THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES
PART SECOND
Doctrines Of The Holy Scriptures
by Richard Watson.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

© 2002
THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

*Or, a View of the*

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND INSTITUTIONS

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

BY RICHARD WATSON.

A NEW EDITION,
WITH A COPIOUS INDEX, AND AN ANALYSIS
BY J. M'CLINTOCK.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.
(One Digital Volume - Ed.)

TWENTY-SIXTH EDITION.

NEW YORK: HUNT & EATON.
CINCINNATI: CRANSTON & STOWE.
1889.
PART SECOND.

DOCTRINES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER 1. — THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

The Divine authority of those writings which are received by Christians as a revelation of infallible truth, having been established, our next step is seriously, and with simplicity of mind, to examine their contents, and to collect from them that ample information on religious and moral subjects which they profess to contain, and in which it had become necessary that the world should be supernaturally instructed. Agreeably to a principle which has already been laid down, I shall endeavour, as in the case of any other record, to exhibit their meaning by the application of those plain rules of interpretation which have been established for such purposes by the common agreement of the sober part of mankind. All the assistance within reach from critics, commentators, and divines, shall however be resorted to; for, though the water can only be drawn pure from the sacred fountain itself, we yet owe it to many of these guides, that they have successfully directed us to the openings through which it breaks, and led the way into the depth of the stream.

The doctrine which the first sentence in this Divine revelation unfolds is, that there is a God, the Creator of heaven and earth; and as this is fundamental to the whole scheme of duty, promise, and hope, which the books of Scripture successively unfold and explain, it demands our earliest consideration.

In three distinct ways do the sacred writers furnish us with information on this great and essential subject, the existence and the character of God; — from the names by which he is designated; from the actions ascribed to him; and from the attributes with which he is invested in their invocations and praises: and in those lofty descriptions of his nature which, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have recorded for the instruction of the world. These attributes will be afterward particularly considered; but the impression of the general view of the Divine character, as thus revealed, is too important to be omitted.
The names of God as recorded in Scripture, convey at once ideas of overwhelming greatness and glory, mingled with that awful mysteriousness with which, to all finite minds, and especially to the minds of mortals, the Divine essence and mode of existence must ever be invested. Though ONE, he is μyth³a, Elohim, Gods, persons adorable. He is ḥwh ḣ, Jehovah, self-existing, ḥa, El, strong, powerful; ḥyah ḣ, EhiEh, I am, I will be, self-existence, independency, all-sufficiency, immutability, eternity; ydv, SHADDAI, almighty, all-sufficient; ṯda, Adon, Supporter, Lord, Judge.

These are among the adorable appellatives of God which are scattered throughout the revelation which he has been pleased to make of himself: but on one occasion he was pleased more particularly to declare “his name,” that is, such of the qualities and attributes of the Divine nature, as mortals are the most interested in knowing; and to unfold, not only his natural, but those also of his moral attributes by which his conduct toward his creatures is regulated. “And the Lord passed by and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation,” Exodus 34. This is the most ample and particular description of the character of God, as given by himself in the sacred records; and the import of the several titles by which he has thus in his infinite condescension manifested himself, has been thus exhibited. He is not only Jehovah, self-existent, and El, the strong or mighty God; but “mwjr, Rochum, the merciful being, who is full of tenderness and compassion, ṯwj, Chanun, the gracious one, he whose nature is goodness itself — the loving God. Éra ṣypa, Erec Apayim, long suffering, the being who, because of his tenderness, is not easily irritated, but suffers long and is kind. br, Rab, the great or mighty one. dcj, Chesed, the bountiful Being; he who is exuberant in his beneficence. tma, Emeth, the truth, or true one, he alone who can neither deceive nor be deceived. dsjr xn, Notser Chesed, the preserver of bountifulness, he whose beneficence never ends, keeping mercy for thousands of generations, showing compassion and mercy while the world endures. hacj w[vpw^w acn, Nose âvon vapeshâ vechataah, he who bears away iniquity, transgression and sin; properly the Redeemer, the PARDONER the FORGIVER, the Being whose prerogative it is to forgive sin,
and save the soul. \( hq\_ny\_a\_l\ hq\n \), NAKEH lo yinnakeh, the righteous Judge, who distributes justice with an impartial hand. And ^\( ^\_wp\_dp \), PAKED, âvon, &c, he who visits iniquity, he who punishes transgressors, and from whose justice no sinner can escape: the God of retributive and vindictive justice.” (Dr. A. Clarke in loc.)

The second means by which the Scriptures convey to us the knowledge of God, is by the actions which they ascribe to him. They contain indeed the important record of his dealings with men in every age which is comprehended within the limit of the sacred history; and, by prophetic declaration, they also exhibit the principles on which he will govern the world to the end of time; so that the whole course of the Divine administration may be considered as exhibiting a singularly illustrative comment upon those attributes of his nature, which, in their abstract form, are contained in such declarations as those which have been just quoted. The first act ascribed to God is that of creating the heavens and the earth out of nothing; and by his fiat alone arranging their parts, and peopling them with living creatures. By this were manifested — his eternity and self-existence, as he who creates must be before all creatures, and he who gives being to others can himself derive it from none; his almighty power, shown both in the act of creation, and in the number and vastness of the objects so produced: his wisdom, in their arrangement, and in their fitness to their respective ends: and his goodness as the whole tended to the happiness of sentient beings. The foundations of his natural and moral government are also made manifest by his creative acts. In what he made out of nothing he had an absolute right and prerogative of ordering and disposal; so that to alter or destroy his own work, and to prescribe the laws by which the intelligent and rational part of his creatures should be governed, are rights which none can question. Thus on the one hand his character of Lord or Governor is established, and on the other our duty of lowly homage and absolute obedience.

Agreeably to this, as soon as man was created, he was placed under a rule of conduct. Obedience was to be followed with the continuance of the Divine favour; transgression, with death. The event called forth new manifestations of the character of God. His tender MERCY, in the compassion showed to the fallen pair; his JUSTICE, in forgiving them only in the view of a satisfaction to be hereafter offered to his justice by an innocent representative of the sinning race; his LOVE to that race, in giving
his own Son to become this *Redeemer*, and in the fulness of time to die for the sins of the whole world; and his HOLINESS, in connecting with this provision for the pardon of man the means of restoring him to a sinless state, and to the obliterated image of God in which he had been created. Exemplifications of the Divine MERCY are traced from age to age, in his establishing his own worship among men, and remitting the punishment of individual and national offences in answer to prayer offered from penitent hearts, and in dependence upon the typified or actually offered universal sacrifice: — of his CONDESCENSION, in stooping to the cases of individuals; in his dispensations both of providence and grace, by showing respect to the poor and humble; and, principally, by the incarnation of God in the form of a servant, admitting men into familiar and friendly intercourse with himself, and then entering into heaven to be their patron and advocate, until they should be received unto the same glory, “and so be for ever with the Lord” — of his strictly RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT, in the destruction of the old world, the cities of the plain, the nations of Canaan, and all ancient states, upon their “filling up the measure of their iniquities;” and, to show that “he will *by no means clear the guilty;*” in the numerous and severe punishments inflicted even upon the chosen seed of Abraham, because of their transgressions: — of his LONG SUFFERING, in frequent warnings, delays, and corrective judgments, inflicted upon individuals and nations, before sentence of utter excision and destruction: — of FAITHFULNESS and TRUTH, in the fulfilment of promises, often many ages after they were given, as in the promises to Abraham respecting the possession of the land of Canaan by his seed; and in all the “promises made to the fathers” respecting the advent, vicarious death, and illustrious offices of the Christ, the Saviour of the world: — of his IMMUTABILITY, in the constant and unchanging laws and principles of his government, which remain to this day precisely the same, in every thing universal, as when first promulgated, and have been the rule of his conduct in all places as well as through all time: — of his PRESCIENCE of future events, manifested by the predictions of Scripture; and of the depth and stability of his COUNSEL, as illustrated in that plan and purpose of bringing back a revolted world to obedience and felicity, which we find steadily kept in view in the Scriptural history of the acts of God in former ages: which is still the end toward which all his dispensations bend, however wide and mysterious their sweep; and which they will finally accomplish, as we learn from the prophetic history of the future, contained in the Old and New Testaments.
Thus the course of Divine operation in the world has from age to age been a manifestation of the Divine character, continually receiving new and stronger illustrations to the completion of the Christian revelation by the ministry of Christ and his inspired followers, and still placing itself in brighter light and more impressive aspects as the scheme of human redemption runs on to its consummation. From all the acts of God as recorded in the Scriptures, we are taught that he alone is God; that he is present every where to sustain and govern all things; that his wisdom is infinite, his counsel settled, and his power irresistible; that he is holy, just, and good; the Lord and the Judge, but the Father and the Friend of man.

More at large do we learn what God is, from the declarations of the inspired writings.

As to his SUBSTANCE, that “God is a Spirit.” As to his DURATION, that “from everlasting to everlasting he is God;” “the King, eternal, immortal, invisible.” That, after all the manifestations he has made of himself, he is from the infinite perfection and glory of his nature, INCOMPREHENSIBLE; “Lo, these are but parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!” “Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out.” That he is UNCHANGEABLE. “the Father of Lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” That “he is the fountain of LIFE,” and the only independent Being in the universe, “who only hath immortality.” That every other being, however exalted, has its existence from him; “for by him were all things created, which are in heaven and in earth, whether they are visible or invisible.” That the existence of every thing is upheld by him, no creature being for a moment independent of his support; “by him all things consist,” “upholding all things by the word of his power.” That he is OMNIPRESENT: “Do not I fill heaven and earth with my presence, saith the Lord?” That he is OMNISCIENT: “All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” That he is the absolute LORD and OWNER of all things: “The heavens, even the heaven of heavens, are thine, and all the parts of them.” “The earth is thine, and the fulness thereof, the world and them that dwell therein.” “He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.” That his PROVIDENCE extends to the minutest objects: “The hairs of your head are all numbered.” “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” That he is a being of unspotted PURITY and perfect RECTITUDE: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!” “A God of truth, and
in whom is no iniquity.” “Of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” That he is JUST in the administration of his government: “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?” “Clouds and darkness are round about him; judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne.” That his WISDOM is unsearchable: “O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” And, finally, that he is GOOD and MERCIFUL: “Thou art good, and thy mercy endureth for ever.” “His tender mercy is over all his works.” “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

Under these deeply awful, but consolatory views, do the Scriptures present to us the supreme object of our worship and trust, dwelling upon each of the above particulars with inimitable sublimity and beauty of language, and with an inexhaustible variety of illustration; nor can we compare these views of the Divine nature with the conceptions of the most enlightened of pagans, without feeling how much reason we have for everlasting gratitude, that a revelation so explicit, and so comprehensive, should have been made to us on a subject which only a revelation from God himself could have made known. It is thus that Christian philosophers, even when they do not use the language of the Scriptures, are able to speak on this great and mysterious doctrine in language so clear, and with conceptions so noble; in a manner too so equable, so different to the sages of antiquity, who, if at any time they approach the truth, when speaking of the Divine nature, never fail to mingle with it some essentially erroneous or grovelling conception. “By the word GOD,” says Dr. Barrow, “we mean a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, the creator and the governor of all things, to whom the great attributes of eternity and independency, omniscience and immensity, perfect holiness and purity, perfect justice and veracity, complete happiness, glorious majesty, and supreme right of dominion, belong; and to whom the highest veneration, and most profound submission and obedience, are due.” (Barrow on the Creed.) “Our notion of Deity,” says Bishop Pearson, “doth expressly signify a Being or Nature of infinite perfection; and the infinite perfection of a Being or Nature consists in this, that it be absolutely and essentially necessary; an actual Being of itself; and potential or causative of all beings beside itself, independent from any other, upon which all things else depend, and by
which all things else are governed.” (Pearson on the Creed.) “God is a Being, and not any kind of being; but a substance, which is the foundation of other beings. And not only a substance, but perfect. Yet many beings are perfect in their kind, yet limited and finite. But God is absolutely, fully, and every way infinitely perfect; and therefore above spirits, above angels who are perfect comparatively. God’s infinite perfection includes all the attributes, even the most excellent. It excludes all dependency, borrowed existence, composition, corruption, mortality, contingency, ignorance, unrighteousness, weakness, misery, and all imperfections whatever. It includes necessity of being, independency, perfect unity, simplicity, immensity, eternity, immortality; the most perfect life, knowledge, wisdom, integrity, power, glory, bliss, and all these in the highest degree. We cannot pierce into the secrets of this eternal Being. Our reason comprehends but little of him, and when it can proceed no farther, faith comes in, and we believe far more than we can understand: and this our belief is not contrary to reason; but reason itself dictates unto us that we must believe far more of God than it can inform us of.” (Lawson’s Theo-Politica.) To these we may add an admirable passage from Sir Isaac Newton: “The word GOD frequently signifies Lord; but every lord is not God; it is the dominion of a spiritual Being or Lord, that constitutes God; true dominion, true God; supreme, the supreme; feigned, the false God. From such true dominion it follows that the true God is living, intelligent, and powerful; and from his other perfections that he is supreme, or supremely perfect; he is eternal and infinite; omnipotent and omniscient; that is, he endures from eternity to eternity; and is present from infinity to infinity. He governs all things that exist, and knows all things that are to be known: he is not eternity or infinity but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present; he endures always, and is present every where; he is omnipresent, not only virtually, but also substantially; for power without substance cannot subsist. All things are contained and move in him; but without any mutual passion; he suffers nothing from the motions of bodies; nor do they undergo any resistance from his omnipresence. It is confessed that God exists necessarily, and by the same necessity he exists always and every where. Hence also he must be perfectly similar, all eye, all ear, all arm, all the power of perceiving, understanding, and acting; but after a manner not at all corporeal, after a manner not like that of men, after a manner wholly to us unknown. He is destitute of all body, and all bodily shape; and therefore cannot be seen, heard, or touched; nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any thing corporeal. We have ideas
of the attributes of God, but do not know the substance of even any thing: we see only the figures and colours of bodies, hear only sounds, touch only the outward surfaces smell only odours, and taste tastes; and do not, cannot, by any sense, or reflex act, know their inward substances: and much less can we have any notion of the substance of God. We know him by his properties and attributes."

It is observable that neither Moses, the first of the inspired penmen, nor any of the authors of the succeeding canonical books, enters into any proof of this first principle of religion, *that there is a God*. They all assume it as a truth commonly known and admitted. There is indeed in the sacred volume no allusion to the existence of Atheistical sentiments, till some ages after Moses, and then it is not quite clear whether speculative or practical Atheism be spoken of. From this circumstance we learn that, previous to the time of Moses, the idea of one supreme and infinitely perfect God was familiar to men; that it had descended to them from the earliest ages; and also that it was a truth of original revelation, and not one which the sages of preceding times had wrought out by rational investigation and deduction. Had that been the fact, we might have expected some intimation of it: and that if those views of God which are found in the Pentateuch, were discovered by the successive investigations of wise men among the ancients, the progress of this wonderful discovery would have been marked by Moses; or if one only had demonstrated this truth by his personal researches, that some grateful mention of so great a sage, of so celebrated a moral teacher, would have been made. A truth too so essential to the whole Mosaic system, and upon which his own official authority rested, had it originated from successful human investigation, would seem naturally to have required a statement of the arguments by which it had been demonstrated, as a fit introduction to a book in which he professed to record revelations received from this newly discovered being, and to enforce laws uttered under his command. Nothing of this kind is attempted; and the sacred historian and lawgiver proceeds at once to narrate the *acts* of GOD and to declare his *will*. The history which he wrote, however, affords the reason why the introduction of formal proof of the existence of one true God was thought unnecessary. The first man, we are informed, knew God, not only from his works, but by sensible manifestation and converse; the same Divine appearances were made to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob; and when Moses wrote, persons were still living who had conversed with those who conversed with God or were descended
from the same families to whom God “at sundry times” had appeared in visible glory, or in angelic forms. These Divine manifestations were also matters of public notoriety among the primitive families of mankind; from them the tradition was transmitted to their descendants; and the idea once communicated, was confirmed by every natural object which they saw around them. It continued even after the introduction of idolatry; and has never, except among the most ignorant of the heathen, been to this day obliterated by polytheistic superstitions. It was thus that the knowledge of God was communicated to the ancient world. No discovery of this truth, either in the time of Moses, or in any former age, was made by human research; neither the date nor the process of it could therefore be stated in his writings; and it would have been trifling to moot a question which had been so fully determined, and to attempt to prove a doctrine universally received.

That the idea of a supreme First Cause was at first obtained by the exercise of reason, is thus contradicted by the facts, that the first man received the knowledge of God by sensible converse with him, and that this doctrine was transmitted, with the confirmation of successive visible manifestations, to the early ancestors of all nations. Whether the discovery, therefore, of the simple truth of the existence of a First Cause be within the compass of human powers, is a point which cannot be determined by matter of fact; because it may be proved that those nations by whom that doctrine has been acknowledged, had their origin from a common stock, resident in that part of the world in which the primitive revelations were given. They were therefore never in circumstances in which such an experiment upon the power or weakness of the human mind could be made. Among some uncivilized tribes, such as the Hottentots of Africa, and the aborigines of New South Wales, the idea of a Supreme Being is probably entirely obliterated; some notions of spiritual existences, superior in power to man, and possessed of creative and destructive powers, do however remain, naturally tending to that train of reflection, which in better instructed minds issues in the apprehension of one Supreme and Divine Intelligence. But no instance has been known of the knowledge of God having thus, or by any other means, originating in themselves, been recovered; if restored to them at all, it has been by the instruction of others, and not by the rational investigation of even superior minds in their own tribes. Wherever there has been sufficient mental cultivation to call forth the exercise of the rational faculty in search of spiritual and moral truth, the idea of a First
Cause has been previously known; wherever that idea has been totally obliterated, the intellectual powers of man have not been in a state of exercise, and no curiosity as to such speculations has been awakened. Matter of fact does not therefore support the notion, that the existence of God is discoverable by the unassisted faculties of man; and there is, I conceive, very slender reason to admit the abstract probability.

A sufficient number of facts are obvious to the most cursory observation to show, that without some degree of education, man is wholly the creature of appetite. Labour, feasting, and sleep, divide his time, and wholly occupy his thoughts. If therefore we suppose a First Cause to be discoverable by human investigation, we must seek for the instances among a people whose civilization and intellectual culture have roused the mind from its torpor, and given it an interest in abstract and philosophic truth; for to a people so circumstanced as never to have heard of God, the question of the existence of a First Cause must be one of mere philosophy. Religious motives, whether of hope or fear, have no influence where no religion exists, and its very first principle is here supposed to be as yet undiscovered. Before, therefore, we can conceive the human mind to have reached a state of activity sufficiently energetic and curious even to commence such an inquiry, we must suppose a gradual progress from the uncivilized state, to a state of civil and scientific cultivation, and that without religion of any kind; without moral control; without principles of justice, except such as may have been slowly elaborated from those relations which concern the grosser interests of men, if even they be possible; without conscience; without hope or fear in another life. That no society of civilized men has ever been constituted under such circumstances, is what no one will deny; that it is possible to raise a body of men into that degree of civil improvement which would excite the passion for philosophic investigation without the aid of religion, which, in its lowest forms of superstition, admits in a defective degree what is implied in the existence of God, a superior, creative, governing, and destroying power, can have no proof, and is contradicted by every fact and analogy with which we are acquainted. Under the influence and control of religion, all States, ancient and modern, have hitherto been formed and maintained. It has entered essentially into all their legislative and gubernative institutions; and Atheism is so obviously dissocializing, that even the philosophic Atheists of Greece and Rome confined it to their esoteric doctrine, and were equally zealous with others to maintain the public religion as a restraint upon the
multitude, without which they clearly enough discerned that human laws, and merely human motives, would be totally ineffectual to prevent that selfish gratification of the passions, the enmities, and the cupidity of men, which would break up every community into its origins fragments, and arm every man against his fellow.

From this we may conclude, that man without religion cannot exist in that state of civility and cultivation in which his intellectual powers are disposed to, or capable of, such a course of inquiry as might lead him to a knowledge of God; and that, as a mere barbarian, he would be wholly occupied with the gratification of his appetites, or his sloth. Should we however suppose it possible, that those who had no previous knowledge of God, or of superior invisible powers, might be brought to the habits of civil life, and be engaged in the pursuit of various knowledge, (which itself however is very incredible,) it would still remain a question whether, provided no idea from tradition or instruction had been suggested of the existence of spiritual superior beings, or of a supreme Creator or Ruler, such a truth would be within the reach of man, even in an imperfect form. We have already seen, that a truth may appear exceedingly simple, important, and evident, when once known, and on this account its demonstration may be considered easy, which nevertheless has been the result of much previous research on the part of the discoverer. (Vide part i, c. 4.) The abundant rational evidence of the existence of God, which may now be so easily collected, and which is so convincing, is therefore no proof, that without instruction from Heaven the human mind would ever have made the discovery. "God is the only way to himself; he cannot in the least be come at, defined or demonstrated by human reason; for where would the inquirer fix his beginning? He is to search for something he knows not what; a nature without known properties; a being without a name. It is impossible for such a person to declare or imagine what it is he would discourse of, or inquire into; a nature he has not the least apprehension of; a subject he has not the least glimpse of, in whole or in part which he must separate from all doubt, inconsistencies, and errors; he must demonstrate without one known or sure principle to ground it upon; and draw certain necessary conclusions whereon to rest his judgment. without the least knowledge of one term or proposition to fix his procedure upon; and therefore can never know whether his conclusion be consequent, or not consequent, truth or falsehood, which is just the same
in science as in architecture, to raise a building without a foundation.  
(*Ellis’s Knowledge of Divine Things.*)

“Suppose a person, whose powers of argumentation are improved to the utmost pitch of human capacity, but who has received no idea of God by any revelation, whether from tradition, Scripture, or inspiration: how is he to convince himself that God is, and from whence is he to learn what God is? That of which as yet he knows nothing, cannot be a subject of his thought, his reasonings, or his conversation. He can neither affirm nor deny till he know what is to be affirmed or denied. From whence then is our philosopher to divine, in the first instance, his idea of the infinite Being, concerning the reality of whose existence he is, in the second place, to decide?” (*Hare’s Preservative against Socinianism.*)

“Would a single individual, or even a single pair of the human race, or indeed several pairs of such beings as we are, if dropt from the hands of their Maker in the most genial soil and climate of this globe, without a single idea or notion engraved on their minds, ever think of instituting such an inquiry; or short and simple as the process of investigation is, would they be able to conduct it, should it somehow occur to them? No man who has paid due attention to the means by which all our ideas of external objects are introduced into our minds through the medium of the senses; or to the still more refined process by which reflecting on what passes in our minds themselves, when we combine or analyze these ideas, we acquire the rudiments of all our knowledge of intellectual objects, will pretend that they would. The efforts of intellect necessary to discover an unknown truth, are so much greater than those which may be sufficient to comprehend that truth, and feel the force of the evidence on which it rests, when fairly stated, that for one man, whose intellectual powers are equal to the former, ten thousand are only equal to the latter.” (*Gleig’s Stackhouse Intro.*)

“Between matter and spirit, things visible and invisible, time and eternity, beings finite and beings infinite, objects of sense and objects of faith, the connection is not perceptible to human observation. Though we push our researches therefore to the extreme point, whither the light of nature can carry us, they will in the end be abruptly terminated, and we must stop short at an
immeasurable distance between the creature and the Creator.” (Van Mildert’s Discourses.)

