Surely *this* must be explicit enough. Can language be more intelligible, more expressive, or more suited to enhance the subject? Is there any reason, or any religion, in doubting upon a subject rendered so abundantly clear by the pen of inspiration? Must it not betray great mental infirmity, or most bewildering predilections, for any man, be his profession what it may, to remain skeptical upon a subject of more than common transparency? Every man, we know, should be fully persuaded in his own mind; but we are utterly at a loss to conceive what further evidence on *this* subject, can be necessary to produce conviction. We are inclined to think that if men will not believe the written testimony of God, so clearly, so variously, and so frequently repeated, "*neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*"

Much has been said about *religious education*, and we are not about saying any thing to depreciate it any further than it may depreciate the religion of sovereign grace, which is the religion of the bible, and the only religion by which a lost, condemned sinner, can be saved. But what is *meant* by a RELIGIOUS education? Is it meant an education which *inculcates* the principles of religion, or which imparts its essentials? If the former, we admit its propriety; if the latter, the designation is a gross misnomer. Education is not religion, neither is it always its handmaid. It is too frequently mistaken for it, and sometimes stands as a cloud between the self-righteous

⁵¹ 2 Tim. i. 9.

⁵² 2 Tim. iii. 5, 6, 7.

sinner and the grace of God. Dissenters eschew, and that righteously enough, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration ; but there is no great difference between baptismal and *educational* regeneration ; both are subversive of the sovereign grace of God ; and it may be wise for dissenters to enquire if, while they are writing down the doctrine in one form they are not writing it up in another.

Some tell us Sabbath school teachers should convert all their scholars, parents all their children, masters all their servants, and ministers all their hearers. But these religious mechanics seem to understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Herod and Manaen, were educated and brought up under the same roof;⁵³ they played in the same room, heard the same voices, were taught the same lessons, surrounded by the same examples, and subject to the same discipline : yet they each took a different course ; the one becoming a profligate, a persecutor, and a murderer ; the other a disciple of Christ, and a preacher of the gospel. By *grace* we are saved. It is the Lord who makes us to differ ; and we have nothing that we have not received. Let Sabbath school teachers do all they can, within the sphere of their operation ; let parents, let masters, and let ministers do the same ; but let them remember "salvation belongeth unto God," and that to arrogate divine attributes is neither consistent with christian humility nor acceptable to God.

Much has been said about the *objective* force of divine truth in the gospel ; and of the manner in which the intellect operates upon the moral affections. We shall not open here any metaphysical debate, nor bring any great array of argument against this species of vain philosophy. If man does not make himself to differ, and if in a state of gracious difference he is dependent upon the Spirit of God, having nothing but what he receives, then the relation between the understanding and divine truth is not to be brought as an argument against the necessity of divine agency—against a doctrine so fully established

⁵³ Acts xiii. 1.

in the holy scriptures. One passage we will cite: "We all as with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."⁵⁴ Here the gospel is compared to a highly burnished mirror, upon which the glory of the Lord shone, and by which it was reflected with great power and brilliancy. The effect was transforming, or assimilating. But *how* was it produced, even in the *Christian*? "By the *Spirit of the Lord*;" i. e. by the Holy Spirit, procured and sent by the Lord Jesus, who is the spirit, scope, and end of the gospel. Here we see the gospel *objectively*,—pouring incessant streams of light upon the contemplative and listening believer, acting upon his understanding and his affections, and producing a happy conformity to the First-born among many brethren; yet doing it all instrumentally, by the Spirit, whose efficient agency the apostle recognized. The object of the statement here, is doubtless to prevent the supposition that the change "from glory to glory," was effected by the mere contemplation of truth, or by the natural operation of the gospel upon the mind. Such must have been the intention of the writer; and the doctrine conspicuously brought out is, that it was by the *Spirit of God alone* that this change was wrought, even in Christians, under the gospel, and amidst the full blaze of its truth. Without *his* agency, it is assumed, the truths of salvation, however strongly reflected upon the mind, will fail to produce any spiritual effects upon the soul. This is clearly the doctrine of the apostle; it is a doctrine evidently contained in the passage, and it supplies a solid refutation to all the arguments in support of human sufficiency in connexion with the objective influence of divine truth. It is the Spirit of God who makes the gospel efficacious, both to the sinner and the saint.

Some have said God provided salvation, but man determines its application. But if it be so, there is an end at once to the doctrine of discriminating grace; and

⁵⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

the passages of scripture we have recently cited upon this point, as well as many others not cited, contain insufferable nonsense, and must be gross interpolations. Sinners are said to be called according to *God's* purpose, not their own; and if *his* purpose determines their conversion, with what consistency of speech can they be said to determine the application of gospel blessings? We are much nearer the truth when we say the grace of God determines the conversion of a sinner, than when we say the conversion of a sinner determines the grace of God. God changes the sinner's mind: the sinner never changes God's.

