

and not unfrequently tempt him to look on his brother as vastly inferior to himself.

Another circumstance though only conjectural, is, that if Adam and Eve offered sacrifices with the same interest and faith in the atonement as Abel, they most probably felt, more favourably inclined towards Abel, than towards his brother Cain. Notwithstanding their natural attachment to Cain as the first-born, and other circumstances which might prejudice them in his favour, the religious conduct of Abel, and the known fact that God respected the person and offering of Abel, while he clearly disapproved of Cain and his offering, would be sufficient to give Abel the preference, in the esteem of his parents. And Cain might be quite sensible of this point, and even suspicious of being subject to the control of his brother in the same manner, and with more rigour than his brother had been to him.

Another circumstance which is mentioned is, Cain is said to be very *wroth*, and his *countenance fell*. I presume the anger of Cain did not arise simply from Abel's offering being accepted, or respected, nor from his own being rejected; but from a consideration of the fact as operating upon the minds of other people, and the light in which he should afterwards be regarded by his numerous relations both near and distant; together with his entire subjection to his younger brother. It seemed to be these things that so amazingly distressed him, that he could not conceal his irritation and enmity of mind; for he was *very* wroth and his countenance fell; *i. e.* he looked dejected, morose, savage, sullen, sour, and malicious. The thought of his younger brother, who was under his control, and in almost every thing his inferior, together with a dread of seeing his brother holding the reins of family government, and invested with those privileges which he then possessed, exercised his mind so forcibly as to mock the act of concealment. Agreeable to these conjectures, God expostulated with him, and said, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shall not thou have the excellency? Still preserve the rights and privileges which you now possess? And if

thou doest not well, sin, or punishment, lieth at the door. If you accomplish your wicked purpose of killing your brother, sin with all its horrors will enter into your conscience, and make dreadful work therein, as we find it did; for he said, "my punishment is greater than I can bear:" the stings of conscience seem intolerable. Beside, said God, there is no need to kill your brother, he will still be your inferior, his desires shall still be subject to thee,—he shall be under thy control, and thou shalt rule over him as formerly. The scope of the expostulation is to point out the unreasonableness and folly of Cain's wroth and malicious purposes; by assuring him that the acceptance of Abel's person and sacrifice, was entirely a sovereign and spiritual favour; that it would never invade the boundaries of natural and relative rights; make no transfer of civil interest, destroy no just claim, nor divest him of any prerogative which he then possessed; but that, he should still have the excellency, the precedency, the double portion, and the right of primogeniture, rule and government. And to remove every thing of a suspicious nature, he suggested that his brother Abel had no such thoughts as he supposed, that he understood the favour shown, to have no influence on worldly things, or at least not to enrich him with any new investments of an earthly nature, but that he was as humble, as affectionate, and as well disposed toward his brother as ever: and so far from wishing to exercise any authority over him, or make any alteration in family affairs, but that he ever wished to be *under* him; his desire shall be subject to thee, or to thee is subject his desire; he is willing and ready to be your servant—to do your pleasure. This I think to be a fair interpretation of the phrase; but should not these observations be sufficient, I argue from cases that are clear to those which are obscure.

1. We are accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can make this truth more plain. Now we are sure Cain was never in Christ, for we are clearly informed he was of that wicked one, the devil.

2. *God the Father is said to "MAKE us accepted in the Beloved."*

Now if Cain's acceptance was intended in the same sense that a sinner is accepted by God, to enjoy eternal life, it follows, either that God has two methods of justifying and accepting sinners, or else such acceptance cannot be intended: but if such an acceptance is not meant, it seems impossible to draw an inference from the passage in support of offered grace. But as we may safely presume, no sensible person will ever contend for the incongruous notion of two contrary rules by which a sinner is eternally accepted; and seeing the rule of acceptance in this place entirely opposes that distinctly, and unambiguously laid down by Paul, we may safely conclude that a spiritual acceptance is not intended.

3. As the agent in accomplishing our acceptance is God, it entirely opposes the agent in the words under notice, who is a mortal, sinful man, and not the immortal, and impeccable Jehovah. If *thou* (*i. e.* Cain) doest well, &c.