These observations have great weight, and though we allow, that the argument which proves that the effects with which we are surrounded must have been caused, and thus leads us up through a chain of subordinate cause to one First Cause, has in it a simplicity, an obviousness, and a force, which, when we are previously furnished with the idea of God, makes it at first sight difficult to conceive, that men, under any degree of cultivation, should be inadequate to it; yet, if the human mind ever commenced such an inquiry at all, it is highly probable that it would rest in the notion of an eternal succession of causes and effects, rather than acquire the ideas of creation, in the proper sense, and of a supreme Creator. Scarcely any of the philosophers of the most inquisitive ages of Greece, or those of their followers at Rome, though with the advantage of traditions conveying the knowledge of God, seem to have been capable of conceiving of creation out of nothing, (Vide part i, c. iv,) and they consequently admitted the eternity of matter. This was equally the case with the Theistical, the Atheistical, and the polytheistical philosophers. It was not among them a subject of dispute; but taken for a point settled and not to be contradicted, that matter was eternal, and could not therefore be created. Against this notion, since the revelation of truth to man, philosophy has been able to adduce a very satisfactory argument; but, though it is not a very recondite one, it was never discovered by philosophy while unaided by the Scriptures. In like manner philosophy can now furnish cogent arguments against an infinite succession of causes and effects; but it does not appear probable that they could have been apprehended by those to whom the very notion of a First Cause had not been intimated. If however it were conceded, that some glimmering of this great truth might, by induction, have been discovered by contemplative minds thus circumstanced; by what means could they have demonstrated to themselves that that great collection of bodies which we call the world had but one Creator. that he is an incorporeal Spirit; that he is eternal, self existent, immortal, and independent? Certain it is, that the argument à posteriori does not of itself fully confirm all these conclusions; and the argument à priori, when directed to these mysterious points, is not, with all the advantages which we enjoy, so satisfactory, as to leave no rational ground of doubt as to its conclusiveness. No sober man, we apprehend, would be content with that as the only foundation of his faith and hope. If indeed the idea of God were
innate, as some have contended, the question would be set at rest. But then every human being would be in possession of it. Of this there is not only no proof at all, but the evidence of fact is against it; and the doctrine of innate ideas may with confidence be pronounced a mere theory, assumed to support favourite notions, but contradicted by all experience. We are all conscious that we gain the knowledge of God by instruction; and we observe, that in proportion to the want of instruction, men are ignorant, as of other things, so of God. Peter, the wild boy, who in the beginning of the last century, was found in a wood in Germany, far from having any innate sense of God or religion, seemed to be incapable of instruction; and the aboriginal inhabitants of New Holland are found, to this day, in a state of knowledge but little superior, and certainly have no idea of the existence of one supreme Creator.

It is therefore to be concluded, that we owe the knowledge of the existence of God, and of his attributes, to revelation alone; but, being now discovered, the rational evidence of both is copious and irresistible; so much so, that Atheism has never been able to make much progress among mankind, where this revelation has been preserved. It is resisted by demonstrations too numerous, obvious, and convincing; and is itself too easily proved to involve the most revolting absurdities.

No subject has employed the thoughts and pens of the most profound thinkers more than the demonstration of the being and attributes of God; and the evidence from fact, reason, and the nature of things, which has been collected, is large and instructive. These researches have not however brought to light any new attribute of God not found in Scripture. This is a strong presumption that the only source of our notions on this subject is the manifestation which God has been pleased to make of himself, and a confirmation that human reason, if left to itself, had never made the slightest discovery respecting the Divine nature. — But as to what is revealed, they are of great importance in the controversy with polytheism, and with that still more unnatural and monstrous perversion, the philosophy which denies a God.

Demonstrations both à priori and à posteriori, the former beginning with the cause, the latter with the effect, have been attempted, not only of the being, but also of all the attributes ascribed to God in the Holy Scriptures. On each we shall offer some observations and illustrations, taking the argument à posteriori first, both because, as to the simple question of the
being of a God, it is the only satisfactory and convincing proof; and especially, because it is that only to which the Scriptures themselves refer us. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work.” “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” “For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen.”

Nature, as one justly observes, proceeds from causes to effects; but the most certain and successful investigations of man, proceed from effects to causes, and this is the character of what logicians have called the argument à posteriori.

In philosophy it has been laid down as an axiom, “that no event or change comes to pass merely of itself, but that every change stands related to and implies the existence and influence of something else, in consequence of which such change comes to pass, and which may be regarded as the principle, beginning, or source of the change referred to it. Accordingly the term cause is usually employed to denote the supposed principle of change; and the term effect is applied to the change considered in relation to the principle of change whence it proceeded. This axiom or principle is usually thus expressed: — “For every effect there must be a cause.” “Nothing exists or comes to pass without a cause.” “Nihil turpius philosopho quam fieri sine causa quicquum dicere.”

Rooted as this principle is in the common sense, and the common observation and experience of mankind, it is assailed in the metaphysical Atheism of Hume, who appears to have borrowed his argument from the no less skeptical Hobbes, and the relation of cause and effect has in consequence been the subject of considerable controversy.

Causes have been distributed by logicians into efficient, material, final, and formal. Efficient causes are the agents that produce certain effects; material causes are the subjects on which the agent performs his operation; or those contingent natures which lie within the reach of the agent to influence. Final causes are the motives or purposes, which move to action, or the end for which any thing is done. Formal causes denote the changes resulting from the operation of the agent; or that which determines a thing to be what it is, and distinguishes it from every thing else.
It is with efficient causes as understood in the above distribution, that we are principally concerned. Mr. Hume and his followers have laid it down, that there is no instance in which we are able to perceive a necessary connection between two successive events; or to comprehend in what manner the one proceeds from the other, as its cause. — From experience, they observe, indeed we learn, that there are many events, which are constantly conjoined, so that the one invariably follows the other; but it is possible, for any thing we know to the contrary, that this connection, though a constant one, as far as our observation has reached, may not be a necessary connection; nay, it is possible, that there may be no necessary connections among any of the phenomena we see, and if there be any such connections existing, we may rest assured that we shall never be able to discover them. This doctrine has however been admitted by many who not only deny the skeptical conclusions which Hobbes and Hume deduced from it, but who contend that it leads to a directly contrary conclusion. “The fallacy of this part of Mr. Hume’s system,” says Professor Stewart, “does not consist in his premises, but in the conclusion which he draws from them. The word cause is used, both by philosophers and the vulgar, in two senses, which are widely different. When it is said, that every change in nature indicates the operation of a cause: the word cause expresses something which is supposed to be necessarily connected with the change, and without which it could not have happened. This may be called the metaphysical meaning of the word; and such causes may be called metaphysical or efficient causes. In natural philosophy, however, when we speak of one thing being the cause of another, all that we mean is, that the two are constantly conjoined; so that when we see the one, we may expect the other. — These conjunctions we learn from experience alone; and without an acquaintance with them, we could not accommodate our conduct to the established course of nature. The causes which are the objects of our investigation in natural philosophy, may, for the sake of distinction, be called physical causes.” (Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.) By this distinction and concession all that is skeptical and Atheistic, in Hume’s doctrine, is indeed completely refuted; for if metaphysical or efficient causes be allowed, and also that “power, force, energy, and causation, are to be regarded as attributes of mind, and can exist in mind only.” (Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind,) it is of little consequence to the argument as to the existence of a supreme First Cause, whether the constant succession of events among physical causes, has a necessary connection or not; or in other words, whether what is
purely material can have the attribute of causation. — The writer we have just quoted, thinks that this doctrine is “more favourable to Theism, than even the common notions upon this subject;” — “if at the same time we admit the authority of that principle of the mind, which leads us to refer every change to an efficient cause,” — “as it keeps the Deity always in view, not only as the first, but as the constantly operating, efficient cause in nature, and as the great connecting principle among all the various phenomena which we observe.” (Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.) This author still farther thinks, that Mr. Hume has undesignedly furnished an antidote by this error to Spinozism itself. “Mr. Hume’s doctrine, in the unqualified form in which he states it, may lead to other consequences not less dangerous; but if he had not the good fortune to conduct metaphysicians to the truth, he may at least be allowed the merit of having shut up for ever one of the most frequented and fatal paths which led them astray,” — “the cardinal principle on which the whole system of Spinoza turns, being that all events, physical and moral, are necessarily linked together as causes and effects.” (Dissertation prefixed to the Supplement of the Encyclo. Britt.)

When the doctrine is thus restricted to physical causes, its dangerous tendency is greatly weakened, if not altogether neutralized; yet, notwithstanding the authority with which it has been supported, it may be suspected that it is radically unsound, and that it leads to consequences very contradictory to the experience of mankind, or, at best, that it is rather a philosophical paradox or quibble, than a philosophic discovery. What are called above metaphysical or efficient causes are admitted, with respect to mind, of which “power, force, energy and causation, are attributes.” “One kind of cause, namely, what a man, or any other living being, is to his own voluntary actions, or to those changes which he produces directly in himself, and indirectly in himself, by the occasional exertion of his own power,” says Dr. Gregory, (Literary and Philosophical Essays.) “may be called for distinction’s sake an agent. That there are such agents, and that many events are to be referred to them, as either wholly or partly their causes or principles of change, is not only certain but even self evident.” We are all conscious of power to produce certain effects, and we are sure that there is between this cause and the effect produced, more than a mere relation of antecedence and sequence, for we are conscious not only of designing to produce the effect, but of the exertion of power, though we do not always know the medium by which the power acts upon the object,
as when we move the hand or the foot voluntarily, nor the mode in which
the exerted energy connects itself with the result. Yet the result follows the
will, and however often this is repeated, it is still the same. The relations
between physical causes and effects must be different from this; but if
according to the doctrine of Hume it were only a relation of *succession,*
the following absurdities, as stated by Dr. Reid, (Reid’s Essays,) would
inevitably follow — “night would be the cause of day, and day the cause of
night; for no two things have more constantly followed each other since the
beginning of the world. *Any thing,* for what we know, may be the cause of
*any thing,* since nothing is essential to a cause but its being constantly
followed by the effect: what is unintelligent may be the cause of what is
intelligent; folly may be the cause of wisdom, and evil of good; and thus all
reasoning from the effect to the nature of the cause, and all reasoning from
final causes, must be given up as fallacious.” Physical causes, as for
example, what impulse is to motion, heat to expansion, fusion, and
evaporation; the earth to the fall of a stone toward it; the sun and moon to
the tides; express a relation different from that between man and any of his
voluntary actions; but it cannot be the same as the relation of priority and
succession among things or events. Men have been mistaken, in some
cases, in taking the circumstances of the succession of one event to another
as a proof of their relation as cause and effect; but even that shows that, in
the fixed opinion of mankind, *constant* succession, when there is an
appearance of the dependence of one thing upon another, implies more
than mere succession, and that what is considered as the *cause* has an
*efficiency* either from itself or by *derivation,* by which the effect is brought
to pass. It is truly observed by Dr. Brown, (Procedure, &c., of the Human
Understanding.) “We find by observation and experience that such and
such effects *are* produced; but when we attempt to think of the reason
*why,* and the manner *how* the causes work those effects, then we are at a
stand, and all our reasoning is precarious, or at best but probable
conjecture.” From hence however it would be a ridiculous conclusion, that
because we are ignorant of the manner in which physical causes act, they
do not act at all; or that none such exist in the ordinarily received sense;
that is, that the effect is not *dependent* upon what is called the *cause,* and
that the presence of the latter, according to the established laws of nature,
is not *necessary* to the effect, so that without it the effect would not
follow. The *efficient* cause may be *latent,* but the *physical* cause is that
*through* which it operates, and must be supposed to have an *adaptation* to
convey the power, so to speak, in some precise mode, by mechanical or
other means, to the result, or there could neither be ingenuity and contrivance in the works of art, nor wisdom in the creation. A watch might indicate the hour without wheels, and a clod might give as copious a light to the planetary system as the sun. If the doctrine of Hume denies efficient causes, it contradicts all consciousness and the experience founded upon it; if it applies only to physical causes, it either confounds them with efficient causes, or says in paradoxical language, only what has been better said by others, and that without any danger of involving either absurd or dangerous consequences. “When an event is produced according to a known law of nature, the law of nature is called the cause of that event. But a law of nature is not the efficient cause of any event; it is only the rule according to which the efficient cause acts. A law is a thing conceived in the mind of a rational being, not a thing which has a real existence, and therefore like a motive, it can neither act nor be acted upon, and consequently cannot be an efficient cause. If there be no being that acts according to that law, it produces no effect.” (Reid’s Essays.) “All things that are done in the world, are done immediately by God himself, or by created intelligent beings; matter being evidently not at all capable of any laws or powers whatever, any more than it is capable of intelligence; excepting only this one negative power, that every part of it will, of itself, always and necessarily continue in that state, whether of rest or motion, wherein it at present is. So that all those things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter and laws of motion, of gravitation, attraction, or the like, are indeed, (if we will speak strictly and properly,) the effects of God’s acting upon matter continually, and every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent beings. Consequently there is no such thing as what men commonly call the course of nature, or the powers of nature. The course of nature, truly and properly speaking, is nothing else but the will of God producing certain effects in a continued, regular, constant, and uniform manner.” (Dr. Samuel Clarke.)

The true state of the case appears to be,

1. That there are efficient causes, and that the relation between them and their effects is necessary, since, without the operation of the efficient, the effect would not take place. This we find in ourselves, and we proceed therefore upon the surest ground when we ascribe effects which are above human power, to a causation which is more than human, and, in the case of
the phenomena of universal nature, to a *Divine cause*, or in other words to God,

2. That there are physical causes, between which and their effects there is a relation or connection very different to that of a mere order of succession, which in fact is a relation which entirely excludes the idea of causation in any sense. According to the present established order of nature, this also may be termed a *necessary* connection, although not necessary in the sense of its being the only method by which the infinite and first efficient could produce the effect. His resources are doubtless boundless; but having established a certain order in nature, or, in other words, having given certain powers and properties to matter, with reference to a mutual operation of different bodies upon each other, his supreme efficiency, his causing power, takes its direction, and displays itself in this order, and is *modified* by the pre-established and constantly upheld properties *through* and *by* which it operates. So far, and in this sense, the relation between physical causes and effects is a *necessary* one, and the doctrine of final causes is thus established by those wondrous arrangements and adaptations in the different parts of nature, and in individual bodies, which carry on, and conduct the ever-acting efficiency of God to those wise and benevolent ends which he has proposed. Thus the sun, by virtue of a previously established adaptation between its own qualities, the earth’s atmosphere and the human eye, is the necessary *cause* of light and vision, though the true efficient be the Creator himself, ever present to his own arrangements; as the spring of a watch is the necessary cause of the motion of the wheels and indices though the efficient, in the proper sense, is the artist himself who framed the whole. In these cases there is, however, this difference to be observed, though it affects not the argument of a secondary physical causation, that the maker of a watch, finding certain bodies, endued with certain primary properties, may array them one against the other, and so leave his work to go on without his constant impulse and interposition; but in nature, the primary properties of matter, and its existence itself are *derived* and *dependent*, and need the constant upholding of Him who spake them out of nothing, and “by whom they all *consist*.”

The relation of cause and effect according to the common sense and observation of mankind, being thus established, we proceed to the arguments which are founded upon it.
The existence of God, once communicated to us by his own revelation, direct or traditional, is capable of ample proof, and receives an irresistible corroborative evidence, à posteriori.

An argument à priori, is an argument from something antecedent to something consequent; from principle to corollary; from cause to effect. An argument à posteriori, on the contrary, is an argument from consequent to antecedent, from effect to cause. Both these kinds of proof have been resorted to in support of the doctrine of the existence of God; but it is on the latter only that any dependence can be placed, and the demonstration is too strong to need a doubtful auxiliary.

The first argument, à posteriori, for the existence of a God, is drawn from our own actual existence, and that of other beings around us. This, by an obvious error, has sometimes been called an argument à priori; but if our existence is made use of to prove the existence of a supreme Creator, it is unquestionably an argument which proceeds from consequent to antecedent, from effect to cause. This ancient, and obvious demonstration has been placed in different views by different writers. Locke has, in substance, thus stated it. Every man knows with absolute certainty, that he himself exists. He knows also that he did not always exist, but began to be. It is clearly certain to him, that his existence was caused and not fortuitous, and was produced by a cause adequate to the production. By an adequate cause, is invariably intended, a cause possessing and exerting an efficacy sufficient to bring any effect to pass. In the present case, an adequate cause is one possessing, and exerting all the understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, such a being as the man in question. This cause is what we are accustomed to call God. The understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create a being compounded of the human soul and body, admit of no limits. He who can contrive and create such a being, can contrive and create any thing. He who actually contrived and created man, certainly contrived and created all things.

The same argument is given more copiously, but with great clearness, by Mr. Howe: —

“We therefore begin with God’s existence; for the evincing of which, we may be most assured, First, that there hath been somewhat or other from all eternity; or that, looking backward, somewhat of real being must be confessed eternal. Let such as have
not been used to think of any thing more than what they could see with their eyes, and to whom reasoning only seems difficult because they have not tried what they can do in it, but use their thoughts a little, and by moving them a few easy steps, they will soon find themselves as sure of this as that they see, or hear, or understand, or are any thing.

“For being sure that something now is, (that you see, for instance, or are something,) you must then acknowledge, that certainly something always was, and hath ever been, or been from all eternity; or else you must say, that, some time, nothing was; or that all being once was not. And so, since you find that something now is, there was a time when all being did begin to be; that is, that till that time there was nothing; but now, at that time something first began to be. For what can be plainer than that if all being some time was not, and now some being is, every thing of being had a beginning. And thence it would follow, that some being, that is, the first that ever began to be, did of itself start up out of nothing, or made itself to be when before nothing was.

“But now, do you not plainly see that it is altogether impossible any thing should do so; that is, when it was as yet nothing, and when nothing at all as yet was, that it should make itself, or come into being of itself? For surely making itself is doing something. But can that which is nothing do any thing? Unto all doing there must be some doer. Wherefore a thing must be before it can do any thing; and therefore it would follow, that it was before it was; or was and was not, was something and nothing, at the same time. Yea, and that it was diverse from itself: for a cause must be a distinct thing from that which is caused by it. Wherefore it is most apparent, that some being hath ever been, or did never begin to be.

“Whence, farther, it is also evident, Secondly, that some being was uncaused, or was ever of itself without any cause. For what never was from another had never any cause, since nothing could be its own cause. And somewhat, as appears from what hath been said, never was from another. Or it may be plainly argued thus; that either some being was uncaused, or all being was caused. But if all being was caused, then some one at least was the cause of itself; which hath been already shown impossible. Therefore the
expression commonly used concerning the first being, that it was of itself, is only to be taken *negatively*, that is, that it was not of another; not *positively*, as if it did some time make itself. Or what there is positive signified by that form of speech, is only to be taken thus, that it was a being of that nature, as that it was impossible it should ever not have been; not that it did ever of itself step out of not being into being.

“And now it is hence farther evident, *Thirdly*, that some being is independent upon any other, that is, whereas it already appears that some being did never depend on any other, as a productive cause, and was not beholden to any other, that it might come into being; it is thereupon equally evident that it is simply independent, or cannot be beholden to any for its continued being. For what did never need a productive cause, doth as little need a sustaining or conserving cause. And to make this more plain, either some being is independent, or all being is dependent. But there is nothing without the compass of all being whereon it may depend. Wherefore to say, that all being doth depend, is to say, it depends on nothing, that is, that it depends not. For to depend on nothing, is not to depend. It is therefore a manifest contradiction to say that all being doth depend; against which it is no relief to urge, that all beings do circularly depend on one another.  For so, however the whole circle or sphere of being should depend on nothing; or one at last depend on itself, which negatively taken, as before, is true, and the thing we contend for — that one, the common support of all the rest, depends not on any thing without itself.

“Whence also it is plainly consequent, *Fourthly*, that such a Being is necessary, or doth necessarily exist: that is, that it is of such a nature as that it could not or cannot but be. For what is in being, neither by its own choice, nor any other’s, is necessarily. But what was not made by itself, (which hath been shown to be impossible,) nor by any other, (as it hath been proved something was not,) it is manifest, it neither depended on its choice, nor any other’s that it is. And therefore, its existence is not owing to choice at all, but to the necessity of its own nature. Wherefore it is always by a simple, absolute, natural necessity; being of a nature to which it is altogether repugnant and impossible ever not to have been, or ever to cease from being. And now having gone thus far, and being
assured, that hitherto we feel the ground firm under us; that is, having gained a full certainty, that there is an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, and therefore actually and everlastingly existing; we may advance one step farther,

“And with equal assurance add, *Fifthly*, that this eternal, independent, uncaused, necessary Being, is self-active; that is, (which is at present meant,) not such as acts upon itself, but that which hath the power of acting upon other things, in and of itself, without deriving it from any other. Or at least that there is such a Being as is eternal, uncaused, &c, having the power of action in and of itself. For either such a Being as hath been already evinced is of itself active or unactive, or hath the power of action of itself or not. If we will say the latter, let it be considered what we say, and to what purpose we say it.