The view which has been taken of this subject, and with which we shall close our labours at this time, refers the mighty question of our salvation to the good pleasure of Jehovah's will as its prime distinguishing source, and points all its final results to the glory of his grace. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him: in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory."⁵⁵

It is no fault of ours, nor is it any impeachment of the system of sovereign grace, that we cannot comprehend it. Paul himself could not. But thus much is certain; God hath concluded all in unbelief, that sovereign mercy, in distinction from human worthiness, and in contrast to it, might be gloriously displayed in all who are forgiven, whether Jews or Gentiles. We may therefore exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments,

⁵⁵ Eph. i. 7—12.

and his ways are past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen."⁵⁶

We think we have sufficiently illustrated the two questions proposed at the commencement of this publication; which are in beautiful harmony with the last cited passage, which, when taken in connexion with the doctrines that had been taught, is singularly appropriate. "Paul had been teaching," writes professor Hodge, "that men are justified, not on the ground of their own merit, but of the merit of Christ; they are sanctified, not by the power of their own good purposes, and the strength of their own will, but by the Spirit of God; they are chosen and called to eternal life, not on the ground of any thing in them, but according to him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. God, therefore, is the Alpha and Omega of salvation. The creature has neither merit nor power. His salvation must rest on sovereign mercy alone."

In merit, efficiency, will, purpose, power or goodness, man is nothing. God therefore was under no moral obligation to save him. Nor can *any* creature lay his *maker* under obligation, seeing God himself is all in all: the source, the means, and the end. By him all things are which now exist; through his power, wisdom, goodness, and omnipresence, all things are maintained, directed, and governed; and to him, as their final end, all things converge. They are *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him. That system of religion therefore, is most in accordance with the character of God, the condition of man, and the end of the universe, in which all things are supposed to be of God, subject to his government, and intended to display the glory of his character as the highest and noblest of all possible objects.

And this is precisely the view we have taken of the

⁵⁶ Rom. xi. 33, 34, 35, 36.

matter; for by this wise provision God has gathered to himself the glory of our salvation, for to him must be ascribed the efficacy of its operations. We are nothing but what grace makes us, nor can we wish to be. We have nothing but what we receive; but then this grace is so abundant that we have every thing to receive, and the world is governed for the sake of the church. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

A few remarks, relating to the application and uses of this doctrine, may not be out of place.

Remark 1. *The delightful brilliancy of the doctrine now displayed, pours inimitable loveliness and sheds unfading glories, upon the character of God.* It opens the benevolent heart of God, brings him near to us in creation and redemption, and thus reveals his nature and his dispensations, in soft and hallowed brightness.

Rem. 2. *The beneficence of God, both in providence and grace, is calculated to persuade our judgments and to move our affections.* For analyse human nature as we may, it will ever be found more susceptible of deep continued kindness, than of any thing else; and he who knows what is in man, has not hesitated to appeal to this great law of our constitution, by affirming it to be the "Goodness of God which leadeth men to repentance."

Rem. 3. *The doctrines implied in a free and sovereign salvation, are entitled to our noblest regards.* They are adapted to our condition, calculated to command our highest admiration, to secure our best obedience, and to supply us plenteously with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. To revile them as some have done, to conceal or betray them as others are wont to do, or to pervert them to wicked purposes as is the case with perhaps not a few, are crimes so frightful as to place the agents of them almost beyond the limits of forgiveness; and were it not a fact, that sovereign grace has triumphed over the blackest vices in the foul catalogue of human crimes, it might at once be inferred that God had

given up the parties to strong delusions, with the intention of visiting them in his anger and consuming them in his retributive displeasure. As it is, we appeal to the understandings and to the consciences of all such persons, "if God peradventure may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth: and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive (Gr. alive) by him at his will."

Rem. 4. *By this scheme of sovereign grace, so contrary to human judgments, and so confounding to self-plumed sciolists, moralists, politicians, and worldly-wisemen, God has triumphantly secured all the glory of salvation to himself.* This is obvious. "Because the (reputed) foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 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 which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."⁵⁷ "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."⁵⁸

Rem. 5. *Let not the poor and the illiterate conclude that salvation is not for them, because they occupy inferior conditions in life.* If God had chosen only the wealthy or the wise, the highly imaginative or the titled aristocracy, his grace would indeed have been rich and his glory also great in their salvation; but if he has chosen tradesmen and artizans—rustics and manufacturers—coal-heavers and bargemen—porters and dustmen—hill-coolies and Virginian slaves,—if these are objects of his

⁵⁷ 1 Co. i. 25—31.

⁵⁸ Rom. iii. 27.

choice, how infinitely *richer* must his grace appear, and how far more exceedingly abundant must the thanksgiving of many redound to his honour and glory! If also it should be found that he calls by his grace the poor in *preference* to the rich—if he takes the peasant but leaves the prince—regenerates the footman but passes by “his grace”—brings the servant into his family but takes not in the master or the mistress, then what sovereign brightness clothes the riches of his grace! Yet even this is the case. “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”⁵⁹ “Hearken my beloved brethren,” said James, “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him?”⁶⁰ Many are called, but few chosen; yet out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God hath ordained praise.