I would ask, by what law his doing was to be regulated? Not the law of man; that was never intended to govern all the powers of the mind. Not the law of sacrifice, for that directed to the Beloved through whose sacrifice we are accepted. Not the law of works, or the moral law in covenant form, for that Cain had violated; and besides, by the works of the law no flesh living can be justified, and if not justified, of course not accepted. Not a remedial law, such as Mr. Baxter and others would persuade us the gospel is, because there is no such thing, and if there was, it would be of no use.

Lastly, if the word *acceptance*, must be retained, it must denote the acceptance of his *offering*, and not his *person*. If he acted uprightly and sincere, his sacrifices should be accepted as they formerly had; but if not, he must take the sin and punishment to himself. The reader is now in possession of evidence, collected from the meaning of the word rendered accepted; the different forms in which the passage is construed; the circumstances which accompany the fact, and which result from a comparison of the passage in its present form; with others of a positive, decisive, and unequivocal

nature. If, after summing up the evidence, and carefully comparing one part with another, and all the parts with the whole, he can still see an offer of grace made to Cain, I can only say, he possesses a strength of vision to which I can lay no claim.

The following is copied from Dr. Gill's Commentary on John iii. 12.—'The Jews relate the occasion of it (*death,*) after this manner:—Cain said to Abel his brother, come, and let us go out into the open field: and when they were both out in the open field, Cain said to Abel his brother, there is no judgment, nor judge, nor another world: neither will a good reward be given to the righteous, nor vengeance be taken on the wicked: neither was the world created in mercy, nor is it governed in mercy; or why is thy offering kindly accepted, and mine is not kindly accepted? Abel answered Cain, and said to Cain, there is judgment, and there is a judge, and there is another world: and there are gifts of a good reward to the righteous, and vengeance will be taken on the wicked: and the world was created in mercy, and in mercy it is governed, for according to the fruit of good works it is governed: because that my works are better than thine, my offering is kindly accepted, and thine is not kindly accepted. And they both strove together in the field, and Cain rose up against his brother, and slew him.' This quotation by the Doctor is from the Targum of Hieros. and Jon. in Gen. iv. 8.

The same learned author further observes, 'in the Hebrew text in Gen. iv. 8. there is an extraordinary large pause, as if a discourse of this kind, which passed between the two brothers, was to be inserted. Philo, the Jew, says, that in the contention or dispute between *Cain* and *Abel*, *Abel* attributed all things to God, and *Cain* ascribed every thing to himself: so that the controversy was about grace and works as now: and as then Cain hated his brother upon this account, so now carnal men hate and persecute the saints, because they will not allow their works to be the cause of justification and salvation.' And from hence also it may be observed, that a work may be, as to the *matter* of it,

good; *and yet, as to its circumstances*, and the end and view of it, evil. To which may be added, a grammarian's figure of speech, that not *nouns*, but *adverbs* constitute *well-doing*. It is not enough that good works are done, they must be *well done*. The *manner* as well as the *matter* enter into the character of obedience. And, perhaps, one of the greatest difficulties in the world, for a good man, is, *to do good things well*. I have only to add in this place, that Jehovah only reasoned with Cain upon his own principles, in the same method as a Calvinist may reason with a Wesleyan, a Baxterian, a Fullerian, and other terminations of like sound, but different significations.

Gen. vi. 3. “*My spirit shall not always strive with man.*”

These words are thought by some to include the idea of offered grace; and to suggest, with great force of consequence, a salvable state, in which it is supposed the antediluvians lived. It is thought, that an offer of grace and salvation, was not only made by Noah, but that the Holy Ghost was engaged in reasoning with them, and persuading them to accept of the proffered grace.

I cannot feel satisfied with this general interpretation for the following reasons:—

1. *The consequences resulting from such a view of the passage.* It seems a clear case with me, that there is always a natural and necessary likeness between principles and consequences, as much as there is between a spring and its streams, a root and its branches. If the spring is salt, it seems an error to calculate upon the streams being fresh; and if the root is holy, we may, correctly enough, expect to find the same quality in the branches. If principles are rigidly correct, consequences cannot be erroneous: and, if consequences are decidedly opposed to plain and practical ideas, the principles from which they are drawn must be manifestly wrong.

According to the interpretation into which we are enquiring, the following may be considered as an abridged statement of the case.