“1. We are to weigh what it is we affirm, when we speak of an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, which is of itself totally unactive, or destitute of any active power. If we will say there is some such thing, we will confess, when we have called it something, it is a very silly, despicable, idle something, and a something, (if we look upon it alone,) as good as nothing. For there is but little odds between being nothing, and being able to do nothing. We will again confess, eternity, self-origination, independency, necessity of existence, to be very great and highly dignifying attributes; and import a most inconceivable excellency. For what higher glory can we ascribe to any being, than to acknowledge it to have been from eternity of itself, without being beholden to any other, and to be such as that it can be and cannot but be in the same state, self-subsisting, and self-sufficient to all eternity? But can our reason either direct or endure, that we should so incongruously misplace so magnificent attributes as these, and ascribe the prime glory of the most excellent Being unto that which is next to nothing? But if any in the meantime will be so inconsiderate as to say this, let it

“2. Be considered to what purpose they say it. Is it to exclude a necessary self-active Being? But it can signify nothing to that purpose. For such a Being they will be forced to acknowledge, let them do what they can (beside putting out their own eyes)
notwithstanding. For why do they acknowledge any necessary being at all, that was ever of itself? Is it not because they cannot, otherwise, for their hearts, tell how it was ever possible that any thing at all could come into being? But, finding that something is, they are compelled to acknowledge that something hath ever been, necessarily and of itself. No other account could be given how other things came to be. But what? doth it signify any thing toward the giving an account of the original of all other things, to suppose only an eternal, self-subsisting, unactive Being? Did that cause other things to be? Will not their own breath choke them if they attempt to utter the self-contradicting words, an unactive cause, which is efficient or the author of any thing? And do they not see they are as far from their mark, or do no more toward the assigning an original to all other things, by supposing an eternal, unactive being only, than if they supposed none at all? That which can do nothing, can no more be the productive cause of another, than that which is nothing. Wherefore, by the same reason that hath constrained us to acknowledge an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, we are also unavoidably led to acknowledge this Being to be self-active, or such as hath the power of action in and of itself; or that there is certainly such a Being, who is the cause of all the things which our senses tell us are existent in the world.

“For what else is left us to say or think? Will we think fit to say that all things we behold were, as they now are, necessarily existent from all eternity? That were to speak against our own eyes, which continually behold the rise and fall of living things, of whatsoever sort or kind, that can come under their notice. For all the things we behold are, in some respect or other, internally or externally, continually changing, and therefore could never long be beheld as they are. And to say then, they have been continually changing from eternity, and yet have been necessarily, is unintelligible and flat nonsense. For what is necessarily, is always the same; and what is in this or that posture necessarily, (that is, by an intrinsic, simple and absolute necessity, which must be here meant,) must be ever so. Wherefore to suppose the world in this or that state necessarily, and yet that such a state is changeable, is an impossible and self-contradicting supposition.
“But now, since we find that the present state of things is changeable, and actually changing, and that what is changeable is not necessarily, and of itself; and since it is evident that there is some necessary Being, otherwise nothing could ever have been; and that without action nothing could be from it; since also all change imports somewhat of passion, and all passion supposes action; and all action, active power; and active power, an original seat or subject, which is self-active, or hath the power of action in and of itself; (for there could be no derivation of it from that which hath it not, and no first derivation, but from that which hath it originally of itself; and a first derivation there must be, since all things that are, or ever have been, furnished with it, and not of themselves, must either immediately or mediately have derived it from that which had it of itself;) it is therefore manifest that there is a necessary, self-active Being, the Cause and Author of this perpetually variable state and frame of things.

“And hence, since we can frame no notion of life which self-active power doth not, at least, comprehend, (as upon trial we shall find that we cannot,) it is consequent, Sixthly, that this Being is also originally vital, and the root of all vitality, such as hath life in or of itself, and from whence it is propagated to every other living thing.” (Living Temple.)

The self-existent, eternal, self-active, and vital Being, whose necessary existence has thus been proved, is also intelligent; of which the demonstration à posteriori is large and convincing. For since we are speaking of a Being who is himself independent, and upon whom all things depend; and from the dependence of every thing we see around us, we necessarily infer a cause of them, whom we do not see, but who must himself be independent, and from whom they must have originated; their actual existence, and their being upheld and sustained, prove his power, and their arrangement, and wise and evidently intentional disposition, prove also his intelligence.

In the proposition that the self-existent and original cause of all things must be an intelligent Being, Dr. Samuel Clarke justly observes, lies the main question between us and Atheists.

“For that something must be self existent, and that that which is self-existent must be eternal and infinite, and the original cause of
all things, will not bear much dispute. But all Atheists, whether they hold the world to be of itself eternal, both as to matter and form, or whether they hold the matter to be eternal, and the form contingent, or whatever hypothesis they frame, have always asserted and must maintain, either directly or indirectly, that the self-existent Being is not an intelligent Being; but either pure inactive matter, or (which in other words is the very same thing,) a mere necessary agent. For a mere necessary agent must of necessity either be plainly and directly in the grossest sense unintelligent, which was the notion of the ancient Atheists of the self-existent Being; or else its intelligence, according to Spinoza and some moderns, must be wholly separate from any power of will and choice, which in respect of excellency and perfection, or indeed to any common sense, is the very same thing as no intelligence at all. Now that the self-existent Being is not such a blind and unintelligent necessity, but in the most proper sense an understanding and really active Being, does not indeed so obviously and directly appear to us by considerations à priori; but à posteriori almost every thing in the world demonstrates to us this great truth, and affords undeniable arguments to prove that the world and all things therein are the effects of an intelligent and knowing Cause.

“And 1st. Since in general there are manifestly in things various kinds of powers, and very different excellencies and degrees of perfection; it must needs be, that, in the order of causes and effects, the cause must always be more excellent than the effect: and consequently the self-existent Being, Whatever that be suppose to be, must of necessity (being the original of all things) contain in itself the sum and highest degree of all the perfections of all things. Not because that which is self existent, must therefore have all possible perfections: (for this, though most certainly true in itself, yet cannot be so easily demonstrated à priori:) but because it is impossible that any effect should have any perfection, which was not in the cause. For if it had, then that perfection would be caused by nothing; which is a plain contradiction. Now an unintelligent being, it is evident, cannot be endued with all the perfections of all things in the world; because intelligence is one of those perfections. All things therefore cannot arise from an unintelligent original: and consequently the self-existent Being must of necessity be intelligent.
“There is no possibility for an Atheist to avoid the force of this argument any other way, than by asserting one of these two things: either that there is no intelligent Being at all in the universe; or that intelligence is no distinct perfection, but merely a composition of figure and motion, as colour and sounds are vulgarly supposed to be. Of the former of these assertions, every man’s own consciousness is an abundant confutation. For they who contend that beasts are mere machines, have yet never presumed to conjecture that men are so too. And that the latter assertion (in which the main strength of Atheism lies) is most absurd and impossible, shall be shown.

“For since in men in particular there is undeniably that power, which we call thought, intelligence, consciousness, perception or knowledge; there must of necessity either have been from eternity without any original cause at all, an infinite succession of men, whereof no one has had a necessary, but every one a dependent and communicated being: or else these beings, endued with perception and consciousness, must at some time or other have arisen purely out of that which had no such quality as sense, perception, or consciousness; or else they must have been produced by some intelligent superior Being. There never was nor can be any Atheist whatsoever, that can deny but one of these three suppositions must be the truth. If, therefore, the two former can be proved to be false and impossible, the latter must be owned to be demonstrably true. Now that the first is impossible, is evident from what has been already said. And that the second is likewise impossible, may be thus demonstrated: —

“If perception or intelligence be any real distinct quality, or perfection, and not a mere effect or composition of unintelligent figure and motion; then beings endued with perception or consciousness, can never possibly have arisen purely out of that which itself had no such quality as perception or consciousness; because nothing can ever give to an other any perfection which it hath not either actually in itself, or at least in a higher degree. This is very evident; because, if any thing could give to another any perfection which it has not itself, that perfection would be caused absolutely by nothing; which is a plain contradiction. If any one here replies, (as Mr. Gildon has done in a letter to Mr. Blount,) that
colours, sounds, tastes, and the like, arise from figure and motion, which have no such qualities in themselves; or that figure, divisibility, mobility, and other qualities of matter, are confessed to be given from God, who yet cannot, without extreme blasphemy, be said to have any such qualities himself; and that therefore in like manner, perception or intelligence may arise out of that which has no intelligence itself: the answer is very easy: First, that colours, sounds, tastes, and the like, are by no means effects arising from mere figure and motion; there being nothing in the bodies themselves, the objects of the senses, that has any manner of similitude to any of these qualities; but they are plainly thoughts or modifications of the mind itself, which is an intelligent being; and are not properly caused, but only occasioned, by the impressions of figure and motion. Nor will it at all help an Atheist (as to the present question) though we should here make for him, (that we may allow him the greatest possible advantage,) even that most absurd supposition, that the mind itself is nothing but mere matter, and not at all an immaterial substance. For, even supposing it to be mere matter. yet he must needs confess it to be such matter, as is endued not only with figure and motion, but also with the quality of intelligence and perception: and consequently, as to the present question, it will still come to the same thing; that colours, sounds, and the like, which are not qualities of unintelligent bodies, but perceptions of mind, can no more be caused by, or arise from mere unintelligent figure, and motion, than colour can be a triangle, or sound a square, or something be caused by nothing. Secondly; as to the other part of the objection, that figure, divisibility, mobility, and other qualities of matter, are (as we ourselves acknowledge) given it from God, who yet cannot, without extreme blasphemy, be said to have any such qualities himself; and that, therefore, in like manner, perception or intelligence may arise out of that which has no intelligence itself; the answer is still easier: that figure divisibility, mobility, and other such like qualities of matter, are not real, proper, distinct, and positive powers, but only negative qualities, deficiencies, or imperfections. And though no cause can communicate to its effect any real perfection which it has not itself, yet the effect may easily have many imperfections, deficiencies, or negative qualities, which are not in the cause. Though therefore figure, divisibility, mobility, and the like, (which are mere negations,
as all limitations, and all defects of powers are,) may be in the
effect, and not in the cause; yet intelligence. (which I now suppose,
and shall prove immediately, to be a distinct quality; and which no
man can say is a mere negation,) cannot possibly be so.

“Having therefore thus demonstrated, that if perception or
intelligence be supposed to be a distinct quality or perfection,
(though even but of matter only, if the Atheist pleases,) and not a
mere effect or composition of unintelligent figure and motion; then
beings endued with perception or consciousness can never have
arisen purely out of that which had no such quality as perception or
consciousness; because nothing can ever give to another any
perfection, which it has not itself: it will easily appear, secondly,
that perception or intelligence is really such a distinct quality or
perfection, and not possibly a mere effect or composition of
unintelligent figure and motion: and that for this plain reason,
because intelligence is not figure, and consciousness is not motion.
For whatever can arise from, or be compounded of any things, is
still only those very things of which it was compounded. And if
infinite compositions or divisions be made eternally, the things will
be but eternally the same. And all their possible effects can never be
any thing but repetitions of the same. For instance: all possible
changes, compositions, or divisions of figure, are still nothing but
figure: and all possible compositions or effects of motion, can
eternally be nothing but mere motion. If therefore there ever was a
time when there was nothing in the universe but matter and motion,
there never could have been any thing else therein but matter and
motion. And it would have been as impossible, there should ever
have existed any such thing as intelligence or consciousness; or
even any such thing as light, or heat, or sound, or colour, or any of
those we call secondary qualities of matter; as it is now impossible
for motion to be blue or red, or for a triangle to be transformed into
a sound. That which has been apt to deceive men in this matter, is
this, that they imagine compounds to be somewhat really different
from that of which they are compounded: which is a very great
mistake. For all the things, of which men so judge, either, if they be
really different, are not compounds nor effects of what men judge
them to be, but are something totally distinct; as when the vulgar
think colours and sounds to be properties inherent in bodies, when
indeed they are purely thoughts of the mind: or else, if they be really compounds and effects, then they are not different, but exactly the same that ever they were; as, when two triangles put together make a square. that square is still nothing but two triangles; or when a square cut in halves makes two triangles, those two triangles are still only the two halves of a square; or when the mixture of blue and yellow powder makes a green, that green is still nothing but blue and yellow intermixed, as is plainly visible by the help of microscopes. And in short, every thing by composition, division or motion, is nothing else but the very same it was before, taken either in whole or in parts, or in different place or order. He therefore that will affirm intelligence to be the effect of a system of unintelligent matter in motion, must either affirm intelligence to be a mere name or external denomination of certain figures and motions, and that it differs from unintelligent figures and motions, no other wise than as a circle or triangle differs from a square, which is evidently absurd: or else he must suppose it to be a real distinct quality, arising from certain motions of a system of matter not in itself intelligent; and then this no less evidently absurd consequence would follow, that one quality inhered in another; for, in that case, not the substance itself, the particles of which the system consists, but the mere mode, the particular mode of motion and figure would be intelligent.

“That the self-existent and original cause of all things, is an intelligent Being, appears abundantly from the excellent variety, order, beauty, and wonderful contrivance, and fitness of all things in the world, to their proper and respective ends. Since therefore things are thus, it must unavoidably be granted, (even by the most obstinate Atheist,) either that all plants and animals are originally the work of an intelligent Being, and created by him in time; or that having been from eternity in the same order and method they now are in, they are an eternal effect of an eternal intelligent Cause continually exerting his infinite power and wisdom; or else that without any self-existent original at all, they have been derived one from another in an eternal succession, by an infinite progress of dependent causes. The first of these three ways is, the conclusion we assert: the second, (so far as the cause of Atheism is
concerned,) comes to the very same thing: and the third I have already shown to be absolutely impossible and a contradiction.

“Supposing it was possible that the form of the world, and all the visible things contained therein, with the order, beauty, and exquisite fitness of their parts; nay, supposing that even intelligence itself, with consciousness and thought, in all the beings we know, could possibly be the result or effect of mere unintelligent matter, figure, and motion; (which is the most unreasonable and impossible supposition in the world;) yet even still there would remain an undeniable demonstration, that the self-existent Being, (whatever it be supposed to be,) must be intelligent For even these principles themselves, unintelligent figure and motion could never have possibly existed, without there had been before them an intelligent cause. I instance in motion. It is evident there is now such a thing as motion in the world; which either began at some time or other, or was eternal. If it began at any time, then the question is granted, that the First Cause is an intelligent being: for mere unintelligent matter, and that at rest, it is manifest, could never of itself begin to move. On the contrary, if motion was eternal, it was either eternally caused by some eternal intelligent Being, or it must of itself be necessary and self-existent; or else, without any necessity in its own nature, and without any external necessary cause, it must have existed from eternity by an endless successive communication. If motion was eternally caused by some eternal intelligent Being; this also is granting the question as to the present dispute. If it was of itself necessary and self-existent; then it follows that it must be a contradiction in terms, to suppose any matter to be at rest: beside, (as there is no end of absurdities,) it must also imply a contradiction, to suppose that there might possibly have been originally more or less motion in the universe than there actually was: which is so very absurd a consequence, that Spinoza himself, though he expressly asserts all things to be necessary, yet seems ashamed here to speak out his opinion, or rather plainly contradicts himself in the question about the original of motion. But if it be said, lastly, that motion, without any necessity in its own nature, and without any external necessary cause, has existed from eternity, merely by an endless successive communication, as Spinoza, inconsistently enough, seems to assert; this I have before shown to
be a plain contradiction. It remains therefore that motion must of
necessity be originally caused by something that is intelligent; or
else there never could have been any such thing as motion in the
world. And consequently the self-existent Being, the original Cause
of all things, (whatever it is supposed to be,) must of necessity be
an intelligent Being.”

The argument from the existence of motion to the existence of an
intelligent First Cause is so convincing, that the farther illustration of it, in
which the absurdities of Atheism are exhibited in another view, will not be
unacceptable.

“Consider that all this motion and motive power must have some
source and fountain diverse from the dull and sluggish matter
moved thereby, unto which it already hath appeared impossible that
it should originally and essentially belong.

“Also that the mighty active Being, which hath been proved
necessarily existent, and whereto it must first belong, if we suppose
it destitute of the self-moderating principle of wisdom and counsel,
cannot but be always exerting its motive power, invariably used to
the same degree, that is, to its very utmost, and can never cease or
fail to do so. For its act knows no limit but that of its power, (if this
can have any,) and its power is essential to it, and its essence is
necessary.

“Farther, that the motion impressed upon the matter of the
universe, must hereupon necessarily have received a continual
increase ever since it came into being.

“That supposing this motive power to have been exerted from
eternity, it must have been increased long ago to an infinite excess.

“That hence the coalition of the particles of matter for the forming
of any thing, had been altogether impossible: for let us suppose this
exerted motive power to have been, any instant, but barely
sufficient for such a formation; because that could not be
despached in an instant, it would, by its continual increase, be
grown so over-sufficient, as, in the next instant, to dissipate the
particles, but now beginning to unite.
“At least, it would be most apparent, that if ever such a frame of things as we now behold could have been produced, that motive power increased to so infinite an excess, must have shattered the whole frame in pieces, many an age ago, or rather never have permitted that such a thing as we call an age could possibly have been.

“Our experience gives us not to observe any such destructive or remarkable changes in the course of nature, and this indeed (as was long ago foretold) is the great argument of the Atheistical scoffers in these latter days, that things remain as they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. But let it be soberly weighed, how it is possible that the general consistency, which we observe in things throughout the universe, and their steady orderly posture, can stand with this momentarily increase of motion.

“For we see when we throw a stone out of our hand, whatever of the impressed force it imparts to the air, through which it makes its way, or whatever degree of it vanishes of itself, it yet retains a part a considerable time, which carries it all the length of its journey, and does not vanish and die away on the sudden. So when we here consider in the continual momentarily renewal of the same force, always necessarily going forth from the same mighty agent, without any moderation or restraint, that every following impetus doth so immediately overtake the former, that whatever we can suppose lost, is yet abundantly over-supplied; upon the whole, it cannot fail to be ever growing, and before now must have grown to that all-destroying excess before mentioned.

“It is therefore evident, that as without the supposition of a self-active Being, there could be no such thing as motion, so without the supposition of an intelligent Being, (that is, that the same Being be both self-active and intelligent,) there could be no regular motion, such as is absolutely necessary to the forming and continuing of any of the compacted bodily substances, which our eyes behold every day; yea, or of any whatsoever, suppose we their figures, their shapes, to be as rude, as deformed, and useless as we can imagine, much less such as the exquisite compositions, and the exact order of things in the universe do evidently require and discover.” (Howe’s Living Temple.)
The proof that the original cause of all things is an intelligent Being, alluded to above by Dr. S. Clarke, as exhibited by the excellent variety, order, beauty, and wonderful contrivance and fitness of all things in the world to their proper and respective ends, has, from the copious and almost infinite illustration of which it is capable, been made a distinct branch of theological science. It is the most obvious and popular, and therefore the most useful argument in favour of the intelligence of that Being of infinite perfections, we call God; it is that to which the Holy Scriptures refer us for the confirmation of their own doctrine on this subject, and it has been constantly resorted to by all writers on this first principle of religion in every age. When it has been considered separately, and the proofs from nature have been largely given, it has been designated “Natural Theology,” and has given rise to many important works, equally entertaining, instructive, and convincing. The basis, and indeed the plan, of Dr. Paley’s Natural Theology, are found in the third and following chapters of Howe’s Living Temple; but the outline has been filled up, and the subject expanded by that able writer with great felicity of illustration, and acute and powerful argument. From the platform of Paley’s work, as it may be found in “the Living Temple,” I shall give a few extracts, which, though they appear in the “Natural Theology” in a more expansive form, strengthened by additional examples, and clothed in some of the instances given with a more correct philosophy, are not superseded. They bear upon the conclusion with an irresistible force, and are expressed with a noble eloquence, though in language a little antiquated in structure.

“As nothing can be produced without a cause, so no cause can work above or beyond its own capacity and natural aptitude. Whatsoever therefore is ascribed to any cause, above and beyond its ability, all that surplusage is ascribed to no cause at all: and so an effect, in that part at least, were supposed without a cause. And if it then follow when an effect is produced, that it had a cause; why doth it not equally follow, when an effect is produced, having manifest characters of wisdom and design upon it, that it had a wise and designing cause? If it be said, there are some fortuitous or casual (at least undesigned) productions, that look like the effects of wisdom and contrivance, but indeed are not, as the birds so orderly and seasonably making their nests, the bees their comb, and the spider its web, which are capable of no design, that exception needs to be well proved before it be admitted; and that it be plainly
demonstrated, both that these creatures are not capable of design, and that there is not a universal, designing cause, from whose directive as well as operative influence, no imaginable effect or event can be exempted. In which case it will no more be necessary, that every creature that is observed steadily to work toward an end, should itself design and know it, than that an artificer’s tools should know what he is doing with them; but if they do not, it is plain he must. And surely it lies upon them who so except, to prove in this case what they say and not to be so precarious as to beg, or think us so easy as to grant, so much, only because they have thought fit to say it, or would fain have it so, that is, that this or that strange event happened without any designing cause.