“He takes the fool, and makes him know
The mysteries of his grace;
To bring aspiring wisdom low,
And all its pride abase.”

Christ himself was once a poor man. His followers were, for the most part, illiterate and despised. So were the first Christians; and the men who turned the world upside down, were neither kings nor capitalists.

Rem. 6. *No convicted, law-distressed sinner, ought ever to despair of obtaining mercy upon the grounds of a free and sovereign salvation.* For if this salvation is wholly free, it asks nothing for value received; and that it is free, is a fact divinely attested in the scriptures of truth, and in the experience of believers. Cost what it

⁵⁹ Luke x. 21, 22,

⁶⁰ James ii. 5.

might, it costs the sinner nothing. It is all free to him. No legal condition is enjoined, no premium is required. The only qualification needed by him is, a deep conviction of his sinfulness, and of the necessity of redemption through the blood of Christ, in order that he may appreciate a free salvation, and seek acceptably its enjoyments and benefits; while even the qualification itself is really a token for good, seeing it springs from a principle of grace in the soul, and is the earnest and pledge of all the blessings sought.

Rem. 7. *Nor ought Christians, of recent standing, or of weak imperfect parts, to be discouraged.* That which sovereign grace begins, sovereign grace will perfect; for grace and glory are inseparably united. What the dawn is to the day, the infant to the man, or the acorn to the tree, that is grace to glory—that is the present to the future condition of the saints. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”⁶¹ “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”⁶² And he who gave the kingdom will impart a meetness for it, and effect a preservation to it. Zerubbabel’s hands laid the foundations of the second temple, his hands also finished it; and we know who said, “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Rem. 8. *Christians above all people again ought to be satisfied with their conditions in life.* They are under the providence of God, and all things work together for their good. They are rich in their relations and prospects; and if but little in hand, they have much in hope. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And what is tribulation, with a kingdom at the end of it? and such a kingdom as this too! Things are appraised according to their durability, connexions, or results; and the principle is a sound one. Apply it in the present instance, and then ask what is the worth of the whole world, if followed by weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever? What are titles and honours, with damnation at the end?

⁶¹ Zech. iv. 6.

⁶² Luke xii. 32.

What is a splendid railway, with perdition for a terminus ? or a fast sailing vessel, with destruction for its port ? A feast of fat things, with "death in the pot," is scarcely to be desired ; nor a holiday in fine clothes, if succeeded by a prison dress and transportation to a penal settlement for life. The *soul*—the soul is *every-thing*. The redemption of the soul is *precious* ; for eternal life is the grand consideration. He who is redeemed unto God, may well afford to be content with the dispensations of providence, seeing his interests are all consulted, and his salvation perfectly secured. He who is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, ought not to fume or to fret because he is denied a little thick clay—because he does not live in a toy-shop, or because a few parcels of sticks and straws are not possessed by him. Having food and raiment, let him therewith be content. The shoe that *slouches* is as troublesome as the shoe that pinches, and a *bundle* of walking sticks is rather an incumbrance than a service. How dishonourable to religion when the loss of a legacy, disappointment in a few anticipated pounds, or the miscarriage of some favourite project, is sufficient not only to disconcert the feelings but to mar the peace of whole families, to sever the closest ties of friendship, and to poison the purest pleasures of domestic life. How is it that these coarse, sordid, "corruptible things, such as silver and gold," should command almost the whole life and soul of those very persons who profess to have been delivered from the present evil world, and to have turned their backs upon it ? Why are they not absorbed by their *heavenly inheritance* ? They were *once*. Once, at least, they *professed* to have been so.

Rem. 9. *All Christians should be useful.* Because they all *may* be useful: they are all *commanded* to be useful ; and they are all *qualified* to be useful. Usefulness is the calling to which they are apprenticed in the day of God's power, the *business* in which they are to be engaged while they live, and which they are to carry on in this world for the benefit of mankind, the interests of the church, and the glory of God.

ERRATA.

- Page 6, line 9 from above, a semicolon after "*point.*"
" 6, line 3 from below, a period after "*pleasant.*"
" 10, line 3 from below, two inverted commas before "*all.*"
" 11, line 4 from below, a semicolon after "*materials.*"
" 19, line 15 from above, for "*Rubuen,*" read "*Ruben.*"
" 44, line 16 from below, two inverted commas before "*therefore.*"
" 58, line 15 from above, for "*viscious,*" read "*vicious.*"
" 61, line 18, from above, for "*exiles,*" read "*exile.*"
" 62, line 4 from below, after person read "*is.*"
" 66, line 3 from above, after "*God*" place two inverted commas.
" 72, line 15 from above, for "*ull,*" read "*full.*"
" 74, line 3 from above, for "*esemble,*" read "*resemble.*"
" 74, line 14 from above, for "*Ducalh onors,*" read "*Ducal honors.*"
" 82, line 13 from above, for "*rhind,*" read "*rind.*"
" 121, line 9 from below, for "*them,*" read "*men.*"
" 152, line 11 from above, for "*Sinia,*" read "*Sion.*"