God ardently desired the salvation of the antediluvian world, which to accomplish, he makes an offer of grace to them all; and more effectually to complete his desires and secure their happiness, he follows up the same by the exertions of his Holy Spirit. We might ask, what more could he have done, or what more could be done? But man's will opposed to his Maker's wishes, rejects the offers of grace, and the strivings of the Spirit; he opposes, and successfully opposes too, his resistance; and though but a feeble worm, he overcomes Omnipotence, frustrates divine purposes, and ends the strife by conquering everlasting strength. That Jehovah, defeated in the conflict, stung with disappointment, and covered with disgrace, determined to wreak his vengeance on them, and therefore covered them with a flood of cold perishing water.

Persons anxious to defend such awful sentiments, are at liberty, for me, to claim and enjoy all the honour and glory connected with a triumphant defence.

Should it be said, Jehovah could have saved them by his power, but he treated them as reasonable, rational, and intelligent beings; we have only to look over their history, to be convinced of their rationality and intelligence; and a very brief survey of such an idea seems sufficient to discover the rationality and intelligence of the person in whose mind it originated. If the ambassadors for the triple alliance should fail in their efforts to persuade the sublime Porte into a compliance with the terms of the three united powers, and should order their maritime forces to return home without effecting, or even endeavouring to effect, the liberation of Greece, would the nation be satisfied with their conduct, though they should strongly urge the rationality, and intelligence of the Turkish nation. Were they to say, the people are human beings, they are reasonable, and some of them even intelligent persons, though their stubbornness and peculiar notions will not allow them to agree to the proposals so strongly urged upon their notice, by the combined powers of Britain, France, and Russia; would such a defence be deemed a justification of their conduct? I think not.

And equally deficient and ludicrous, is, in my view of things, the reasoning and defence which many people adopt and set up, in order to prove the propriety of the conduct of Jehovah in desisting from his efforts to persuade men into a compliance with his *terms*, as they are called, because they are reasonable creatures!! As if their intelligence and reason was a barrier, an indestructible barrier, to their salvation!! This has always appeared to me a very peculiar mode of reasoning, and does still.

2. *The equivocal reading of the passage, forms another objection with me.*

It will be said, half the texts in the bible are not free from this objection, and that to reject doctrines because they are not founded on scriptures incapable of a different reading, is, for substance, to reject all truth and doctrine whatever. But, let it be observed, some passages are much more doubtful as to the correctness of their translations, than what others are. A passage, may be construed, like a sentence, into twenty different forms, and yet the same ideas be strictly retained. When this is the case, a change in the form of expression, is, with me, a matter of indifference; but when different instructions involve contrary ideas, we ought at least to proceed with great caution in fixing the precise meaning of such passages. And for any person to build a scheme of doctrine on passages confessedly obscure, is certainly to proclaim his want of judgment and revelation; especially if such passages admit of constructions at once subversive and destructive to his favourite ideas. No judicious man would choose to raise a fortification on a base, subject to the superior prowess of his enemies, and liable to be crumbled to pieces the moment it is assailed. Yet such appears to me the case, with many persons in a theological point of view; whenever you institute an enquiry in order to investigate the legitimacy of their creed, their parchments are rolled together like a scroll, and the moment you touch their foundation, that moment their fabric falls.

Two things may be briefly noticed, *viz. what we are to understand by the Spirit, and its striving.*

As to the first, interpreters, both ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, are much divided. Some of the Jewish rabbies think the *soul* of *man* is intended. This is the opinion of the famous Aben Ezra; and it is certain, the soul is called the spirit of God—"The spirit of God is in my nostrils." The word rendered *strive*, is said to signify a *sheath*; and is thought to suggest, that what a sheath is to a sword, that the body is to the soul. And then the sense is, 'the soul of man shall not always be inclosed in the body, like a sword in its sheath; I will *draw, separate, or divide* the soul from the body, as a sword is drawn from its sheath; yet, nevertheless, though I will destroy the thread of human existence, it shall be protracted to the term of one hundred and twenty years.'

Whatever objections may be made to this exposition, thus much is certain, that the comparison is by no means novel. Authors both profane and sacred, have adopted the very same similitude; and Dan. vii. 15. seems to agree with the sense just given. "I, Daniel, was grieved (*cut*) in my spirit in the midst of my body," (*sheath*), so Montanus, Munster, Vatablus, Gill, Poole, Brown, Bagster, &c.