“But, however, I would demand, of such as make this exception, whether they think there be any effect at all, to which a designing cause was necessary, or which they will judge impossible to have been otherwise produced than by the direction and contrivance of wisdom and counsel? I little doubt but there are thousands of things, laboured and wrought by the hand of man, which they would presently, upon first sight, pronounce to be the effects of skill, and not of chance; yea, if they only considered their frame and shape, though they understood not their use and end, they would surely think at least some effects or other sufficient to argue to us a designing cause. And would they but soberly consider and resolve what characters or footsteps of wisdom and design might be reckoned sufficient to put us out of doubt, would they not, upon comparing, be brought to acknowledge that there are nowhere any more conspicuous and manifest, than in the things daily in view, that go ordinarily, with us, under the name of works of nature? Whence it is plainly consequent, that what men commonly call universal nature, if they would be content no longer to lurk in the darkness of an obscure and uninterpreted word, they must confess is nothing else but common providence, that is, the universal power which is everywhere active in the world, in conjunction with the unerring wisdom which guides and moderates all its exertions and operations, or the wisdom which directs and governs that power. They must therefore see cause to acknowledge that an exact order and disposition of parts in very neat and elegant compositions, do plainly argue wisdom and skill in the contrivance; only they will
distinguish and say, *It is so in the effects of art, but not of nature.*

What is this, but to deny in particular what they granted in general? To make what they have said signify nothing more than if they had said, such exquisite order of parts is the effect of wisdom, where it is the effect of wisdom; but it is not the effect of wisdom, where it is not the effect of wisdom; and to trifle, instead of giving a reason why things are so? And whence take they their advantage for this trifling, or do they hope to hide their folly in it, but that they think while what is meant by art is known, what is meant by nature cannot be known? But if it be not known, how can they tell but their distinguishing members are coincident, and run into one? Yea, and if they would allow the thing itself to speak, and the effect to confess and dictate the name of its own cause, how plain is it that they do run into one; and that the expression imports no impropriety, which we somewhere find in Cicero, *The art of nature*; or rather, that nature is nothing else but Divine art, at least in as near an analogy as between any things Divine and human? But, that this matter (even the thing itself, waiving for the present the consideration of names,) may be a little more narrowly discussed and searched into, let some curious piece of workmanship be offered to such a skeptic’s view, the making whereof he did not see, nor of any thing like it, and we will suppose him not told that this was made by the hand of any man, nor that he hath any thing to guide his judgment about the way of its becoming what it is, but only his own view of the thing itself; and yet he shall presently, without hesitation, pronounce, this was the effect of much skill. I would here inquire, Why do you so pronounce? Or, What is the reason of this your judgment? Surely he would not say he hath no reason at all for this so confident and unwavering determination; for then he would not be determined, but speak by chance, and be indifferent to say that or any thing else. Somewhat or other there must be, that, when he is asked, is this the effect of skill? shall so suddenly and irresistibly captivate him into an assent that it is so, that he cannot think otherwise. Nay, if a thousand men were asked the same question, they would as undoubtedly say the same thing; and then, since there is a reason for this judgment, what can be devised to be the reason, but that there are so manifest characters and evidences of skill in the composure, as are not attributable to any thing else? Now here I would farther demand, Is
there any thing in this reason? Yea, or No? Doth it signify any thing, or is it of any value for the purpose for which it is alleged? Surely it is of very great, inasmuch as, when it is considered, it leaves it not in a man’s power to think any thing else; and what can be said more potently and efficaciously to demonstrate? But now, if this reason signify any thing, it signifies thus much; that wheresoever there are equal characters, and evidences of skill, a skilful agent must be acknowledged. And so it will, (in spite of cavil,) conclude universally, and abstractedly, from what we can suppose distinctly signified by the terms of art and nature, that whatsoever effect hath such, or equal characters of skill upon it, did proceed from a skilful cause. That is, that if this effect be said to be from a skilful cause, as having manifest characters of skill upon it, then every such effect, that hath equally manifest characters of skill upon it, must be, with equal reason, concluded to be from a skilful cause.

“We will acknowledge skill to act, and wit to contrive, to be very distinguishable things, and in reference to some works, (as the making some curious automaton, or self-moving engine,) are commonly lodged in divers subjects; that is, the contrivance exercises the wit and invention of one, and the making, the manual skill and dexterity of others: but the manifest characters of both will be seen in the effect. —

That is, the curious elaborateness of each several part shows the latter, and the order and dependence of parts, and their conspiracy to one common end, the former. Each betokens design; or at least the smith or carpenter must be understood to design his own part, that is, to do as he was directed, both together do plainly bespeak an agent that knew what he did; and that the thing was not done by chance, or was not the casual product of only being busy at random, or making a careless stir, without aiming at any thing. And this, no man that is in his wits would, upon sight of the whole frame, more doubt to assent unto, than that two and two make four. And he would certainly be thought mad, that should profess to think that only by some one’s making a bustle among several small fragments of brass, iron, and wood, these parts happened to be thus curiously formed, and came together into this frame, of their own accord.
“Or lest this should be thought to intimate too rude a representation of their conceit who think this world to have fallen into this frame and order wherein it is, by the agitation of the moving parts, or particles of matter, without the direction of a wise mover; and that we may also make the case as plain as is possible to the most ordinary capacity, we will suppose (for instance) that one who had never before seen a watch, or any thing of that sort, hath now this little engine first offered to his view; can we doubt, but that he would, upon the mere sight of its figure, structure, and the very curious workmanship which we will suppose appearing in it, presently acknowledge the artificer’s hand? But if he were also made to understand the use and purpose for which it serves, and it were distinctly shown him how each thing contributes, and all things in this little fabric concur to this purpose, the exact measuring and dividing of time by minutes, hours, and months, he would certainly both confess and praise the great ingenuity of the first inventor. But now if a bystander, beholding him in this admiration, would undertake to show a profounder reach and strain of wit, and should say, Sir, you are mistaken concerning the composition of this so much admired piece; it was not made or designed by the hand or skill of any one; there were only an innumerable company of little atoms or very small bodies, much too small to be perceived by your sense, that were busily frisking and plying to and fro about the place of its nativity; and by a strange chance or a stranger fate, and the necessary laws of that motion which they were unavoidably put into, by a certain boisterous, undesining mover, they fell together into this small bulk, so as to compose this very shape and figure, and with this same number and order of parts which you now behold: one squadron of these busy particles (little thinking what they were about) agreeing to make one wheel, and another a second, in that proportion which you see; others of them also falling and becoming fixed in so happy a posture and situation as to describe the several figures by which the little moving fingers point out the hours of the day, and the day of the month, and all conspired to fall together, each into its own place, in so lucky a juncture, as that the regular motion failed not to ensue which we see is now observed in it, — what man is either so wise or so foolish, (for it is hard to determine whether the excess or the defect should best qualify him to be of this faith,) as to be
capable of being made believe this piece of natural history? And if any one should give this account of the production of such a trifle, would he not be thought in jest? But if he persist, and solemnly profess that thus he takes it to have been, would he not be thought in good earnest mad? And let but any sober reason judge whether we have not unspeakably more madness to contend against in such as suppose this world, and the bodies of living creatures, to have fallen into this frame and orderly disposition of parts wherein they are, without the direction of a wise and designing cause? And whether there be not an incomparably greater number of most wild and arbitrary suppositions in their fiction than in this? Beside the innumerable supposed repetitions of the same strange chances all the world over; even as numberless, not only as productions, but as the changes that continually happen to all the things produced. And if the concourse of atoms could make this world, why not (for it is but little to mention such a thing as this,) a porch, or a temple, or a house, or a city, as Tully speaks, which were less operous, and much more easy performances?

“It is not to be supposed that all should be astronomers, anatomists, or natural philosophers, that shall read these lines; and therefore it is intended not to insist upon particulars, and to make as little use as is possible of terms that would only be agreeable to that supposition. But surely such general, easy reflections on the frame of the universe, and the order of parts in the bodies of all sorts of living creatures, as the meanest ordinary understanding is capable of, would soon discover incomparably greater evidence of wisdom and design in the contrivance of these, than in that of a watch or a clock. And if there were any whose understandings are but of that size and measure as to suppose that the whole frame of the heavens serves to no other purpose than to be of some such use to us mortals here on earth as that instrument; if they would but allow themselves leisure to think and consider, they might discern the most convincing and amazing discoveries of wise contrivance and design (as well as the vastest might and power) in disposing things into so apt a subserviency to that meaner end; and that so exact a knowledge is had thereby of times and seasons, days and years, as that the simplest idiot in a country may be able to tell you, when the light of the sun is withdrawn from his eyes, at what time it will
return, and when it will look in at such a window, and when at the other; and by what degrees his days and nights shall either be increased or diminished; and what proportion of time he shall have for his labours in this season of the year, and what in that; without the least suspicion or fear that it shall ever fall out otherwise.

“For let us suppose (what no man can pretend is more impossible, and what any man must confess is less considerable, than what our eyes daily see,) that in some part of the air near this earth, and within such limits as that the whole scene might be conveniently beheld at one view, there should suddenly appear a little globe of pure flaming light resembling that of the sun, and suppose it fixed as a centre to another body or moving about that other as its centre, (as this or that hypothesis best pleases us,) which we could plainly perceive to be a proportionably little earth, beautified with little trees and woods, flowery fields and flowing rivulets, with larger lakes into which these discharge themselves; and suppose we see other planets all of proportionable bigness to the narrow limits assigned them, placed at their due distances, and playing about this supposed earth or sun, so as to measure their shorter and soon absolved days, months, and years, or two, twelve, or thirty years, according to their supposed circuits; — would they not presently, and with great amazement, confess an intelligent contriver and maker of this whole frame, above a Posidonius or any mortal? And have we not in the present frame of things a demonstration of wisdom and counsel, as far exceeding that which is now supposed, as the making some toy or bauble to please a child is less an argument of wisdom than the contrivance of somewhat that is of apparent and universal use? Or if we could suppose this present state of things to have but newly begun, and ourselves pre-existent, so that we could take notice of the very passing of things out of horrid confusion into the comely order they are now in, would not this put the matter out of doubt? But might what would yesterday have been the effect of wisdom, better have been brought about by chance, five or six thousand years, or any longer time ago? It speaks not want of evidence in the thing, but want of consideration, and of exercising our understandings, if what were new would not only convince but astonish, and what is old, of the same importance, doth not so much as convince!
“And let them that understand any thing of the composition of a
human body (or indeed of any living creature) but bethink
themselves whether there be not equal contrivance, at least,
appearing in the composure of that admirable fabric, as of any the
most admired machine or engine devised and made by human skill
and wit. If we pitch upon any thing of known and common use, as
suppose again, a clock or watch, which is no sooner seen than it is
acknowledged (as hath been said) the effect of a designing cause;
will we not confess as much of the body of a man? Yea, what
comparison is there, when in the structure of some one single
member, as a hand, a foot, an eye, or ear, there appears upon a
diligent search, unspeakably greater curiosity, whether we consider
the variety of parts, their exquisite figuration, or their apt
disposition to the distinct uses and ends these members serve for,
than is to be seen in any clock or watch? Concerning which uses of
the several parts in man’s body, Galen, so largely discoursing in
seventeen books, inserts on the leg, this epiphonema, upon the
mention of one particular instance of our most wise Maker’s
provident care: — ‘Unto whom (saith he) I compose these
commentaries,’ (meaning his present work of unfolding the useful
figuration of the human body,) ‘as certain hymns, or songs of
praise, esteeming true piety to consist in this, that I first may know,
and then declare to others, his wisdom, power, providence, and
goodness, than in sacrificing to him many hecatombs: and in the
ignorance whereof there is greatest impiety, rather than in
abstaining from sacrifice.’ ‘Nor,’ (as he adds in the close of that
excellent work,) ‘is the most perfect natural artifice to be seen in
man only; but you may find the like industrious design and wisdom
of the Author, in any living creature which you shall please to
dissect: and by how much the less it is, so much the greater
admiration shall it excite in you; which those artists show, that
describe some great thing (contractedly) in a very small space: as
that person who lately engraved Phaeton carried in his chariot with
his four horses upon a little ring — a most incredible sight! But
there is nothing in matters of this nature more strange than in the
structure of the leg of a flea.’ How much more might it be said of
all its inward parts? ‘Therefore, (as he adds,) the greatest
commodity of such a work accrues not to physicians, but to them
who are studious of nature, namely, the knowledge of our Maker’s
perfection, and that (as he had said a little above) it establishes the principle of the most perfect theology; which theology is much more excellent than all medicine.’

‘It were too great an undertaking, and beyond the designed limits of this discourse, (though it would be to excellent purpose, if it could be done without amusing terms, and in that easy, familiar way as to be capable of common use,) to pursue, and trace distinctly the prints and footsteps of the admirable wisdom which appears in the structure and frame of this outer temple. For even our bodies themselves are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Corinthians 6:19. And to dwell awhile in the contemplation and discovery of those numerous instances of most apparent, ungainsayable sagacity and providence which offer themselves to view in every part and particle of this fabric: how most commodiously all things are ordered in it! With how strangely cautious circumspection and foresight not only destructive, but even (perpetually) vexatious and afflicting incongruities are avoided and provided against, to pose ourselves upon the sundry obvious questions that might be put for the evincing of such provident foresight. As for instance, how comes it to pass that the several parts which we find to be double in our bodies, are not single only? Is this altogether by chance? That there are two eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, feet, &c: what a miserable, shiftless creature had man been, if there had only been allowed him one foot! A seeing, hearing, talking, unmoving statue. That the hand is divided into fingers? Those so conveniently situate, one in so fitly opposite a posture to the rest?

“And what, if some one pair or other of these parts had been universally wanting? The hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears. How great a misery had it inferred upon mankind! and is it only a casualty that it is not so? That the back bone is composed of so many joints, (twenty-four, beside those of that which is the basis and sustainer of the whole,) and is not all of a piece, by which stooping, or any motion of the head or neck, diverse from that of the whole body, had been altogether impossible; that there is such variety and curiosity in the ways of joining the bones together in that, and other parts of the body, that in some parts they are joined by mere adherence of one to another, either with or without an
intervening medium, and both these ways so diversely; that others are fastened together by proper jointing, so as to suit and be accompanied with motion, either more obscure or more manifest, and this, either by a deeper, or more superficial insertion of one bone into another, or by a mutual insertion, and that in different ways; and that all these should be so exactly accommodated to the several parts and uses to which they belong and serve; — was all this without design? Who that views the curious and apt texture of the eye, can think it was not made on purpose to see with; and the ear, upon the like view, for hearing, when so many things must concur that these actions might be performed by these organs, and are found to do so? Or who can think that the sundry little engines belonging to the eye were not made with design to move it upward, downward, to this side or that, or whirl it about as there should be occasion; without which instruments and their appendages, no such motion could have been? Who, that is not stupidly perverse, can think that the sundry inward parts (which it would require a volume distinctly to speak of, and but to mention them and their uses would too unproportionably swell this part of this discourse) were not made purposely by a designing agent, for the ends they so aptly and constantly serve for? The want of some one among divers whereof, or but a little misplacing or if things had been but a little otherwise than they are, had inferred an impossibility that such a creature as man could have subsisted, or been propagated upon the face of the earth. As what if there had not been such a receptacle prepared as the stomach is, and so formed and placed as it is, to receive and digest necessary nutriment? Had not the whole frame of man beside been in vain? Or what if the passage from it downward had not been made somewhat a little ascending, so as to detain a convenient time what it received, but that what was taken in were suddenly transmitted? It is evident the whole structure had been ruined as soon as made, What, (to instance in what seems so small a matter,) if that little cover had been wanting at the entrance of that through which we breathe; (the depression whereof by the weight of what we eat or drink, shuts it, and prevents meat and drink from going down that way;) had not unavoidable suffocation ensued? And who can number the instances that can be given beside? Now when there is a concurrence of so many things absolutely necessary, (concerning which the common saying is as applicable, more
frequently wont to be applied to matters of morality, — ‘Goodness is from the concurrence of all causes, evil, from any defect,’) each so aptly and opportuneely serving its own proper use, and all, one common end, certainly to say that so manifold, so regular and stated a subserviency to that end, and the end itself, were undesigned, and things casually fell out thus, is to say we know or care not what.

“We will only, before we close this consideration, concerning the mere frame of a human body, (which hath been so hastily and superficially proposed,) offer a supposition which is no more strange (excluding the vulgar notion by which nothing is strange, but what is not common) than the thing itself as it actually is; namely, that the whole more external covering of the body of a man were made, instead of skin and flesh, of some very transparent substance, flexible, but clear as very crystal; through which, and the other more inward (and as transparent) integuments, or enfoldings, we could plainly perceive the situation and order of all the internal parts, and how they each of them perform their distinct offices: if we could discern the continual motion of the blood, how it is conveyed, by its proper conduits, from its first source and fountain, partly downward to the lower entrails, (if rather it ascend not from thence, as at least what afterward becomes blood doth,) partly upward, to its admirable elaboratory, the heart; where it is refined and furnished with fresh vital spirits, and so transmitted thence by the distinct vessels, prepared for this purpose: could we perceive the curious contrivance of those little doors, by which it is let in and out, on this side and on that; the order and course of its circulation, its most commodious distribution by two social channels or conduit pipes, that every where accompany one another throughout the body: could we discern the curious artifice of the brain, its ways of purgation; and were it possible to pry into the secret chambers and receptacles of the less or more pure spirits there; perceive their manifold conveyances, and the rare texture of that net, commonly called the wonderful one: could we behold the veins, arteries, and nerves, all of them arising from their proper and distinct originals, and their orderly dispersion for the most part by pairs, and conjugations, on this side and that, from the middle of the back; with the curiously wrought branches, which, supposing these to
appear duly diversified, as so many more duskish strokes in this transparent frame they would be found to make throughout the whole of it; were every smaller fibre thus made at once discernible, especially those innumerable threads into which the spinal marrow is distributed at the bottom of the back: and could we, through the same medium perceive those numerous little machines made to serve unto voluntary motions, (which in the whole body are computed, by some, to the number of four hundred and thirty, or thereabouts, or so many of them as, according to the present supposition, could possibly come in view,) and discern their composition, their various and elegant figures — round, square, long, triangular, &c, and behold them do their offices, and see how they ply to and fro, and work in their respective places, as any motion is to be performed by them: were all these things, I say, thus made liable to an easy and distinct view, who would not admiringly cry out, How fearfully and wonderfully am I made? And sure there is no man sober, who would not, upon such a sight, pronounce that man mad, that should suppose such a production to have been a mere undesigned casualty. At least, if there be any thing in the world that may be thought to carry sufficiently convincing evidences in it, of its having been made industriously, and on purpose, not by chance, would not this composition, thus offered to view, be esteemed to do so much more? Yea, and if it did only bear upon it characters equally evidential, of wisdom and design, with what doth certainly so, though in the lowest degree, it were sufficient to evince our present purpose. For if one such instance as this would bring the matter no higher than to a bare equality, that would at least argue a maker of man’s body, as wise, and as properly designing as the artificer of any such slighter piece of workmanship, that may yet, certainly, be concluded the effect of skill and design. And then, enough might be said, from other instances, to manifest him unspeakably superior. And that the matter would be brought, at least, to an equality upon the supposition now made, there can be no doubt, if any one be judge that hath not abjured his understanding and his eyes together. And what then, if we lay aside that supposition, (which only somewhat gratifies fancy and imagination,) doth that alter the case? Or is there the less of wisdom and contrivance expressed in this work of forming man’s body, only for that it is not so easily and suddenly
obvious to our sight? Then we might with the same reason say, concerning some curious piece of carved work that is thought fit to be kept locked up in a cabinet, when we see it, that there was admirable workmanship shown in doing it; but as soon as it is again shut up in its repository, that there was none at all. Inasmuch as we speak of the objective characters of wisdom and design, that are in the thing itself, (though they must some way or other come under our notice, otherwise we can be capable of arguing nothing from them, yet,) since we have sufficient assurance that there really are such characters in the structure of the body of man as have been mentioned, and a thousand more than have been thought necessary to be mentioned here; it is plain that the greater or less facility of finding them out, so that we be at a certainty that they are, (whether by the slower, or more gradual search of our own eyes, or by relying upon the testimony of such as have purchased themselves that satisfaction by their own labour and diligence,) is merely accidental to the thing itself we are discoursing of; and neither adds to, nor detracts from the rational evidence of the present argument. Or if it do either, the more abstruse paths of Divine wisdom in this, as in other things, do rather recommend it the more to our adoration and reverence, than if every thing were obvious, and lay open to the first glance of a more careless eye. The things which we are sure (or may be, if we do not shut our eyes) the wise Maker of this world hath done, do sufficiently serve to assure us, that he could have done this also; that is, have made every thing in the frame and shape of our bodies conspicuous in the way but now supposed, if he had thought it fit. He hath done greater things. And since he hath not thought that fit, we may be bold to say, the doing of it would signify more trifling, and less design. It gives us a more amiable and comely representation of the Being we are treating of, that his works are less for ostentation than use; and that his wisdom and other attributes appear in them rather to the instruction of sober, than the gratification of vain minds.

“We may therefore confidently conclude, that the figuration of the human body carries with it as manifest, unquestionable evidences of design, as any piece of human artifice, that most confessedly in the judgment of any man, doth so; and therefore had as certainly a designing cause. We may challenge the world to show a disparity,
unless it be that the advantage is inconceivably great on our side. For would not any one that hath not abandoned both his reason and his modesty, be ashamed to confess and admire the skill that is shown in making a statue, or the picture of a man, that (as one ingeniously says) is but the shadow of his skin, and deny the wisdom that appears in the composure of his body itself, that contains so numerous and so various engines and instruments for sundry purposes in it, as that it is become an art, and a very laudable one, but to discover and find out the art and skill that are shown in the contrivance and formation of them?

“And now if any should be so incurably blind as not to perceive, or so perversely wilful as not to acknowledge, an appearance of wisdom in the frame and figuration of the body of an animal (peculiarly of man) more then equal to what appears in any the most exquisite piece of human artifice, and which no wit of man can ever fully imitate: although, as hath been said, an acknowledged equality would suffice to evince a wise Maker thereof, yet because it is the existence of God we are now speaking of, and that it is therefore not enough to evince, but to magnify the wisdom we would ascribe to him; we shall pass from the parts and frame to the consideration of the more principal powers and functions of terrestrial creatures; ascending from such as agree to the less perfect order of these, to those of the more perfect, namely, of man himself. And surely to have been the author of faculties that shall enable to such functions, will evidence a wisdom that defies our imitation, and will dismay the attempts of it.