2. Some understand the *spirit* mentioned as referring to himself, and then the words must be considered in the form of a divine soliloquy.

Mr. Poole, in his commentary hints at this sense, and refers to the case of Ephraim and Israel, Hosea xi. 8, 9. And the meaning is, 'My spirit which is within me, shall not be, as it were, always in a tumult and contention respecting man, whether I shall or shall not destroy him; I will decide the strife and be at a point; I will positively destroy him after I have given him the space of one hundred and twenty years to repent of his wickedness.' Dr. Gill observes, this sense much obtains among the learned. See his 'Cause of God and Truth,' vol. 1, sect. 2.

3. Can any sound reason be shown, why the words should not by a metonymy signify the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, as in 2 Tim. i. 7.? "For God hath not given us the *spirit of fear*, but of *power, of love,*



and *of a sound mind.*" And then the sense is, that Noah, abundantly qualified by the Holy Ghost, stood in the circle of blasphemy, and with the greatest and most manly intrepidity insisted on the necessity of moral and evangelical righteousness. And, like Paul, when before an adulterous and intemperate Felix, " he reasoned of *righteousness*, temperance, and of judgment to come." Compare Neh. ix. 30. with Acts xxiv. 25. and vii. 51, 52.

4. Or, by the *spirit* may be intended the *nature*, the *tone*, and the *object* of Noah's ministry. " The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10. And seems to have been the very spirit and soul of Noah's ministry, which was ridiculed and rejected by the antediluvians, until wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

5. If the Holy Ghost is intended, it must be in the ministry of Noah, as he was in the ministry of the prophets, Neh. ix. 30. " Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by *thy spirit in the prophets*; yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hands of the people of the lands." " Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One." Acts vii. 51, 52. Here we find the Holy Ghost is said to be resisted in the gospel ministry; and as this appears to have been the uniform practice of the Jews, why should the rule for such an interpretation of the words in Gen. vi. 3. be set aside?

As to the *striving* of the Spirit, we may observe, the Hebrew word rendered *strive*, signifies to *judge*, to *execute judgment*, or punish in a righteous way: and hence the words are construed by some, *my Spirit shall not JUDGE these men for ever*. And then, it must regard the Spirit's acting as a judge in the consciences of men; and thus, either accusing, excusing, acquitting, or condemning, all the day long. And that, in consequence of their multiplied iniquities, God determined to exercise his righteous severity upon them; which threat seems

to be mitigated by the boon of an hundred and twenty years reprieve.

‘It also signifies, to litigate a point, or reason in a cause, before it is ripe for judgment, or the execution of it.’—*Dr. Gill*. And the sense is, that the Spirit of God had been reasoning, contending, and litigating with these men in the court of conscience, about their sins, both in the gospel ministry and in providence; and finding them still incorrigible, stiff-necked, and notoriously infamous, he determined to proceed to pass judgment on them, and to consign them over to general destruction. Yet, such was the long-suffering of God in the days of Noah, that he gave them the space of one hundred and twenty years to repent; but they repented not. *Ainsworth’s* note is,—‘The word, strive, signifies, to *judge*, to *contend in judgment*; and may here intend or import, both contending by preaching, disputing, convincing in the mouths of the patriarchs, as Neh. ix. 30. and by inward motions and checks of conscience, which his Spirit gave them for their sins.’ This seems to me, as near the truth of the case, as we can reasonably expect a person to come. But then, what has all this to do with an offer of grace, or the Holy Ghost striving to save every man by his gospel and influence? It is an excellent rule which every body approve, and which perhaps nobody uniformly practice, (*viz.*) never to *draw an* inference except the premises are free from obscurity, so that the consequence is natural and necessary. But will any person say, that the gospel cannot be preached without making an offer of spiritual food to carnal appetites? without casting pearl before swine, or offering to dogs the children’s meat? Cannot the gospel be preached, and the purity of the law maintained, without an offer of salvation? Cannot sinners be convinced of their bad practices, without an offer of forgiveness? Or, must a traitor have an offer of pardon and liberty before he is condemned? May not a minister of the gospel reason, warn, dissuade, and exhort the unregenerate part of his congregation, without offering the blessings of spiritual and everlasting affection? And may not such reasoning, &c. produce very pungent feelings, and bitter remorse!

Did Paul make an offer of any spiritual blessing to Felix, when he reasoned on righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come? Where a minister of the gospel consistently and conscientiously abstains from offering, or tendering, the treasures of distinguishing mercy, —say, are none of his unregenerate hearers *stung*, affected, convinced, and often converted under their ministry? I think they are; and think the case is so clear that few people will be disposed to contest its correctness. For my own part, I never yet dare to offer salvation to any of my hearers, being well convinced it is a given one, and that consistency can never shine brighter than in the christian ministry: yet, I have no doubt but some of my hearers who are uncalled, and it may be unchosen, have, nevertheless, very strong convictions at times, and very powerful struggles in their own bosoms. But unless it can be proved that the Holy Ghost designs the salvation of every person who is conscious of their wrong—every person who is accused and upbraided in his very conscience—who is stung with guilty recollections, and distressed at times by the accusations of conscience; except it can be solidly proved, that the Holy Ghost designs their eternal salvation, the premises will never sustain an inference in favour of offered mercy. Let the different constructions of the passage, and the different thoughts suggested, be fairly attended to; and I am much mistaken, if it can furnish any evidence in support of general, offered, uncertain, and even *ineffectual* grace. So far from it, that it strikes me it might be improved into a very powerful argument against what it is intended to support; for if after so much striving, and so many offers, they at last perished in their sins and iniquities, it must suggest the inutility of free-will; and point out the necessity of omnipotent and irresistible grace, to regenerate the heart and sanctify the affections.

OBJECT.—*But how could God be just if he did not offer and strive to save every one?*

ANS.—How could God be just to offer a salvation without an atonement? If this was the case, no marvel that they were successful in their contentions

with the Holy Spirit, seeing the Divine Spirit was striving with justice, order, and purpose, as well as sinners. And if an atonement was made for them, how could he be just in condemning them to eternal flames, and reserving them in chains, fire, and horror, till the judgment day? Would it not have been more consistent to have said, *deliver them from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom*. We might ask, how could he be just in involving children and infants in the general deluge? In sending the gospel to one village and country, while others remain destitute for years and centuries? And if *any* divine agency is necessary to form a man after God's heart, why is it exercised on one person and not another? Should it be said, one person is more deserving of it than another, how then can salvation be *entirely* of grace? And would not creature deservings at *least*, render a *complete* atonement unnecessary and impossible? And would the substitution of human qualifications in the place and stead of the atonement, or in any manner connected with the atonement, in order to its completeness, render it available to any, be any honour to the Redeemer's work, or bring any glory to God? I believe not. In short, look at the subject in any direction, in any relation, or in any of its tendencies, and the objection vanishes in every point of view.

Will any of the advocates for offered grace, *offer* an answer to the following questions?—

Query 1. Supposing an offer of grace was made to the antediluvians, on what ground was it made?

2. If made on the ground of a general atonement, how was it that such an atonement did not savingly embrace them?

3. If owing to their resistance and depravity, could it be generally *efficient*? Or, can the atonement be generally *sufficient* without being as generally *efficient*? Or, is it sufficient for all the purposes of salvation where it is not efficacious?

4. If this is the case, does it not imply a contradiction? because it must be *sufficient* and *deficient*, at one and the same time.

5. If redemption is efficacious to the elect *only*, is the offer to be made to the non-elect on the ground of a redemption *generally deficient*, or, what is the same thing, generally *inefficient*?

6. If the ground of general offers will not allow of practical application on a general scale, must not the offers be grossly absurd, and insufferably ridiculous?

Deut. xxx. 19, 20. “ *I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*”

As there are several passages in the old testament of a similar import to the one above, I shall offer a few remarks, which in my view, are adapted to illustrate and point out their proper meaning.

1. *Offers of grace are based upon creature obedience.* No person ever thinks about offering covenant blessings on the ground of faith and repentance. These are designated the terms or *requirements* of the gospel, and considered as the indispensable conditions on which the offer is made.

2. *It must be conceded, that obligation arises out of a subsisting relation, between the subject obeying, and the object obeyed.* From the different relations which mankind sustain to one another, and their Creator, proceed the diversified nature of their obedience, exemplified and maintained by consistent conduct.