“We begin with that of growth. Many sorts of rare engines we acknowledge contrived by the wit of man, but who hath ever made one that could grow, or that had in it a self-improving power? A tree, an herb, a pile of grass, may upon this account challenge all the world to make such a thing; that is, to implant the power of growing into any thing to which it doth not natively belong, or to make a thing to which it doth not.

“By what art would they make a seed? And which way would they inspire it with a seminal form? And they that think this whole globe of the earth was compacted by the casual (or fatal) coalition of particles of matter, by what magic would they conjure up so many
to come together as to make one clod? We vainly hunt with a lingering mind after miracles; if we did not more vainly mean by them nothing else but novelties, we are compassed about with such: and the greatest miracle is, that we see them not. You with whom the daily productions of nature (as you call it) are so cheap, see if you can do the like. Try your skill upon a rose. Yea, but you must have pre-existent matter? But can you ever prove the Maker of the world had so, or even defend the possibility of uncreated matter? And suppose they had the free grant of all the matter between the crown of their head and the moon, could they tell what to do with it, or how to manage it, so as to make it yield them one single flower, that they might glory in as their own production?

“And what mortal man, that hath reason enough about him to be serious, and to think awhile, would not even be amazed at the miracle of nutrition? Or that there are things in the world capable of nourishment? Or who would attempt an imitation here, or not despair to perform anything like it? That is, to make any nourishable thing. Are we not here infinitely outdone? Do we not see ourselves compassed about with wonders, and are we not ourselves such, in that we see, and are creatures, from all whose parts there is a continual defluxion, and yet that receive a constant gradual supply and renovation, by which they are continued in the same state? as the bush burning but not consumed. It is easy to give an artificial frame to a thing that shall gradually decay and waste till it be quite gone, and disappear. You could raise a structure of snow that would soon do that. But can your manual skill compose a thing that, like our bodies, shall be continually melting away, and be continually repaired, through so long a tract of time? Nay, but can you tell how it is done? You know in what method, and by what instruments, food is received, concocted, separated, and so much as must serve for nourishment turned into chyle, and that into blood, first grosser, and then more refined, and that distributed into all parts for this purpose. Yea, and what then? Therefore are you as wise as your Maker? Could you have made such a thing as the stomach, a liver, a heart, a vein, an artery? Or are you so very sure what the digestive quality is? Or if you are, and know what things best serve to maintain, to repair, or strengthen it, who implanted that quality? Both where it is so immediately useful, or in the other
things you would use for the service of that? Or how, if such things had not been prepared to your hand, would you have devised to persuade the particles of matter into so useful and happy a conjuncture, as that such a quality might result? Or (to speak more suitably to the most) how, if you had not been shown the way, would you have thought it were to be done, or which way would you have gone to work, to turn meat and drink into flesh and blood?

“And what shall we say of spontaneous motion, wherewith we find also creatures endowed that are so mean and despicable in our eyes, (as well as ourselves,) that is, that so silly a thing as a fly, a gnat, &c, should have a power in it to move itself, or stop its own motion, at its own pleasure? How far have all attempted imitations in this kind fallen short of this perfection! And how much more excellent a thing is the smallest and most contemptible insect, than the most admired machine we ever heard or read of; (as Architas Tarentinus’s dove so anciently celebrated, or more lately Regiomontanus’s fly, or his eagle, or any the like;) not only as having this peculiar power, above any thing of this sort, but as having the sundry other powers beside, meeting in it, whereof these are wholly destitute?

“And should we go on to instance farther in the several powers of sensation, both external and internal, the various instincts, appetitions, passions, sympathies, antipathies, the powers of memory, (and we might add of speech,) that we find the inferior orders of creatures either generally furnished with, or some of them, as to this last, disposed unto; how should we even overdo the present business; and too needlessly insult over human wit, (which we must suppose to have already yielded the cause,) in challenging it to produce and offer to view a hearing, seeing engine, that can imagine, talk, is capable of hunger, thirst, of desire, anger, fear, grief, &c, as its own creature, concerning which it may glory, and say, I have done this!

“Is it so admirable a performance, and so ungainsayable an evidence of skill and wisdom, with much labour and long travail of mind: a busy restless agitation of working thoughts; the often renewal of frustrated attempts: the varying of defeated trials, this way and that,
at length to hit upon, and by much pains, and with a slow, gradual progress, by the use of who can tell how many sundry sorts of instruments or tools, by long hewing, hammering, turning, filing, to compose one only single machine of such a frame and structure as that by the frequent reinforcement of a skilful hand, it may be capable of some (and that otherwise but a very short-lived) motion? And is it no argument, or effect of wisdom, so easily and certainly, without labour, error, or disappointment, to frame both so infinite a variety of kinds, and so innumerable individuals of every such kind of living creatures, that not only with the greatest facility can move themselves with so many sorts of motion downward, upward, to and fro, this way or that, with a progressive or circular, a swifter or a slower motion, at their own pleasure; but can also grow, propagate, see, hear, desire, joy, &c? Is this no work of wisdom, but only either blind fate or chance? Of how strangely perverse and odd a complexion is that understanding, (if yet it may be called an understanding) that can make this judgment?

“But because whatsoever comes under the name of cogitation, properly taken, is assigned to some higher cause than mechanism; and that there are operations belonging to man, which lay claim to a reasonable soul, as the immediate principle and author of them, we have yet this farther step to advance, that is, to consider the most apparent evidence we have of a wise, designing agent, in the powers and nature of this more excellent, and, among other things, more obvious to our notice, the noblest of his productions.

“And were it not for the slothful neglect of the most to study themselves, we should not have need to recount unto men the common and well-known abilities and excellencies which peculiarly belong to their own nature. They might take notice, without being told, that first, as to their intellectual faculty, they have somewhat about them that can think, understand, frame notions of things; that can rectify or supply the false or defective representations which are made to them by their external senses and fancies; that can conceive of things far above the reach and sphere of sense, the moral good or evil of actions or inclinations, and what there is in them of rectitude or pravity; whereby they can animadvert, and cast their eye inward upon themselves; observe the good or evil acts or inclinations, the knowledge, ignorance, dulness, vigour, tranquillity,
trouble, and generally, the perfections or imperfections of their own minds; that can apprehend the general natures of things, the future existence of what yet is not, with the future appearance of that which, to us, as yet, appears not.

“They may take notice of their power of comparing things, of discerning and making a judgment of their agreements and disagreements, their proportions and dispositions to one another; of affirming or denying this or that, concerning such or such things; and of pronouncing, with more or less confidence, concerning the truth or falsehood of such affirmations or negations.

“And moreover, of their power of arguing, and referring one thing from another, so as from one plain and evident principle to draw forth a long chain of consequences, that may be discerned to be linked therewith.

“They have withal to consider the liberty and the large capacity of the human will, which, when it is itself, rejects the dominion of any other than the supreme Lord’s, and refuses satisfaction in any other than the supreme and most comprehensive good.

“And upon even so hasty and transient a view of a thing furnished with such powers and faculties, we have sufficient occasion to bethink ourselves, How came such a thing as this into being; whence did it spring, or to what original doth it owe itself? More particularly we have here two things to be remembered — That, notwithstanding so high excellencies, the soul of man doth yet appear to be a caused being, that some time had a beginning — That by them it is sufficiently evident, that it owes itself to a wise and intelligent cause.”

The instance of a watch, chosen by Howe for the illustration of his argument, that evidences of design, in any production, are evidences of a designing cause; is thus strikingly amplified and applied by Paley to refute the leading Atheistic theories: — “The mechanism of the watch being once observed and understood, the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction and designed its use.
“Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed: all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist’s skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

“Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to show with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

“Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered in what manner they condued to the general effect; or even some parts concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they condued to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case, if, by the loss or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which or the connection by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this
obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be spared without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment, — these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

“Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found, in the place where he had found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other, and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, namely, of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.

“Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watchmaker.

“Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear, that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so.

“And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of metallic nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing, — is nothing. The expression ‘the law of metallic nature,’ may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear, but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as ‘the law of vegetable nature,’ ‘the law of animal nature,’ or indeed as ‘the law of nature’ in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion
of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

"Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument; he knows the utility of the end; he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

"Suppose, in the next place, that the person who found the watch should, after some time, discover that, in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing, in the course of its movement, another watch like itself; (the thing is conceivable;) that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould, for instance, or a complex adjustment of lathes, files, and other tools, evidently and separately calculated for this purpose; let us inquire what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion.

"The first effect would be to increase his admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible, mechanism, by which it was carried on, he would perceive in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done; for referring the construction of the watch to design and to supreme art. If that construction without this property, or, which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this farther property, the crown and perfection of all the rest.

"He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, in some sense, the maker of the watch which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different sense from that in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use.
With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second; in no such sense as this was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn, but no latitude of expression would allow us to say, no stretch of conjecture could lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair is neither more nor less than this: by the application of an unintelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, all effect is produced, namely, the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn: yet is this share the same as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section, therefore,

“Though it be now no longer probable, that the individual watch which our observer had found, was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet doth not this alteration in any wise affect the inference, that an artificer had been originally employed and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now than they were before. In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency to a use, that relation to an end which we have marked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question by telling us that a preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement without anything capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end
ever having been contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to a use, imply the presence of intelligence and mind. No one, therefore, can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it; could be truly said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result connected with the utilities of other beings. All these properties, therefore, are as much unaccounted for as they were before.

“Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty farther back, that is, by supposing the watch before us to have been produced from another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, now dispensed with. If the difficulty were diminished the farther we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach toward a limit, there, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called infinite, we may conceive the limit to be attained: but where there is no such tendency or approach, nothing is effected by lengthening the series. There is no difference as to the point in question, (whatever there may be as to many points,) between one series and another; between a series which is finite, and a series which is infinite. A chain composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. And of this we are assured, (though we never can have tried the experiment,) because, by increasing the number of links, from ten, for instance, to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, &c, we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency toward self-support. There is no difference in this respect (yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is
finite and one that is infinite. This very much resembles the case before us. The machine, which we are inspecting, demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance, and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design a designer, whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That other machine may, in like manner, have proceeded from a former machine: nor does that alter the case: contrivance must have had a contriver. That former one from one preceding it: no alteration still: a contriver is still necessary. No tendency is perceived, no approach toward a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series as with another; a series which is finite as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

“The question is not simply, How came the first watch into existence? which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and consequently to have had no such first, for which it was necessary to provide a cause. This perhaps would have been nearly the state of the question, if nothing had been before us but all unorganized, unmechanized substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to show that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession, (if it were possible, which I think it is not, for unorganized bodies to spring from one another,) or by individual perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether we had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for in the watch which we are examining, are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, adaptation to the purpose. And the question, which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, whence this contrivance and design? The thing required is the intending mind, the adapting hand, the intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number or succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more by increasing
that number to infinity. If it be said, that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other’s movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, viz. the watch from which it proceeded, I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitableness of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to a use, (all which we discover in the watch,) we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore, to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all of the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver: proofs of design, but no designer.

“Our observer would farther also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him was, in truth and reality, the maker of every watch produced from it; there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) between the making of another watch with his own hands, by the mediation of files, lathes, chisels, &c, and the disposing, fixing, and inserting of these instruments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made, in such a manner as to form a new watch in the course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools instead of another.

“The conclusion which the first examination of the watch, of its works, construction and movement, suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This conclusion is invincible. A second examination presents us with a new discovery. The watch is found, in the course of its movement, to produce another watch, similar to itself: and not only so, but we perceive in it a system of organization, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have, or ought it to have, upon our former inference? What, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill, which had been employed in the formation of such a machine? Or shall it, instead of this, all at once turn us round to an opposite conclusion, viz. that no art or skill whatever has been concerned in the business, although all other evidences of art and skill remain as they were,
and this last and supreme piece of art be now added to the rest? Can this be maintained without absurdity? Yet this is Atheism.”

If the argument is so powerful, when a work of art merely is made its basis; it is rendered much more convincing when it is transferred to the works of nature; because ends more singular are, in an infinite number of instances, there proposed, and are accomplished by contrivances much more curious and difficult. In the quotation above given from Howe, the *eye*, the parts of the body which are *double*, and the construction of the *spine*, are adduced among others as striking instances of a *contrivance* superior to the art of man, and as evidently denoting forethought and plan, the attributes not of *intelligence* only, but of an intelligence of an infinitely superior order. These instances have been admirably wrought up by the master hand which furnished the last quotation.

We begin with the human *eye*.

“The contrivances of nature surpass the contrivances of art, in the complexity, subtlety, and curiosity of the mechanism; and still more, if possible, do they go beyond them in number and variety; yet in a multitude of cases, are not less evidently mechanical, not less evidently contrivances, not less evidently accommodated to their end, or suited to their office, than are the most perfect productions of human ingenuity.

“I know no better method of introducing so large a subject, than that of comparing a single thing with a single thing; an eye, for example, with a telescope. As far as the examination of the instrument goes, there is precisely the same proof that the eye was made for vision, as there is that the telescope was made for assisting it. They are made upon the same principles; both being adjusted to the laws by which the transmission and refraction of rays of light are regulated. I speak not of the origin of the laws themselves; but such laws being fixed, the construction, in both cases, is adapted to them. For instance; these laws require, in order to produce the same effect, that the rays of light, in passing from water into the eye, should be refracted by a more convex surface than when it passes out of air into the eye. Accordingly we find, that the eye of a fish, in that part of it called the crystalline lens, is much rounder than the eye of terrestrial animals. What plainer
manifestation of design can there be than this difference? What could a mathematical instrument maker have done more, to show his knowledge of his principle, his application of that knowledge, his suiting of his means to his end; I will not say, to display the compass or excellency of his skill and art, for in these all comparison is indecorous, but to testify counsel, choice, consideration, purpose?

“To some it may appear a difference sufficient to destroy all similitude between the eye and the telescope, that the one is a perceiving organ, the other an unperceiving instrument. The fact is, that they are both instruments. And, as to the mechanism, at least as to mechanism being employed, and even as to the kind of it, this circumstance varies not the analogy at all: for observe, what the constitution of the eye is. It is necessary, in order to produce distinct vision, that an image or picture of the object be formed at the bottom of the eye. Whence this necessity arises, or how the picture is connected with the sensation, or contributes to it, it may be difficult, nay, we will confess, if you please, impossible for us to search out. But the present question is not concerned in the inquiry. It may be true, that, in this, and in other instances, we trace mechanical contrivance a certain way; and that then we come to something which is not mechanical, or which is inscrutable. But this affects not the certainty of our investigation, as far as we have gone. The difference between an animal and an automatic statue, consists in this, — that in the animal, we trace the mechanism to a certain point, and then we are stopped; either the mechanism becoming too subtile for our discernment, or something else beside the known laws of mechanism taking place; whereas, in the automaton, for the comparatively few motions of which it is capable, we trace the mechanism throughout. But, up to the limit, the reasoning is as clear and certain in the one case as the other. In the example before us, it is a matter of certainty, because it is a matter which experience and observation demonstrate, that the formation of an image at the bottom of the eye is necessary to perfect vision. The image itself can be shown. Whatever affects the distinctness of the image, affects the distinctness of the vision. The formation then of such an image being necessary (no matter how) to the sense of sight, and to the exercise of that sense, the
apparatus by which it is formed is constructed and put together, not only with infinitely more art, but upon the self-same principles of art, as in the telescope or camera obscura. The perception arising from the image may be laid out of the question; for the production of the image, these are instruments of the same kind. The end is the same; the means are the same. The purpose in both is alike; the contrivance for accomplishing that purpose is in both alike. The lenses of the telescope, and the humours of the eye, bear a complete resemblance to one another, in their figure, their position, and in their power over the rays of light, viz. in bringing each pencil to a point at the right distance from the lens; namely, in the eye, at the exact place where the membrane is spread to receive it. How is it possible, under circumstances of such close affinity, and under the operation of an equal evidence, to exclude contrivance from the one; yet to acknowledge the proof of contrivance having been employed, as the plainest and clearest of all propositions in the other?

“The resemblance between the two cases is still more accurate, and obtains in more points than we have yet represented, or than we are, on the first view of the subject, aware of. In dioptric telescopes there is an imperfection of this nature. Pencils of light, in passing through glass lenses, are separated into different colours, thereby tinging the object, especially the edges of it, as if it were viewed through a prism. To correct this inconvenience had been long a desideratum in the art. At last it came into the mind of a sagacious optician, to inquire how this matter was managed in the eye; in which there was exactly the same difficulty to contend with as in the telescope. His observation taught him, that, in the eye, the evil was cured by combining together lenses composed of different substances, i.e. of substances which possessed different refracting powers. Our artist borrowed from thence his hint; and produced a correction, of the defect by imitating, in glasses made from different materials, the effects of the different humours through which the rays of light pass before they reach the bottom of the eye. Could this be in the eye without purpose, which suggested to the optician the only effectual means of attaining that purpose?

“But farther; there are other points, not so much perhaps of strict resemblance between the two, as of superiority of the eye over the
telescope; yet of a superiority, which, being founded in the laws that regulate both, may furnish topics of fair and just comparison. Two things were wanted to the eye, which were not wanted, at least in the same degree, to the telescope; and these were, the adaptation of the organ, first, to different degrees of light; and secondly, to the vast diversity of distance at which objects are viewed by the naked eye, viz. from a few inches to as many miles. These difficulties present not themselves to the maker of the telescope. He wants all the light he can get; and he never directs his instrument to objects near at hand. In the eye, both these cases were to be provided for; and for the purpose of providing for them a subtile and appropriate mechanism is introduced.

“In order to exclude excess of light, when it is excessive, and to render objects visible under obscurer degrees of it, when no more can be had, the hole or aperture in the eye, through which the light enters, is so formed, as to contract or dilate itself for the purpose of admitting a greater or less number of rays at the same time. The chamber of the eye is a camera obscura, which, when the light is too small, can enlarge its opening; when too strong, can again contract it; and that without any other assistance than that of its own exquisite machinery. It is farther also, in the human subject, to be observed, that this hole in the eye, which we call the pupil, under all its different dimensions, retains its exact circular shape. This is a structure extremely artificial. Let an artist only try to execute the same. He will find that his threads and strings must be disposed with great consideration and contrivance, to make a circle, which shall continually change its diameter, yet preserve its form. This is done in the eye by an application of fibres, i.e. of strings, similar, in their position and action, to what an artist would and must employ, if he had the same piece of workmanship to perform.

“The second difficulty which has been stated, was the suitting of the same organ to the perception of objects that lie near at hand, within a few inches, we will suppose, of the eye, and of objects which were placed at a considerable distance from it, that, for example, of as many furlongs: (I speak in both cases of the distance at which distinct vision can be exercised.) Now this, according to the principles of optics, that is, according to the laws by which the transmission of light is regulated (and these laws are fixed,) could
not be done without the organ itself undergoing an alteration, and receiving an adjustment that might correspond with the exigency of the case, that is to say, with the different inclination to one another under which the rays of light reached it. Rays issuing from points placed at a small distance from the eye, and which consequently must enter the eye in a spreading or diverging order, cannot, by the same optical instrument in the same state, be brought to a point, i.e. be made to form an image, in the same place with rays proceeding from objects situated at a much greater distance, and which rays arrive at the eye in directions nearly, and physically speaking, parallel. It requires a rounder lens to do it. The point of concourse behind the lens must fall critically upon the retina, or the vision is confused; yet, other things remaining the same, this point, by the immutable properties of light, is carried farther back, when the rays proceed from a near object, than when they are sent from one that is remote. A person who was using an optical instrument, would manage this matter by changing, as the occasion required, his lens or his telescope; or by adjusting the distances of his glasses with his hand or his screw: but how is it to be managed in the eye? What the alteration was, or in what part of the eye it took place, or by what means it was effected, (for, if the known laws which govern the refraction of light be maintained, some alteration in the state of the organ there must be,) had long formed a subject of inquiry and conjecture. The change, though sufficient for the purpose, is so minute as to elude ordinary observation. Some very late discoveries, deduced from a laborious and most accurate inspection of the structure and operation of the organ, seem at length to have ascertained the mechanical alteration which the parts of the eye undergo. It is found, that by the action of certain muscles, called the straight muscles, and which action is the most advantageous that could be imagined for the purpose, — it is found, I say, that, whenever the eye is directed to a near object, three changes are produced in it at the same time, all severally contributing to the adjustment required. The cornea, or outermost coat of the eye, is rendered more round and prominent; the crystalline lens underneath is pushed forward; and the axis of vision, as the depth of the eye is called, is elongated. These changes in the eye vary its power over the rays of light in such a manner and degree as to produce exactly the effect which is wanted, viz. the formation of an image *upon the*
retina, whether the rays come to the eye in a state of divergency, which is the case when the object is near to the eye, or come parallel to one another, which is the case when the object is placed at a distance. Can any thing be more decisive of contrivance than this is? The most secret laws of optics must have been known to the author of a structure endowed with such a capacity of change. It is, as though an optician, when he had a nearer object to view, should rectify his instrument by putting in another glass, at the same time drawing out also his tube to a different length.

“In considering vision as achieved by the means of an image formed at the bottom of the eye, we can never reflect without wonder upon the smallness, yet correctness, of the picture, the subtilty of the touch, the fineness of the lines. A landscape of five or six square leagues is brought into a space of half an inch diameter; yet the multitude of objects which it contains are all preserved; are all discriminated in their magnitudes, positions, figures, colours. The prospect from Hampstead hill is compressed into the compass of a sixpence, yet circumstantially represented. A stage coach travelling at its ordinary speed for half an hour, passes in the eye, only over one twelfth of an inch, yet is this change of place in the image distinctly perceived throughout its whole progress; for it is only by means of that perception that the motion of the coach itself is made sensible to the eye. If any thing can abate our admiration of the smallness of the visual tablet compared with the extent of vision, it is a reflection which the view of nature leads us, every hour, to make, viz. that in the hands of the Creator, great and little are nothing.”