3. *By the same root is brought into existence, those distinctions which point out, the nature of the duty required, or the action performed.* The distinction between spiritual, moral, natural, civil, &c. obligation, explain the nature of the relation, by which their duty is regulated, and their obedience required.

4. *If relation is the ground of all obligation, there must be a necessary agreement between the one and*

*the other.* There will be the same resemblance between relation and duty, as between the root and branches, the spring and the stream. If it arises out of creation, it will be *moral*, if from the constitution of bodies, *natural*, if from a relation to national interest, *political*; and if from a given interest in the Redeemer, *spiritual*. And as relation determines the *nature* of obligation, so it also regulates its *magnitude*. There is always a *just* proportion between the relation sustained, and the duty imposed; to deny this would be to make the commands of God like the ways of man—*unequal*.

5. *When any relation ceases to exist, the obligation founded thereon must expire.* Thus, when the dissolution of a covenant takes place, the contracting parties are free from their engagements, because their voluntary relations are no more; and every duty which that covenant involved, must be reseeded.

6. *Both the Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants, have long since disappeared.* Circumcision, the sign and seal of the former, and Urim and Thummim, the glory of the latter, have lost their identity in the present state of things, as winter loses its existence in the succeeding summer.

7. *All obligation, therefore, which sprang out of those relations, must be cancelled.* This must be admitted, or truth rejected in a palpable shape.

8. *If all such obligation is effaced by the expiration of the covenants out of which it arose, it follows, that all arguments drawn from these sources, must be alike groundless and unavailing.* But, that this is the true state of the case, must be obvious to every thinking mind. Neither the assumption can be questioned, nor the consequence resisted.

9. *If such relation and obligation is obliterated, it is impossible to reason by analogy, because there can be none.* All this mode of reasoning must, therefore, be uniformly rejected; and if offers of grace can be proved to be a scripture doctrine, it must be done by a different mode of reasoning, and by evidence derived from different sources. Those relations were but temporary, and on temporary relations there could never be suspended

everlasting blessings ; and if not, how could they be offered on those grounds ?

There is a marked difference between the Messiac, Adamic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants. The relations of the two former are perpetual, while those of the latter were but temporary. The reason is, because the two first are founded on his *perfections*, while the succeeding two rested upon his *dispensations*. In the two last we see, relations adapted to his *government* ; in the former, relations agreeing with his *nature*. His dispensations may pass away, but his nature knows no limits, can sustain no change, approach to no termination.

The covenant of grace is immutable and everlasting, because it is not built on his government, but his government on that ; it is not subservient to his dispensations, but his dispensations are regulated and conducted in subordination to his covenant. This covenant can never be broken, seeing the relation is unchanging, and its mercies are the sure mercies of *David*. Nor can the covenant of works be ever destroyed, while Adam's posterity is propagated in one continuous relation to their Creator, Governor and Judge. Like the covenant of grace, it is founded in Jehovah's nature and perfections. The one contain his *gifts*, the other retain his *rights*. This, was fixed in complex personality ; that, in simple humanity. One respected the offspring of grace, the other the productions of nature. In the law his rights are demanded, in the gospel his gifts are diffused.

While therefore his nature remains the same, the relation founded thereon must continue : and while those relations exist, both his gifts and his rights must remain immutably the same. He can no more neglect the rights of his nature, than he can cease to bestow the gifts of his nature. The precepts of the law are as dear to him as the promises of the gospel. The latter are all yea, and amen, sure and certain to all the seed : the former, are immutable and binding on all mankind. A man may be justly, as well as mercifully delivered from the penalty of the law of works ; but,

it would be neither merciful nor just, to place him beyond the scope of its precepts. The *cross* may remove the *curse*, but it can never banish the rule by which it was incurred. Blood may cancel the errors of human nature, but it was never designed to abolish that system of regulations, which arose out of his relations, was founded on his nature, and stood adapted to the original capacities of his intelligent creatures. Before his law can be annulled, either his relation to us, as our Creator and Governor must be destroyed, or his rights from us as his creatures must be forfeited; but we know the latter can never be done; and how relationship by grace can destroy a relationship by nature, any more than the latter can dissolve the former, is not very easy to imagine. These observations, are chiefly designed to shew, that man's obligation must be viewed in connexion with his relation; and that relation, duty, and privilege, are of the same nature, magnitude, and importance. From these remarks it will appear, that if we wish to understand with correctness, the meaning and application of preceptive language, we must study the *relative* situation of the persons addressed, and then strive to ascertain the subsisting analogy between them and us. But if analogy should be sought for in vain, we may rest satisfied that there is no application; at least, if our researches are complete.