On the parts of the body which are double, adduced by Howe, as proofs of contrivance, our author farther remarks: —

“The human, or indeed the animal frame, considered as a mass or assemblage, exhibits in its composition three properties, which have long struck my mind, as indubitable evidences, not only of design, but of a great deal of attention and accuracy in prosecuting the design.

“The first is, the exact correspondency of the two sides of the same animal: the right hand answering to the left, leg to leg, eye to eye, one side of the countenance to the other; and with a precision, to
imitate which, in any tolerable degree, forms one of the difficulties of statuary, and requires, on the part of the artist, a constant attention to this property of his work, distinct from every other.

“It is the most difficult thing that can be, to get a wig made even, yet how seldom is the face awry? And what care is taken that it should not be so, the anatomy of its bones demonstrates. The upper part of the face is composed of thirteen bones, six on each side, answering each to each, and the thirteenth without a fellow, in the middle; the lower part of the face is in like manner composed of six bones, three on each side, respectively corresponding, and the lower jaw in the centre. In building an arch, could more be done in order to make the curve true, i.e. the parts equidistant from the middle, alike in figure and position?

“The exact resemblance of the eyes, considering how compounded this organ is in its structure, how various and how delicate are the shades of colour with which its iris is tinged, how differently, as to effect upon appearance, the eye may be mounted in its socket, and how differently in different heads eyes actually are set, is a property of animal bodies much to be admired. Of ten thousand eyes, I don’t know that it would be possible to match one, except with its own fellow; or to distribute them into suitable pairs by any other selection than that which obtains.

“The next circumstance to be remarked is, that while the cavities of the body are so configurated, as, externally, to exhibit the most exact correspondency of the opposite sides, the contents of these cavities have no such correspondency. A line drawn down the middle of the breast divides the thorax into two sides exactly similar; yet these two sides inclose very different contents. The heart lies on the left side; a lobe of the lungs on the right; balancing each other, neither in size nor shape. The same thing holds of the abdomen. The liver lies on the right side, without any similar viscus opposed to it on the left. The spleen indeed is situated over against the liver; but agreeing with the liver neither in bulk nor form. There is no equipollency between these. The stomach is a vessel, both irregular in its shape, and oblique in its position. The foldings and doublings of the intestines do not present a parity of sides. Yet that symmetry which depends upon the correlation of the sides, is
externally preserved throughout the whole trunk; and is the more remarkable in the lower parts of it, as the integuments are soft; and the shape, consequently, is not, as the thorax is by its ribs, reduced by natural stays. It is evident, therefore that the external proportion does not arise from any equality in the shape or pressure of the internal contents. What is it indeed but a correction of inequalities? an adjustment, by mutual compensation, of anomalous forms into a regular congeries? the effect, in a word, of artful, and, if we might be permitted so to speak, of studied collocation?

“Similar also to this is the third observation; that an internal inequality in the feeding vessels is so managed, as to produce no inequality in parts which were intended to correspond. The right arm answers accurately to the left, both in size and shape; but the arterial branches, which supply the two arms, do not go off from their trunk, in a pair, in the same manner, at the same place, or at the same angle. Under which want of similitude, it is very difficult to conceive how the same quantity of blood should be pushed through each artery; yet the result is right; the two limbs which are nourished by them perceive no difference of supply, no effects of excess or deficiency.

“Concerning the difference of manner, in which the subclavian and carotid arteries, upon the different sides of the body, separate themselves from the aorta, Cheselden seems to have thought, that the advantage which the left gain by going off at a much acuter angle than the right, is made up to the right by their going off together in one branch. It is very possible that this may be the compensating contrivance; and if it be so, how curious, how hydrostatical!”

The construction of the spine, another of Howe’s illustrations, is thus exemplified: —

“The spine or back bone is a chain of joints of very wonderful construction. Various, difficult, and almost inconsistent offices were to be executed by the same instrument. It was to be firm, yet flexible: now I know of no chain made by art, which is both these; for by firmness I mean, not only strength, but stability; firm, to support the erect position of the body; flexible, to allow of the bending of the trunk in all degrees of curvature. It was farther also,
which is another, and quite a distinct purpose from the rest, to become a pipe or conduit for the safe conveyance from the brain of the most important fluid of the animal frame, that, namely, upon which all voluntary motion depends, the spinal marrow; a substance, not only of the first necessity to action, if not to life, but of a nature so delicate and tender, so susceptible, and so inpatient of injury, as that any unusual pressure upon it, or any considerable obstruction of its course, is followed by paralysis or death. Now the spine was not only to furnish the main trunk for the passage of the medullary substance from the brain, but to give out, in the course of its progress, small pipes therefrom, which being afterward indefinitely subdivided, might, under the name of nerves, distribute this exquisite supply to every part of the body. The same spine was also to serve another use not less wanted than the preceding, viz. to afford a fulcrum, stay, or basis, (or, more properly speaking, a series of these,) for the insertion of the muscles which are spread over the trunk of the body; in which trunk there are not, as in the limbs, cylindrical bones, to which they can be fastened: and, likewise, which is a similar use, to furnish a support for the ends of the ribs to rest upon.

“Bespeak of a workman a piece of mechanism which shall comprise all these purposes, and let him set about to contrive it; let him try his skill upon it; let him feel the difficulty of accomplishing the task, before he be told how the same thing is effected in the animal frame. Nothing will enable him to judge so well of the wisdom which has been employed; nothing will dispose him to think of it so truly. First, for the firmness, yet flexibility of the spine, it is composed of a great number of bones (in the human subject of twenty-four) joined to one another, and compacted together by broad bases. The breadth of the bases upon which the parts severally rest, and the closeness of the junction, give to the chain its firmness and stability; the number of parts, and consequent frequency of joints, its flexibility. Which flexibility, we may also observe, varies in different parts of the chain; is least in the back, where strength more than flexure is wanted; greater in the loins, which it was necessary should be more supple than the back; and the greatest of all in the neck, for the free motion of the head. Then, secondly, in order to afford a passage for the descent of the
medullary substance, each of these bones is bored through in the middle in such a manner, as that, when put together, the hole in one bone falls into a line, and corresponds with the holes in the two bones contiguous to it. By which means, the perforated pieces, when joined, form an entire, close, uninterrupted channel; at least, while the spine is upright and at rest. But, as a settled posture is inconsistent with its use, a great difficulty still remained, which was to prevent the vertebrae shifting upon one another, so as to break the line of the canal as often as the body moves or twists; or the joints gaping externally, whenever the body is bent forward, and the spine thereupon made to take the form of a bow. These dangers, which are mechanical, are mechanically provided against. The vertebrae, by means of their processes and projections, and of the articulations which some of these form with one another at their extremities, are so locked in, and confined as to maintain in what are called the bodies, or broad surfaces of the bones, the relative position nearly unaltered; and to throw the change and the pressure produced by flexion, almost entirely upon the intervening cartilages, the springiness and yielding nature of whose substance admits of all the motion which is necessary to be performed upon them, without any chasm being produced by a separation of the parts. I say of all the motion which is necessary; for although we bend our backs to every degree almost of inclination, the motion of each vertebra is very small; such is the advantage which we receive from the chain being composed of so many links, the spine of so many bones. Had it consisted of three or four bones only, in bending the body the spinal marrow must have been bruised at every angle. The reader need not be told that these intervening cartilages are gristles; and he may see them in perfection in a loin of veal. Their form also favours the same intention. They are thicker before than behind; so that, when we stoop forward, the compressible substance of the cartilage, yielding in its thicker and anterior part to the force which squeezes it, brings the surfaces of the adjoining vertebrae nearer to the being parallel with one another than they were before, instead of increasing the inclination of their planes, which must have occasioned a fissure, or opening between them. Thirdly, for the medullary canal giving out in its course, and in a convenient order, a supply of nerves to different parts of the body, notches are made in the upper and lower edge of every vertebra; two on each edge;
equidistant on each side from the middle line of the back. When the vertebrae are put together, these notches, exactly fitting, form small holes, through which the nerves, at each articulation, issue out in pairs, in order to send their branches to every part of the body, and with an equal bounty to both sides of the body. The fourth purpose assigned to the same instrument, is the insertion of the bases of the muscles, and the support of the ends of the ribs; and for this fourth purpose, especially the former part of it, a figure, specifically suited to the design, and unnecessary for the other purposes, is given to the constituent bones. While they are plain, and round, and smooth, toward the front, where any roughness or projection might have wounded the adjacent viscera, they run out, behind, and on each side, into long processes, to which processes the muscles necessary to the motions of the trunk are fixed; and fixed with such art, that while the vertebrae supply a basis for the muscles, the muscles help to keep these bones in their position, or by their tendons to tie them together.

“That most important, however, and general property, viz. the strength of the compages, and the security against luxation, was to be still more specially consulted; for where so many joints were concerned, and where, in every one, derangement would have been fatal, it became a subject of studious precaution. For this purpose, the vertebrae are articulated, that is, the movable joints between them are formed by means of those projections of their substance, which we have mentioned under the name of processes; and these so lock in with, and overwrap one another, as to secure the body of the vertebra, not only from accidentally slipping, but even from being pushed out of its place by any violence short of that which would break the bone.”

Instances of design and wonderful contrivance are as numerous as there are organized bodies in nature, and as there are relations between bodies which are not organized. The subject is, therefore, inexhaustible. The cases stated are sufficient for the illustration of this species of argument for the existence of an intelligent First Cause. Many others are given with great force and interest in the Natural Theology of Paley, from which the above quotations have been made; but his chapter on the Personality of the Deity contains applications of the argument from design, too important to be overlooked. The same course of reasoning may be traced in many other
writers, but by none has it been expressed with so much clearness and felicity.

“Contrivance, if established, appears to me to prove every thing which we wish to prove. Among other things it proves the personality of the Deity, as distinguished from what is sometimes called nature, sometimes called a principle; which terms, in the mouths of those who use them philosophically, seem to be intended, to admit and to express an efficacy, but to exclude and to deny a personal agent. Now that which can contrive, which can design, must be a person. These capacities constitute personality, for they imply consciousness and thought. They require that which can perceive an end or purpose; as well as the power of providing means, and of directing them to their end. They require a centre in which perceptions unite, and from which volitions flow; which is mind. The acts of a mind prove the existence of a mind; and in whatever a mind resides, is a person.

“Of this we are certain, that, whatever the Deity be, neither the universe, nor any part of it which we see, can be he. The universe itself is merely a collective name: its parts are all which are real, or which are things. Now inert matter is out of the question; and organized substances include marks of contrivance. But whatever includes marks of contrivance, whatever, in its constitution, testifies design, necessarily carries us to something beyond itself, to, some other being, to a designer prior to, and out of itself. No animal, for instance, can have contrived its own limbs and senses; can have been the author to itself of the design with which they were constructed. That supposition involves all the absurdity of self-creation, i.e. of acting without existing. Nothing can be God which is ordered by a wisdom and a will which itself is void of; which is indebted for any of its properties to contrivance ab extra. The not having that in his nature which requires the exertion of another prior being, (which property is sometimes called self-sufficiency, and sometimes self-comprehension,) appertains to the Deity, as his essential distinction, and removes his nature from that of all things which we see. Which consideration contains the answer to a question that has sometimes been asked, namely, Why, since something or other must have existed from eternity, may not the present universe be that something? The contrivance perceived in it,
proves that to be impossible. Nothing contrived can, in a strict and proper sense, be eternal, forasmuch as the contriver must have existed before the contrivance.

“We have already noticed, and we must here notice again, the misapplication of the term ‘law,’ and the mistake concerning the idea which that term expresses in physics, whenever such idea is made to take the place of power, and still more of an intelligent power, and, as such, to be assigned for the cause of any thing, or of any property of any thing that exists. This is what we are secretly apt to do when we speak of organized bodies (plants, for instance, or animals) owing their production, their form, their growth, their qualities, their beauty, their use, to any law, or laws of nature; and when we are contented to sit down with that answer to our inquiries concerning them. I say once more, that it is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent, for it is only the mode according to which an agent proceeds; it implies a power, for it is the order according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the ‘law’ does nothing; is nothing.

“What has been said concerning ‘law,’ holds true of mechanism. Mechanism is not itself power. Mechanism without power can do nothing. Let a watch be contrived and constructed ever so ingeniously; be its parts ever so many, ever so complicated, ever so finely wrought, or artificially put together, it cannot go without a weight or spring, i.e. without a force independent of, and ulterior to its mechanism. The spring, acting at the centre, will produce different motions and different results, according to the variety of the intermediate mechanism. One and the self-same spring, acting in one and the same manner, viz. by simply expanding itself, may be the cause of a hundred different, and all useful movements, if a hundred different and well-devised sets of wheels be placed between it and the final effect, e.g. may point out the hour of the day, the day of the month, the age of the moon, the position of the planets, the cycle of the years, and many other serviceable notices; and these movements may fulfil their purposes with more or less perfection, according as the mechanism is better or worse contrived, or better or worse executed, or in a better or worse state
of repair; *but in all cases, it is necessary that the spring act at the centre.* The course of our reasoning upon such a subject would be this. By respecting the watch, even when standing still, we get a proof of contrivance, and of a contriving mind having been employed about it. In the form and obvious relation of its parts, we see enough to convince us of this. If we pull the works in pieces, for the purpose of a closer examination, we are still more fully convinced. But when we see the watch *going,* we see proof of another point, viz. that there is a power somewhere, and somehow or other applied to it: a power in action; that there is more in the subject than the mere wheels of the machine; that there is a secret spring, or a gravitating plummet; in a word, that there is force and energy, as well as mechanism.

“So, then, the watch in motion establishes to the observer two conclusions: one, that thought, contrivance, and design have been employed in the forming, proportioning, and arranging of its parts; and that who ever or wherever he be, or were, such a contriver there is, or was: the other, that force or power, distinct from mechanism, is, at this present time, acting upon it. If I saw a hand mill even at rest, I should see contrivance; but if I saw it grinding, I should be assured that a hand was at the windlass, though in another room. It is the same in nature. In the works of nature we trace mechanism; and this alone proves contrivance; but living, active, moving, productive nature, proves also the exertion of a power at the centre; for wherever the power resides, may be denominated the centre.

“The intervention and disposition of what are called *second causes* fall under the same observation. This disposition is or is not mechanism, according as we can or cannot trace it by our senses, and means of examination. That is all the difference there is; and it is a difference which respects our faculties, not the things themselves. Now where the order of second causes is mechanical, what is here said of mechanism strictly applies to it. But it would be always mechanism (natural chemistry, for instance, would be mechanism) if our senses were acute enough to descry it. Neither mechanism, therefore, in the works of nature, nor the intervention of what are called second causes, (for I think that they are the same thing,) excuses the necessity of an agent distinct from both.
“If, in tracing these causes, it be said, that we find certain general properties of matter, which have nothing in them that bespeaks intelligence, I answer that, still, the managing of these properties, the pointing and directing them to the uses which we see made of them, demands intelligence in the highest degree. For example, suppose animal secretions to be elective attractions, and that such and such attractions universally belong to such and such substances; in all which there is no intellect concerned; still the choice and collocation of these substances, the fixing upon right substances, and disposing them in right places, must be an act of intelligence. What mischief would follow, were there a single transposition of the secretory organs; a single mistake in arranging the glands which compose them!

“There may be many second causes, and many courses of second causes, one behind another, between what we observe of nature and the Deity, but there must be intelligence somewhere: there must be more in nature than what we see; and among the things unseen, there must be an intelligent, designing author. The philosopher beholds with astonishment the production of things around him. Unconscious particles of matter take their stations, and severally range themselves in an order, so as to become collectively plants or animals, i.e. organized bodies, with parts bearing strict and evident relation to one another, and to the utility of the whole: and it should seem that these particles could not move in any other way than as they do; for they testify not the smallest sign of choice, or liberty, or discretion. There may be particular intelligent beings guiding these motions in each case; or they may be the result of trains of mechanical dispositions, fixed beforehand by an intelligent appointment, and kept in action by a power at the centre. But in either case there must be intelligence.

The above arguments, as they irresistibly confirm the Scripture doctrine of the existence of an intelligent First Cause, expose the extreme folly and absurdity of Atheism. The first of the leading theories which it has assumed, is the eternity of matter. When this means the eternity of the world in its present form and constitution, it is contradicted by the changes which are actually and every moment taking place in it; and, as above argued, by the contrivance which it every where presents, and which, it has been proved, necessarily supposes that designing intelligence we call God.
When it means the eternity of unorganized matter only, the subject which has received those various forms, and orderly arrangements, which imply contrivance and final causes, it leaves untouched the question of an intelligent cause, the author of the forms with which it has been impressed. A creative cause may, and must, nevertheless exist; and this was the opinion of many of the ancient Theistical philosophers, who ascribed eternity both to God and to matter; and considered creation, not as the bringing of something out of nothing, but as the framing of what actually existed without order and without end. But though this tenet was held, in conjunction with a belief in the Deity, by many who had not the light of the Scripture revelation; yet its manifest tendency is to Atheism, because it supposes the impossibility of creation in the absolute sense; and thus produces limited notions of God, from which the transition to an entire denial of him is an easy step. In modern times, therefore, the opinion of the eternity of matter has been held by few but absolute Atheists.

What seems to have led to the notion of a pre-existent and eternal matter out of which the world was formed, was the supposed impossibility of a creation from nothing, according to the maxim, “ex nihilo nihil fit.” The philosophy was however bad, because as no contradiction was implied in thus ascribing to God the power to create out of nothing; it was a matter of choice, whether to allow what was merely not comprehensible by man, or to put limitations without reason to the power of God. Thus Cudworth: —

“Because it is undeniably certain, concerning ourselves, and all imperfect beings, that none of these can create any new substance, men are apt to measure all things by their own scantling, and to suppose it universally impossible for any power whatever thus to create. But since it is certain, that imperfect beings can themselves produce some things out of nothing pre-existing, as new cogitations, new local motion, and new modifications of things corporeal, it is surely reasonable to think that an absolutely perfect being can do something more, i.e. create new substances, or give them their whole being. And it may well be thought as easy for God or an omnipotent Being to make a whole world, matter and all, εξ οὐκ ὄντων, as it is for us to create a thought or to move a finger, or for the sun to send out rays, or a candle light, or lastly, for an opaque body to produce an image of itself in a glass or water, or to project a shadow: all these imperfect things being but the energies, rays, images, or shadows of the Deity. For a substance to be made
out of nothing by God, or a Being infinitely perfect, is not for it to be made out of nothing in the impossible sense, because it comes from him who is all. Nor can it be said to be impossible for any thing whatever to be made by that which hath not only infinitely greater perfection, but also infinite active power. It is indeed true, that infinite power itself cannot do things in their own nature impossible; and, therefore, those who deny creation ought to prove that it is absolutely impossible for a substance, though not for an accident or modification, to be brought from non-existence into being. But nothing is in itself impossible, which does not imply a contradiction: and though it be a contradiction for a thing to be and not to be at the same time, there is surely no contradiction in conceiving an imperfect being, which before was not, afterward to be.”

It is not necessary to refer to the usual metaphysical arguments to show the non-eternity of matter, by proving that its existence must be necessary if it be eternal; and, if necessary, that it must be infinite, &c. They are not of much value. Every man bears in himself the proof of a creation out of nothing, so that the objection from the impossibility of the thing is at once removed.

“That sensation, intelligence, consciousness, and volition, are not the result of any modifications of figure and motion, is a truth as evident as that consciousness is not swift, nor volition square. If then these be the powers or properties of a being distinct from matter, which we think capable of the completest proof, every man who does not believe that his mind has existed and been conscious from eternity, must be convinced that the power of creation has been exerted on himself. If it be denied that there is any immaterial substance in man, still it must be confessed that, as matter is not essentially conscious, and cannot be made so by any particular organization, there is some real thing or entity, call it what you please, which has either existed and been conscious from eternity, or been in time brought from non-entity into existence by an exertion of infinite power.”

The former no sober person will contend for, and the latter therefore must be admitted.
On these grounds the absurdity of Atheism is manifest. If it attributes the various arrangements of material things to chance, that is, to nothing, it rests in *design* without a *designer*; in *effects* without a *cause*. If it allow an intelligent cause operating to produce these effects, but denies him to be almighty, by ascribing eternity to matter, and placing its creation beyond his power, it acknowledges with us indeed a God; but makes him an imperfect being, limited in his power; and it chooses to acknowledge this limited and imperfect being not only without reason, for we have just seen that creation out of nothing implies no contradiction, but even *against reason*, for the acknowledgment of a creation out of nothing must be forced from him by his own experience, unless he will contend that that conscious being *himself* may have existed from eternity without being conscious of existence, except for the space of a few past years.

On some modern schemes of Atheism, Paley justly remarks: —

“...I much doubt, whether the new schemes have advanced anything upon the old, or done more than changed the terms of the nomenclature. For instance, I could never see the difference between the antiquated system of atoms and Buffon’s organic molecules. This philosopher, having made a planet by knocking off from the sun a piece of melted glass, in consequence of the stroke of a comet; and having set it in motion by the same stroke, both round its own axis and the sun, finds his next difficulty to be, how to bring plants and animals upon it. In order to solve this difficulty, we are to suppose the universe replenished with particles endowed with life, but without organization or senses of their own; and endowed also with a tendency to marshal themselves into organized forms. The concourse of these particles, by virtue of this tendency, but without intelligence, will, or direction, (for I do not find that any of these qualities are ascribed to them,) has produced the living forms which we now see.

“Very few of the conjectures, which philosophers hazard upon these subjects, have more of pretension in them, than the challenging you to show the direct impossibility of the hypothesis. In the present example there seemed to be a positive objection to the whole scheme upon the very face of it; which was that, if the case were as here represented, *new* combinations ought to be perpetually taking place; new plants and animals, or organized
bodies which were neither, ought to be starting up before our eyes every day. For this, however, our philosopher has an answer. While so many forms of plants and animals are already in existence, and consequently, so many ‘internal moulds,’ as he calls them, are prepared and at hand, the organic particles run into these moulds, and are employed in supplying an accession of substance to them, as well for their growth, as for their propagation, — by which means things keep their ancient course. But, says the same philosopher, should any general loss or destruction of the present constitution of organized bodies take place, the particles for want of ‘moulds’ into which they might enter, would run into different combinations, and replenish the waste with new species of organized substances.

“Is there any history to countenance this notion? Is it known, that any destruction has been so repaired? Any desert thus re-peopled?

“But, these wonder-working instruments, these ‘internal moulds,’ what are they after all? What, when examined, but a name without signification? unintelligible, if not self-contradictory; at the best differing in nothing from the ‘essential forms’ of the Greek philosophy? One short sentence of Buffon’s works exhibits his scheme as follows: — ‘When this nutritious and prolific matter, which is diffused throughout all nature, passes through the internal mould of an animal or vegetable, and finds a proper matrix or receptacle, it gives rise to an animal or vegetable of the same species.’ Does any reader annex a meaning to the expression ‘internal mould,’ in this sentence? Ought it then to be said, that though we have little notion of an internal mould, we have not much more of a designing mind? The very contrary of this assertion is the truth. When we speak of an artificer or an architect, we talk of what is comprehensible to our understanding, and familiar to our experience. We use no other terms, than what refer us for their meaning to our consciousness and observation; what express the constant objects of both; whereas names like that we have mentioned, refer us to nothing; excite no idea; convey a sound to the ear, but I think do no more.

“Another system, which has lately been brought forward, and with much ingenuity, is that of appetencies. The principle, and the short
account of the theory, is this: pieces of soft, ductile matter, being endued with propensities or appetencies for particular actions, would, by continual endeavours, carried on through a long series of generations, work themselves gradually into suitable forms; and at length acquire, though perhaps by obscure and almost imperceptible improvements, an organization fitted to the action which their respective propensities led them to exert. A piece of animated matter for example, that was endued with a propensity to fly, though ever so shapeless, though no other we will suppose than a round ball, to begin with, would, in a course of ages, if not in a million of years, perhaps in a hundred million of years, (for our theorists, having eternity to dispose of, are never sparing in time,) acquire wings. The same tendency to locomotion in an aquatic animal, or rather in an animated lump which might happen to be surrounded by water, would end in the production of fins: in a living substance, confined to the solid earth, would put out legs and feet; or if it took a different turn, would break the body into ringlets, and conclude by crawling upon the ground.

“The scheme under consideration is open to the same objection with other conjectures of a similar tendency, viz. a total defect of evidence. No changes, like those which the theory requires, have ever been observed. All the changes in Ovid’s Metamorphoses might have been effected by these appetencies, if the theory were true: yet not an example, nor the pretence of an example, is offered of a single change being known to have taken place.

“The solution, when applied to the works of nature generally, is contradicted by many of the phenomena, and totally inadequate to others. The ligaments or strictures, by which the tendons are tied down at the angles of the joints, could by no possibility be formed by the motion or exercise of the tendons themselves; by any appetency exciting these parts into action: or by any tendency arising therefrom. The tendency is all the other way; the conatus in constant opposition to them. Length of time does not help the case at all, but the reverse. The valves also in the blood vessels could never be formed in the manner which our theorist proposes. The blood, in its right and natural course, has no tendency to form them. When obstructed or refluent, it has the contrary. These parts
could not grow out of their use, though they had eternity to grow in.

“The senses of animals appear to me altogether incapable of receiving the explanation of their origin which this theory affords. Including under the word ‘sense’ the organ and the perception, we have no account of either. How will our philosopher get at vision, or make an eye? How should the blind animal affect sight, of which blind animals, we know, have neither conception nor desire? Affecting it, by what operation of its will, by what endeavour to see, could it so determine the fluids of its body, as to inchoate the formation of an eye? Or suppose the eye formed, would the perception follow? The same of the other senses. And this objection holds its force, ascribe what you will to the hand of time, to the power of habit, to changes too slow to be observed by man, or brought within any comparison which he is able to make of past things with the present: concede what you please to these arbitrary and unattested suppositions, how will they help you? Here is no inception. No laws, no course, no powers of nature which prevail at present, nor any analogous to these, could give commencement to a new sense. And it is in vain to inquire, how that might proceed which could never begin.

“In the last place: what do these appetencies mean when applied to plants? I am not able to give a signification to the term, which can be transferred from animals to plants; or which is common to both. Yet a no less successful organization is found in plants, than what obtains in animals. A solution is wanted for one as well as the other.

“Upon the whole; after all the schemes and struggles of a reluctant philosophy, the necessary resort is a Deity. The marks of design are too strong to be got over. Design must have had a designer. That designer must have been a person. That person is GOD.”

Well has it been said, that Atheism is, in all its theories, a credulity of the grossest kind, equally degrading to the understanding and to the heart: for what reflecting and honest mind can for a moment put these theories into competition with that revealed in the Scriptures, at once so sublime and so convincing; and which instead of shunning, like those just mentioned, an appeal to facts, bids us look to the heavens and to the earth; assemble the
aggregate of beings, great and small; and examine their structure, and mark their relations, in proof that there must exist an all-wise and an almighty Creator?

Such is the evidence which the doctrine of a Deity receives from experience, observation, and rational induction, *à posteriori*. The argument thus stated, has an overwhelming force, and certainly needs no other, though attempts have been made to obtain proof *à priori*, and thus to meet and rout the forces of the enemy in both directions. No instance is however I believe on record of an Atheistic conversion having been produced by this process, and it may be ranked among the over zealous attempts of the advocates of truth. It is well intentioned, but unsatisfactory, and so far as on the one hand it has led to a neglect of the more convincing, and powerful course of argument drawn from “*the things which do appear;*” and on the other, has encouraged a dependence upon a mode of investigation, to which the human mind is inadequate, which in many instances is an utter mental delusion, and which scarcely two minds will conduct in the same manner; it has probably been mischievous in its effects by inducing a skepticism not arising out of the nature of the case, but from the imperfect and unsatisfactory investigations of the human understanding, pushed beyond the limit of its powers. In most instances it is a sword which cuts two ways, and the mere imaginary assumptions of those who think they have found out a new way to demonstrate truth, have in many instances either done disservice to it by absurdity, or yielded principles which unbelievers have connected with the most injurious conclusions. We need only instance the doctrine of the *necessary* existence of the Deity, when reasoned *à priori*. Some acute infidels have thanked those for the discovery who intended nothing so little as to encourage error: and have argued from that notion, that the Supreme Being cannot be a free agent, and have thus set the first principles of religion at variance with the Scriptures. The fact seems to be, that though, when once the existence of a first and intelligent cause is established, some of his *attributes* are capable of proof *à priori*, (how much that proof is worth is another question,) yet that his *existence* itself admits of no such demonstration, and that in the nature of the thing it is impossible.

The reason of this is drawn from the very nature of an argument *à priori*. It is an argument from an antecedent to a consequent, from cause to effect. If therefore there be any thing existing in nature, or could have been, from which the being and attributes of God might have been derived, or any
thing which can be justly considered as *prior* in order of nature or conception to the first cause of all things; then may the argument from such *prior* thing or principle be good and valid. — But if there is in reality nothing *prior* to the being of God, considered as the first cause and causality, nothing in *nature*, nothing in *reason*, then the attempt is fruitless to argue from it; and we improperly pretend to search into the grounds or reasons of the first cause, of whom antecedently we neither do nor can know any thing.

As the force of the argument *à priori* has however been much debated, it may not be useless to enter somewhat more fully into the subject.

One of the earliest and ablest advocates of this mode of demonstrating the existence of God, was Dr. Samuel Clarke. He however first proceeds *à posteriori* to prove, from the actual existence of dependent beings, the existence from eternity of “one unchangeable and independent Being;” and thus makes himself debtor to this obvious and plain demonstration before he can prove that this Being is, in his sense, *necessarily* existent. Necessity of existence is therefore tacitly acknowledged, not to be a tangible idea in the first instance; and the weight of the proof is tacitly confessed to rest upon the argument from *effect* to *cause*, which if admitted needs no assistance from a more abstract course of arguing. For if the first argument be allowed, every thing else follows; and it must be allowed, before the higher ground of demonstration can be taken. We have seen the guarded manner in which Howe, in the quotation before given, has stated the notion of the necessary existence of the Divine Being. Dr. S. Clarke and his followers have refined upon this, and given a view of the subject which is liable to the strongest objections. His words are, “To be self-existent is to exist by an absolute necessity, originally in the nature of the thing itself;” and “this necessity must not be barely consequent upon our supposition of the existence of such a being, for then it would not be a necessity absolutely such in itself, nor be the *ground* or *foundation* of the existence of any thing, being on the contrary only a consequent of it; but it must antecedently force itself upon us whether we will or not; even when we are endeavouring to suppose that no such being exists.” (*Demonstration* 1.)

One of the reasons given for this opinion is, “there must be in nature a permanent *ground* or *reason* for the existence of the first cause, otherwise its being would be owing to mere chance.” But to this it has been well replied, “Why must we say that God has his existence from, or that he does
exist for some prior cause or reason? Why may we not say that God exists as the first cause of all things, and thereupon surcease from all farther inquiries? God himself said ‘I am,’ and he had done. But the argument, if it did prove any thing, would prove too much. To evince which, let the same way of reasoning be applied to what you call the ground or the reason of the existence of the first cause, and then with very little variation, I retort upon you in your own words. If this ground or reason be itself any thing, or any property of any thing, of what nature, kind or degree soever, there must according to your way of reasoning, be in nature a ground or reason of the existence of such your antecedent necessity, ‘a reason why it is, rather than why it is not, otherwise its existence will be owing to, or dependent on, mere chance.’ You observe elsewhere that ‘nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that any thing, or any circumstance of any thing, is, and yet that there is absolutely no reason why it is, rather than why it is not.’ This consideration you allege as a vindication of your assigning a reason, à priori, for the existence of the first cause. If therefore your supposed reason, ground, or necessity, be ‘any thing or any supposable circumstance of any thing,’ as surely it must be, if not mere nothing, then by the same rule, such ‘ground,’ ‘necessity,’ &c, must have a reason, à priori, why it is, rather than why it is not, and after that another, and then a third, and so on in infinitum. And thus in your way we may be always seeking a first cause, and never be able to find one, whereon to fix ourselves, or check our restless and unprofitable inquiries. While indeed we consider only inferior existencies and second causes, there will always be room left for inquiring why such things are, and how such things came to be as they are; because this is only seeking and investigating the initial, the efficient, or the final cause of their existence. But when we are advanced beyond all causes procatactical and final, it remains only to say, that such is our first cause and causality, that we know it exists, and without prior cause; and with this you yourself will be obliged to fall in, the first step you farther take; for if we ask you of the antecedent necessity, whence it is, and what prior ground there was for it, you must yourself be content to say — so it is, you know not why, you know not how.” (Gretton’s Review of the Argument à priori.)

The necessary existence of the first cause, considered as a logical necessity, may be made out without difficulty, and is indeed demonstrated in the arguments given above; but the natural necessity of his existence is a subject too subtle for human grasp, and, from its obscurity, is calculated to
mislead. Every thing important in the idea, so far as it is unexceptionable, is well and safely expressed by Baxter. “That which could be eternally without a cause, and itself cause all things, is self-sufficient and independent.” (Reasons of the Christian Religion.) This seems the only true notion of necessary existence, and care should be taken to use the term in a definite and comprehensible sense. The word necessity when applied to existence may be taken in two acceptations, either as it arises from the relation which the existence of that of which it is affirmed has to the existence of other things, or from the relation which the actual existence of that thing has to the manner of its own existence. In the former sense, it denotes that the supposition of the non-existence of that of which the necessity is affirmed, implies the non-existence of things we know to exist. Thus some independent being does necessarily exist; because to suppose no independent being, implies that there are no dependent beings, the contrary of which we know to be true. In the second sense, necessity means that the being of which it is affirmed exists after such a manner as that it never could in time past have been non-existent, or can in future time cease to be. Thus every independent being, as it exists without a cause, is necessarily existing, because existence is essential to such a being; so that it never could begin to exist, and never can cease to be: for to suppose a being to begin to exist, or to lose its existence, is to suppose a change from non-entity to entity, or vice versà; and to suppose such a change is to suppose a cause upon which that being depends. Every being therefore which is independent, that is, which had no cause of its existence, must exist necessarily, and cannot possibly have begun to exist in time past, or cease to be in time future.

Still farther on Dr. S. Clarke’s view of the necessary existence of the Supreme Being, it has been observed,

“But what is this necessity which proves so much? It is the ground of existence (he says) of that which exists of itself; and if so, it must, in the order of nature, and in our conceptions, be antecedent to that being of whose existence it is the ground. Concerning such a principle, there are but three suppositions which can possibly be made; and all of them may be shown to be absurd and contradictory. We may suppose either the substance itself, some property of that substance, or something extrinsic to both, to be this antecedent ground of existence prior in the order of nature to the first cause.
“One would think, from the turn of the argument which here represents this antecedent necessity as efficient and causal, that it were considered as something extrinsic to the first cause. Indeed, if the words have any meaning in them at all, or any force of argument, they must be so understood, just as we understand them of any external cause producing its effect. But as an extrinsic principle is absurd in itself, and is beside rejected by Dr. S. Clarke, who says expressly, that ‘of the thing which derives not its being from any other thing, this necessity or ground of existence must be in the thing itself,’ we need not say a word more of the last of these suppositions.

“Let us then consider the first; let us take the substance itself, and try whether it can be conceived as prior or antecedent to itself in our conceptions or in the order of nature. Surely we need not observe that nothing can be more absurd or contradictory than such a supposition. Dr. S. Clarke himself repeatedly affirms, and it would be strange indeed if he did not affirm, that no being, no thing whatever, can be conceived as in any respect prior to the first cause.

“The only remaining supposition is, that some attribute or property of the self-existent being may be conceived as in the order of nature antecedent to that being. But this, if possible, is more absurd than either of the two preceding suppositions. An attribute is attributed to its subject as its ground or support, and not the subject to its attribute. A property, in the very notion of it, is proper to the substance to which it belongs, and subsequent to it both in our conceptions and in the order of nature: An antecedent attribute, or antecedent property, is a solecism as great, and a contradiction as flat, as an antecedent subsequent or a subsequent antecedent, understood in the same sense and in the same syllogism. Every property or attribute, as such, presupposes its subject; and cannot otherwise be understood. This is a truth so obvious and so forcible, that it sometimes extorts the assent even of those who upon other occasions labour to obscure it. It is confessed by Dr. S. Clarke, that ‘the scholastic way of proving the existence of the self-existent being from the absolute perfection of his nature, is ὑπερωτερον ὁτερωτερον. For all or any perfections (says he) presuppose existence; which is a petitio principii.’ If therefore properties,
modes, or attributes in God, be considered as perfections, (and it is impossible to consider them as any thing else,) then, by this confession of the great Author himself, they must all or any of them presuppose existence. It is indeed immediately added in the same place, ‘that bare necessity of existence does not presuppose, but infer existence;’ which is true only if such necessity be supposed to be a principle extrinsic, the absurdity of which has been already shown, and is indeed universally confessed. If it be a mode or property, it must presuppose the existence of its subject, as certainly and as evidently as it is a mode or a property. It might perhaps à posteriori infer the existence of its subject, as effects may infer a cause; but that it should infer in the other way à priori is altogether as impossible as that a triangle should be a square, or a globe a parallelogram.” (Law’s Inquiry.)

The true idea of the necessary existence of God is, that he thus exists because it is his nature, as an independent and uncaused being, to be, his being is necessary because it is underived, not underived because it is necessary. The first is the sober sense of the word among our old divines; the latter is a theory of modern date, and leads to no practical result whatever, except to entangle the mind in difficulty, and to give a colour to some very injurious errors.

Equally unsatisfactory, and therefore quite as little calculated to serve the cause of truth, is the argument from space; which is represented by Newton, Clarke, and others, as an infinite mode of an infinite substance, and that substance God, so that from the existence of space itself may be argued the existence of one supreme and infinite Being. Berkeley, Law, and others, have however shown the fallacy of considering space either as a substance, or a mode, and have brought these speculations under the dominion of common sense, and rescued them from metaphysical delusion. They have rightly observed, that space is a mere negation, and that to suppose it to have existence, because it has some properties, for instance, of penetrability, or the capacity of receiving body, is the same thing as to affirm that darkness must be something because it has the capacity of receiving light, and silence something because it has the property of admitting sound, and absence the property of being supplied by presence. To reason in this manner is to assign absolute negations, and such as, in the same way, may be applied to nothing, and then call them positive properties, and so infer that the chimera, thus clothed with them, must
needs be *something*. The arguments in favour of the real existence of space as something positive, have failed in the hands of their first great authors, and the attempts since made to uphold them have added nothing but what is exceedingly futile, and indeed often obviously absurd. The whole of this controversy has left us only to lament the waste of labour which has been employed in erecting around the impregnable ramparts of the great arguments on which the cause rests with so much safety, the useless incumbrances of mud and straw.

The proof of the *being* of a God reposes wholly then upon arguments à *posteriori*, and it needs no other; though we shall see as we proceed that even these arguments, strong and irrefutable as they are when rightly applied, have been used to prove more as to some of the *attributes* of God, than can satisfactorily be drawn from them. Even with this safe and convincing process of reasoning at our command, we shall find, at every step of an inquiry into the Divine nature, our entire dependence upon Divine revelation, for our *primary* light. That must both originate our investigations, and conduct them to a satisfactory result.
CHAPTER 2. — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: \textit{F7} UNITY, SPIRITUALITY.

The existence of a supreme Creator and First Cause of all things, himself uncaused, and independent, and therefore self-existent, having been proved, the next question is, whether there exists more than one such Being, or, in other words, whether we are to ascribe to him an absolute \textit{unity} or \textit{soleness}. On this point the testimony of the Scriptures is express, and unequivocal. “The Lord our God is \textbf{ONE} Lord,” \textit{Deuteronomy} 6:4. “The Lord he is God; there is \textbf{NONE ELSE} beside him,” \textit{Deuteronomy} 4:35. “Thou art God \textbf{ALONE},” \textit{Psalm} 86:10. “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but \textbf{ONE}.” Nor is this stated in Scripture, merely to exclude all other creators, governors, and deities, in connection with men, and the system of created things which we behold; but \textit{absolutely}, so as to exclude the idea of the existence, any where, of more than one Divine nature.

Of this unity, the proper Scripture notion may be thus expressed. Some things are one by virtue of composition, but God hath no parts, nor is compounded; but is a pure simple Being. Some are one in kind, but admit many individuals of the same kind, as men, angels, and other creatures; but God is so one that there are no other gods, though there are other beings. Some things are so one, as that there exists no other of the same kind, as are one sun, one moon, one world, one heaven; yet there might have been more, if it had pleased God so to will it. But God is so one, that there is not, there \textit{cannot be}, another God. He is one only, and takes up the Deity so fully, as to admit no fellow. (LAWSON’S \textit{Theo-Politica}.)

The proof of this important doctrine from Scripture is short and simple. We have undoubted proofs of a revelation from the Maker and Governor of this present world. Granting him to be wise and good, “it is impossible that God should lie,” and his own testimony assigns to him an exclusive Deity. If we admit the authority of the Scriptures, we admit a Deity; if we admit one God, we exclude all others. The truth of Scripture, resting as we have seen on proofs which cannot be resisted without universal skepticism, and universal skepticism being proved to be impossible by the common conduct of even the most skeptical men, the proof of the Divine unity rests precisely on the same basis, and is sustained by the same certain evidence.
On this as on the former point however there is much *rational* confirmation, to which revelation has given us the key; though without that, and even in its strongest form, it may be concluded from the prevalence of polytheism among the generality of nations, and of dualism among others, that the human mind would have had but too indistinct a view of this kind of evidence to rest in a conclusion so necessary to true religion and to settled rules of morals.

To prove the unity of God several arguments *à priori* have been made use of; to which mode of proof, provided the argument itself be logical, no objection lies. For though it appears absurd to attempt to prove *à priori* the existence of a first cause, seeing that nothing can either in order of time or order of nature be *prior* to him, or be conceived prior to him; yet the existence of an independent and self-existent cause of all things being made known to us by revelation, and confirmed by the phenomena of actual and dependent existence, a ground is laid for considering, from this fact, which is antecedent in order of nature, though not in order of time, the consequent attributes with which such a Being must be invested.

Among the arguments of this class to prove the Divine unity, the following are the principal: —

Dr. S. Clarke argues from his view of the necessary existence of the Divine Being: — “*Necessity,*” he observes, “absolute in itself, is simple and uniform, and universal, without any possible difference, diffirmity, or variety whatsoever; and all variety or difference of existence must needs arise from some external cause, and be dependent upon it.” And again: “To suppose two or more *distinct* beings existing of themselves necessarily, and independent of each other, implies this contradiction, that each of them being independent of each other, they may either of them be supposed to exist alone, so that it will be no contradiction to suppose the other not to exist, and consequently neither of them will be necessarily existing.” (*Demonstration*, Prop. 7.) These arguments being however wholly founded upon that peculiar notion of necessary existence, which is advocated by the author, derive their whole authority from the principle itself, to which some objections have been offered.

The argument from *space* must share the same fate. If space be an infinite attribute of an infinite substance, and an *essential* attribute of Deity, then the existence of one infinite substance, and one only, may probably be argued from the existence of this infinite property; but if space be a mere
negation, and neither substance nor attribute, which has been sufficiently proved by the writers before referred to, then it is worth nothing as a proof of the unity of God.