Much of the confusion of the present day might be soon dismissed, would people but distinguish between things that differ. But many persons seem to have made general invitations the staple of their mind, and without paying any attention, to either character or relation, they seize detached passages of scripture, lay down their propositions, and then pass to their conclusions in about a *brace of shakes*. The premises are never surveyed, nor is the measuring reed applied to ascertain the distance; but, like the gods of Homer, they think of crossing the globe in four strides, extolling the efficacy of their creed to the empyreal heavens, before its virtues have time to rise above the clouds. Having advanced my thoughts on this important point,



I will now consider the passage selected from Deuteronomy. I observe, 1. Particular stress is laid upon the word *choose*, as indicating an offer made. But this verb is used in an active sense, and represented in a commanding form. It is not in the *indicative* mood, but in the *imperative*: as such, the inference in this point must be defective.

2. The phrase, *I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*, is a metonymie, where the effect is formally put for the cause. And the obvious sense is this, ‘I have plainly pointed out the *cause* of life and death, blessing and cursing;’ or as in ver. 15. “life and good, death and evil.”

3. The things set before them, or pointed out to them, were exclusively of a moral and temporal nature. By consulting the whole of the discourse, we find the cause of life and good, was their prompt and cheerful obedience to the laws of their King and God. Now we are sure that eternal life and happiness, is not procured by the obedience of empty offenders. Nor is it hereditary; but runs in the line of electing friendship. The phrase, therefore, “that thou mayest live, *both thou and thy SEED*,” can only agree with an inheritance of Canaan, as an earthly possession. Added to this, whenever heaven is represented under the imposing notion of a kingdom, it is not in the form of an *offer*, but in the shape of a *gift*.

4. This shews that they were addressed according to the nature of the relation they sustained. Political relation formed the ground of the address, and to national interests were their attention directed.

5. The whole proves, that the passage can have no possible relation to offers of grace. The words, *cleave unto him, for he is thy life and the length of thy days*: simply signify that he was the giver and protector of their lives, and that from him hung suspended the vibrating thread, both of their natural and political existence; and as such, they ought with determined vigour, to adhere to the dictates of their acknowledged God and King. Let the enquiry be guided in any direction, which an advocate for the sentiment can desire,

and I shall be unusually surprised if any evidence can be collected in favour of *offered grace*. Things need only examining.

Ps. cxlv. 9. "*The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*"

I have selected this portion of scripture, because it is uniformly pressed into the service of freewillers, in order to destroy absolute and sovereign grace, as settled on the elect by immutable fixation, in the exalted person of Immanuel: "who is the first-born among many brethren; the beginning of the creation of God; and head over all things to his church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all."

The plain idea which the words exhibit, is this: *the goodness and mercy of God are commensurate with his works*. By his works must be meant, either those of nature or grace, or both of them united. If those of *nature*, there is no doubt but what his eye watches the safety, and his hand supplies the need of every living thing; we are assured that he hears the ravens when they cry, and gives to them their meat in due season.

And we are certain that he sees and governs all things, from the moss in Finland, to the cedar in Lebanon; the chinkling fragments of rocks, detached, by the crumbling chisel of time from their tenacious position, are viewed by him with as much intensesness as the mountain of Vesuvius. His providence embraces all things, from the sparkling diamond, to the common pebble in a gravel heap. From the leviathan that sports in the mighty deep, to the animalcule which floats at large in a single drop of the same element. From the lion that bounds the forest, to the ephemeron that receives its existence from a fluvialic grub, deposits its eggs in a uliginous substance, and complete its existence within the space of five hours. Every link in the vast chain of creation, is known, seen, and cared for, by the prolific author of nature; from Gabriel who floats in golden rays of bliss around the eternal throne, to the humble insect that basks beneath the shade of an imperceptible hair. All fall within the range of his govern-