Wollaston argues, that if two or more independent beings exist, their natures must be the same or different; if different, either contrary or various. If contrary, each must destroy the operations of the other; if various, one must have what the other wants, and both cannot be perfect. If their nature be perfectly the same, then they would coincide, and indeed be but one, though called two. (*Religion of Nature.*)

Bishop Wilkins says, if God be an infinitely perfect being, it is impossible to imagine two such beings at the same time, because they must have several perfections, or the same. If the former, neither of them can be God, because neither of them has all possible perfections. If they have both equal perfections, neither of them can be absolutely perfect, because it is not so great to have the same equal perfections in common with another, as to be superior to all others. (*Principles of Natural Religion.*)

“The nature of God,” says Bishop Pearson, “consists in this, that he is the prime and original cause of all things, as an independent being, upon whom all things else depend, and likewise the ultimate end or final cause of all; but in this sense, two prime causes are unimaginable, and for all things to depend on one, and yet for there to be more independent beings than one, is a clear contradiction.” (*Exposition of the Creed.*)

The best argument of this kind is however that which arises from *absolute perfection*, the idea of which forces itself upon our minds, when we reflect upon the nature of a self-existent and independent Being. Such a being there is, as is sufficiently proved from the existence of beings dependent and derived; and it is impossible to admit that without concluding, that he who is independent and underived, who subsists wholly and only of himself without depending on any other, must owe this absoluteness to so peculiar an excellency of its own nature as we cannot well conceive to be less than that by which it comprehends in itself the most boundless and unlimited fulness of being, life, power, or whatsoever can be conceived under the name of a perfection. “To such a being infinity may be justly ascribed; and infinity, not extrinsically considered with respect to time and place, but intrinsically, as imparting bottomless profundity of essence, and the full confluence of all kinds and degrees of perfection without bound or limit.” (*HOWE’S Living Temple.*) “Limitation is the effect of some superior cause,
which, in the present instance, there cannot be: consequently, to suppose limits where there can be no limiter, is to suppose an effect without a cause. For a being to be limited or deficient in any respect, is to be dependent in that respect on some other being which gave it just so much and no more; consequently that being which in no respect depends upon any other, is in no respect limited or deficient. In all beings capable of increase or diminution, and consequently incapable of perfection or absolute infinity, limitation or defect is indeed a necessary consequence of existence, and is only a negation of that perfection which is wholly incompatible with their nature; and therefore in these beings it requires no farther cause. But in a being naturally capable of perfection or absolute infinity, all imperfection or finiteness, as it cannot flow from the nature of that being, seems to require some ground or reason; which reason, as it is foreign from the being itself, must be the effect of some other external cause, and consequently cannot have place in the first cause. That the self-existent being is capable of perfection or absolute infinity must be granted, because he is manifestly the subject of one infinite or perfect attribute, namely, eternity or absolute invariable existence. In this respect his existence is perfect, and therefore it may be perfect in every other respect also. Now that which is the subject of one infinite attribute or perfection, must have all its attributes infinitely or in perfection; since to have any perfections in a finite limited manner, when the subject and these perfections are both capable of strict infinity, would be the fore-mentioned absurdity of positive limitation without a cause. To suppose this eternal and independent Being limited in or by its own nature, is to suppose some antecedent nature or limiting quality superior to that being, to the existence of which no thing, no quality, is in any respect antecedent or superior. The same method of reasoning will prove knowledge and every other perfection to be infinite in the Deity, when once we have proved that perfection to belong to him at all; at least it will show, that to suppose it limited is unreasonable, since we can find no manner of ground for limitation in any respect; and this is as far as we need go, or perhaps as natural light will lead us.” (Dr. Gleig.)

The connection between the steps of the argument from the self-existence and infinity of the Deity to his unity, may be thus traced. There is actually existing an absolute, entire fulness of wisdom, power, and of all other perfection. This absolute entire fulness of perfection is infinite. This infinite perfection must have its seat somewhere. Its primary original seat can be
nowhere but in necessary self-subsisting being. If then we suppose a plurality of self-originate beings concurring to make up the seat or subject of this infinite perfection, each one must either be of finite and partial perfection, or infinite and absolute. Infinite and absolute it cannot be, because one self-originate, infinitely and absolutely perfect being, will necessarily comprehend all perfection, and leave nothing to the rest. Nor finite, because many finites can never make one infinite; nor many broken parcels or fragments of perfection ever make infinite and absolute perfection, even though their number, if that were possible, were infinite.

To these arguments from the Divine nature, proofs of his unity are to be drawn from his works. While we have no revelation of or from any other being than from him whom we worship as God; so the frame and constitution of nature present us with a harmony and order which show, that their Creator and Preserver is but one. We see but one will and one intelligence, and therefore there is but one Being. The light of this truth must have been greatly obscured to heathens, who knew not how to account for the admixture of good and evil which are in the world, and many of them therefore supposed both a good and an evil deity. To us, however, who know how to account for this fact from the relation in which man stands to the moral government of an offended Deity, and the connection of this present state with another; and that it is to man a state of correction and discipline; not only is this difficulty removed, but additional proof is afforded, that the Creator and the Ruler of the world is but one Being. If two independent beings of equal power concurred to make the world, the good and the evil would be equal; but the good predominates. — Between the good and the evil there could also be no harmony or connection; but we plainly see evil subjected to the purposes of benevolence, and so to accord with it, which at once removes the objection.

“Of the unity of the Deity,” says Paley, “the proof is the uniformity of plan observable in the universe. The universe itself is a system; each part either depending upon other parts, or being connected with other parts by some common law of motion, or by the presence of some common substance. One principle of gravitation causes a stone to drop toward the earth, and the moon to wheel round it. One law of attraction carries all the different planets about the sun. This, philosophers demonstrate. There are also other points of agreement among them, which may be considered as marks of
the identity of their origin, and of their intelligent author. In all are found the conveniency and stability derived from gravitation. They all experience vicissitudes of days and nights, and changes of season. They all, at least Jupiter, Mars, and Venus, have the same advantages from their atmospheres as we have. In all the planets, the axes of rotation are permanent. Nothing is more probable than that the same attracting influence, acting according to the same rule, reaches to the fixed stars; but if this be only probable, another thing is certain, namely, that the same element of light does. The light from a fixed star affects our eyes in the same manner, is refracted and reflected according to the same laws, as the light of a candle. The velocity of the light of the fixed stars is also the same, as the velocity of the light of the sun, reflected from the satellites of Jupiter. The heat of the sun, in kind, differs nothing from the heat of a coal fire.

“In our own globe the case is clearer. New countries are continually discovered, but the old laws of nature are always found in them; new plants, perhaps, or animals, but always in company with plants and animals which we already know; and always possessing many of the same general properties. We never get among such original or totally different modes of existence, as to indicate that we are come into the province of a different Creator, or under the direction of a different will. In truth, the same order of things attends us wherever we go. The elements act upon one another, electricity operates, the tides rise and fall, the magnetic needle elects its position in one region of the earth and sea as well as in another. One atmosphere invests all parts of the globe and connects all; one sun illuminates; one moon exerts its specific attraction upon all parts. If there be a variety in natural effects, as, for example, in the tides of different seas, that very variety is the result of the same cause, acting under different circumstances. In many cases this is proved; in all, is probable.

“The inspection and comparison of living forms add to this argument examples without number. Of all large terrestrial animals, the structure is very much alike; their senses nearly the same; their natural functions and passions nearly the same; their viscera nearly the same, both in substance, shape, and office; digestion, nutrition, circulation, secretion, go on, in a similar manner, in all; the great
circulating fluid is the same; for I think no difference has been discovered in the properties of blood from whatever animal it be drawn. The experiment of transfusion proves that the blood of one animal will serve for another. The skeletons also of the larger terrestrial animals show particular varieties, but still under a great general affinity. The resemblance is somewhat less, yet sufficiently evident, between quadrupeds and birds. They are all alike in five respects, for one in which they differ.

“In fish, which belong to another department, as it were, of nature, the points of comparison become fewer. But we never lose sight of our analogy; e.g. we still meet with a stomach, a liver, a spine; with bile and blood; with teeth; with eyes, which eyes are only slightly varied from our own, and which variation, in truth demonstrates, not an interruption, but a continuance of the same exquisite plan; for it is the adaptation of the organ to the element, namely, to the different refraction of light passing into the eye out of a denser medium. The provinces, also, themselves of water and earth, are connected by the species of animals which inhabit both; and also by a large tribe of aquatic animals, which closely resemble the terrestrial in their internal structure; I mean the cetaceous tribe which have hot blood, respiring lungs, bowels, and other essential parts, like those of land animals. This similitude surely bespeaks the same creation, and the same Creator.

“Insects and shell fish appear to me to differ from other classes of animals the most widely of any. Yet even here, beside many points of particular resemblance, there exists a general relation of a peculiar kind. It is the relation of inversion; the law of contrariety: namely, that whereas in other animals, the bones to which the muscles are attached lie within the body; in insects and shell fish they lie on the outside of it. The shell of a lobster performs to the animal the office of a bone, by furnishing to the tendons that fixed basis or immovable fulcrum, without which mechanically they could not act. The crust of an insect is its shell, and answers the like purpose. The shell also of an oyster stands in the place of a bone; the basis of the muscles being fixed to it, in the same manner as, in other animals, they are fixed to the bones. All which (under wonderful varieties, indeed, and adaptations of form) confesses an imitation, a remembrance, a carrying on of the same plan.”
If in a large house, wherein are many mansions and a vast variety of inhabitants, there appears exact order, all from the highest to the lowest continually attending their proper business, and all lodged and constantly provided for suitably to their several conditions, we find ourselves obliged to acknowledge one wise economy; and if in a great city or commonwealth there is a perfectly regular administration, so that not only the whole society enjoys an undisturbed peace, but every member has a station assigned him which he is best qualified to fill, the unenvied chiefs constantly attending their more important cares, served by the busy inferiors, who have all a suitable accommodation, and food convenient for them, the very meanest ministering to the public utility, and protected by the public care; — if, I say, in such a community we must conclude there is a ruling council, which if not naturally yet is politically one, and unless united, could not produce such harmony and order; much more have we reason to recognize one governing Intelligence in the earth, in which there are so many ranks of beings disposed of in the most convenient manner, having all their several provinces appointed to them, and their several kinds and degrees of enjoyment, liberally provided for, without encroaching upon, but rather being mutually useful to each other, according to a settled and obvious subordination. What else can account for this but a sovereign wisdom, a common provident nature presiding over, and caring for the whole? (Abernethy’s Sermons.)

The importance of the doctrine of the Divine unity is obvious. The existence of one God is the basis of all true religion. Polytheism confounds and unsettles all moral distinction, divides and destroys obligation, and takes away all sure trust and hope from man. There is one God who created us; we are therefore his property, and bound to him by an absolute obligation of obedience. He is the sole Ruler of the world, and his one immutable will constitutes the one immutable law of our actions, and thus questions of morality are settled on permanent foundations. To him alone we owe repentance, and confession of sin; to one Being alone we are directed to look for pardon, in the method he has appointed; and if he be at peace with us, we need fear the wrath of no other, for he is supreme: we are not at a loss among a crowd of supposed deities, to which of them we shall turn in trouble; he alone receives prayer, and he is the sole and sufficient object of trust. When we know HIM, we know a Being of absolute perfection, and need no other friend or refuge.
Among the discoveries made to us by Divine revelation, we find not only declarations of the *existence* and *unity* of God, but of his nature or *substance*, which is plainly affirmed to be *spiritual*; “*God is a Spirit.*” The sense of the Scriptures in this respect cannot be mistaken. Innumerable passages and allusions in them show, that the terms *spirit* and *body*, or matter, are used in the popular sense for substances of a perfectly distinct kind, and which are manifested by distinct and in many respects opposite and incommunicable properties: that the former only can perceive, think, reason, will, and act; that the latter is passive, percipient, divisible, and corruptible. Under these views, and in this popular language, God is spoken of in Holy Writ. He is *spirit*, not *body*; *mind*, not *matter*. He is pure spirit, unconnected even with bodily form or organs; “*the invisible God, whom no man hath seen nor can see,*” an immaterial, incorruptible, impassible substance, an immense mind or intelligence, self-acting, self-moving, wholly above the perception of bodily sense; free from the imperfections of matter, and all the infirmities of corporeal beings; far more excellent than any finite and created spirits, because their Creator, and therefore styled, “*the Father of spirits,*” and “*the God of the spirits of all flesh.*”

Such is the express testimony of Scripture as to the Divine nature. That the distinction which it holds between matter and spirit should be denied or disregarded by infidel philosophers, is not a matter of surprise, since it is easy and as consistent in them to materialize God as man. But that the attributes of spirit should have been ascribed to matter by those who nevertheless profess to admit the authority of the Biblical revelation, as in the case of the modern Unitarians and some others, is an instance of singular inconsistency. It shows with what daring an unhallowed philosophy will pursue its speculations, and warrants the conclusion, that the Scriptures in such cases are not acknowledged upon their *own proper principles*, but only so far as they are supposed to agree with, or not to oppose the philosophic system which such men may have adopted. For hesitate as they may, to deny the distinction between matter and spirit, is to deny the spirituality of God; and to contradict the distinction which, as to man, is constantly kept up in every part of the Bible, the distinction between flesh and spirit. To assert that consciousness, thought, volition, &c, are the results of organization, is to deny also what the Scripture so expressly affirms, that the souls of men exist in a disembodied state: and that in this disembodied state, not only do they exist, but that they think
and feel, and act without any diminution of their energy or capacity. The immateriality of the Divine Being may therefore be considered as a point of great importance, not only as it affects our views of his nature and attributes; but because when once it is established that there exists a pure Spirit, living, intelligent, and invested with moral properties, the question of the immateriality of the human soul may be considered as almost settled. Those who deny that, must admit that the Deity is material; or if they start at this, they must be convicted of the unphilosophical and absurd attempt to invest a substance allowed to be of an entirely different nature, the body of man, with those attributes of intelligence and volition which, in the case of the Divine Being, they have allowed to be the properties of pure, unembodied spirit. The propositions are totally inconsistent, for they who believe that God is wholly an immaterial, and that man is wholly a material being, admit that spirit is intelligent, and that matter is intelligent. They cannot then be of different essences, and if the premises be followed out to their legitimate conclusion, either that which thinks in man must be allowed to be spiritual, or a material Deity must follow. The whole truth of revelation, both as to God and his creature man, must be acknowledged, or the Atheism of Spinoza and Hobbes must be admitted.

The decision of Scripture on this point is not to be shaken by human reasoning, were it more plausible in its attempt to prove that matter is capable of originating thought, and that mind is a mere result of organization. The evidence from reason is however highly confirmatory of the absolute spirituality of the nature of God, and of the unthinking nature of matter.

If we allow a First Cause at all, we must allow that cause to be intelligent. This has already been proved, from the design and contrivance manifested in his works. The first argument for the spirituality of God is therefore drawn from his intelligence, and it rests upon this principle, that intelligence is not a property of matter.

With material substance we are largely acquainted; and as to the great mass of material bodies, we have the means of knowing that they are wholly unintelligent. This cannot be denied of every unorganized portion of matter. Its essential properties are found to be solidity, extension, divisibility, mobility, passiveness, &c. In all its forms and mutations, from the granite rock to the yielding atmosphere and the rapid lightning, these essential properties are discovered; they take an infinite variety of
accidental modes, but give no indication of intelligence, or approach to intelligence. If then to know be a property of matter, it is clearly not an essential property, inasmuch as it is agreed by all, that vast masses of this substance exist without this property, and it follows, that it must be an accidental one. This therefore would be the first absurdity into which those would be driven who suppose the Divine nature to be material, that as intelligence, if allowed to be a property of matter, is an accidental and not an essential property, on this theory it would be possible to conceive of the existence of a Deity without any intelligence at all. For take away any property from a subject which is not essential to it, and its essence still remains; and if intelligence, which in this view is but an accidental attribute of Deity, were annihilated, a Deity without perception, thought, or knowledge, would still remain. So monstrous a conclusion shows, that if a God be at all allowed, the absolute spirituality of his nature must inevitably follow. For if we cannot suppose a Deity without intelligence, then do we admit intelligence to be one of his essential attributes; and, as it is easy for every one to observe that this is not an essential property of matter, the substance to which it is essential cannot be material.

If the unthinking nature of unorganized matter furnishes an argument in favour of the spirituality of Deity, the attempt to prove from the fact of intelligence being found in connection with matter in an organized form, that intelligence, under certain modifications, is a property of matter, may from its fallacy be also made to yield its evidence in favour of the truth.

The position assumed is, that intelligence is the result of material organization. This at least is not true of every form of organized matter. Of the unintelligent character of vegetables we have the same evidence as of the earth on which we tread. The organization therefore which is assumed to be the cause of thought, is that which is found in animals; and to use the argument of Dr. Priestley, “the powers of sensation, or perception, and thought, as belonging to man, not having been found but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter, the conclusion is that they depend upon such a system.” It need not now be urged, that constant connection does not imply necessary connection; and that sufficient reasons may be given to prove the connection alleged to be accidental and arbitrary. It is sufficient in the first instance to deny this supposed constant connection between intellectual properties and systems of animal organization; and thus to take away entirely the foundation of the argument.
Man is to be considered in two states, that of life, and that of death: In one he thinks, and in the other he ceases to think; and yet for some time after death, in many cases, the organization of the human frame continues as perfect as before. All do not die of organic disease, Death by suffocation, and other causes, is often effected without any visible violence being done to the brain, or any other of the most delicate organs. This is a well established fact; for the most accurate anatomical observation is not able to discover, in such cases as we have referred to, the slightest organic derangement. The machine has been stopped, but the machine itself has suffered no injury; and from the period of death to the time when the matter of the body begins to submit to the laws of chemical decomposition, its organization is as perfect as dining life. If an opponent replies, that organic violence must have been sustained, though it is indiscernible, he begs the question, and assumes that thought must depend upon organization, the very point in dispute. If more modest, he says, that the organs may have suffered, he can give no proof of it; appearances are all against him. And if he argues from the phenomenon of the connection of thought with organization, grounding himself upon what is visible to observation only, the argument is completely repulsed by an appeal in like manner to the fact, that the organization of the animal frame can be often exhibited, visibly unimpaired by those causes which have produced death, and yet incapable of thought and intelligence. The conclusion therefore is, that mere organization cannot be the cause of intelligence, since it is plain that precisely the same state of the organs shall often be found before and after death; and yet, without any violence having been done to them, in one moment man shall be actually intelligent, and in the next incapable of a thought. So far then from the connection between mental phenomena, and the arrangement of matter in the animal structure being “constant,” the ground of the argument of Priestley and other materialists; it is often visibly broken; for a perfect organization of the animal remains after perception has become extinct.

In support of this argument, we may urge the representations of Scripture, upon that class of materialists who have not proceeded to the full length of denying its authority. Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth, the organism of his frame was therefore complete, before he became “a living soul.” God breathed into him “the breath of lives,” and whatever different persons may understand by that inspiration it certainly was not an organizing operation. The man was first formed or organized, and then life
was imparted. Before the animating breath was inspired, he was not intelligent, because he lived not; yet the organization was complete before either life or the power of perception was imparted; thought did not arise out of his organic structure, as an effect from its cause.

The doctrine that mere organization is the cause of perception, &c, being clearly untenable, we shall probably be told, that the subject supposed in the argument, is a *living* organized being. If so, then the proof that matter can think drawn from organization is given up, and another cause of the phenomenon of intelligence is introduced. This is *life*, and the argument will be considerably altered. It will no longer be, as we have before quoted it from Dr. Priestley, “that the powers of sensation or perception and thought, never having been found but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter, the conclusion is that they depend upon such a system;” but that these powers not having been found but in conjunction with animal *life*, they depend upon that as their cause.

What then is *life*, which is thus exhibited as the cause of intelligence, and as the proof that matter is capable of perception and thought? In its largest and commonly received sense, it is that inherent activity which distinguishes vegetable and animal bodies from the soils in which the former grow, and on which the latter tread. A vegetable is said to live, because it has motion within itself, and is capable of absorption, secretion, nutrition, growth, and the reproduction of its kind. With all this it exhibits no mental phenomena, no sensation, no consciousness, no volition, no reflection; in a word, it is utterly unintelligent. We have here a proof then as satisfactory as our argument from organization, that *life*, at least life of any kind, is not the cause of intelligence, for in ten thousand instances we see it existing in bodies to which it imparts no mental properties at all.

If then it be said that the life intended as the cause of intelligence is not *vegetable*, but *animal* life, the next step in the inquiry is, in what the life of an animal differs from that of a vegetable; and if we go into the camp of the enemy himself, we shall find him laying it down, that to animals a double life belongs, the *organic* and the *animal*, the former of which animals, and even man, has only in common with the vegetable. One modification of life, says Bichat, (upon whose scheme our modern materialists have modelled their arguments,) is common to vegetables and animals, the other peculiar to the latter. “Compare together two individuals, one taken from each of these kingdoms: one exists only within itself, has no other relations to
external objects than those of nutrition; is born, grows, and perishes, attached to the soil which received its germ. The other joins to this internal life, which it possesses in a still higher degree, an external life, which establishes numerous relations between it and the neighbouring objects, unites its existence to that of other beings, and draws it near to, or removes it from them, according to its wants and fears.” (Recherches sur la vie et la mort.) This is only in other words to say, that there is one kind of life in man, which, as in the vegetable, is the cause of growth, circulation, assimilation, nutrition, excretion, and similar functions; and another on which depend sensation, the passions, will, memory, and other attributes which we attribute to spirit. We have gained then by this distinction another step in the argument. There is a life common to animals and to vegetables. Whether this be simple mechanism or something more, matters nothing to the conclusion; it confers neither sensation, nor volition, nor reason. That life in men, and in the inferior animals, which is common to them and to vegetables, called, by Bichat and his followers, organic life, is evidently not the cause of intelligence.

What then is that higher species of life called animal life, on which we are told our mental powers depend? And here the French materialist, whose notions have been so readily adopted into our own schools of physiology, shall speak for himself. “The functions of the animal form two distinct classes. One of these consists of an habitual succession of assimilation and concretion, by which it is constantly transforming into its own substance the particles of other bodies, and then rejecting them when they have become useless. By the other he perceives surrounding objects; reflects on his sensations, performs voluntary motions under their influence, and generally communicates, by the voice, his pleasures or pains; his desires or fears.” “The assembled functions of the second class form the animal life.”

This strange definition of life has been adopted by Lawrence, and other disciples of the French school of materialism; but its absurdity as a definition is obvious, and could only have been adopted as a veil of words to hide a conclusion fatal to the favourite system. So far from being a definition of life, it is no more than a description of the “functions” of a vital principle or power, whatever that power or principle may be. Function is a manner in which any power develops itself, or as Lawrence, the disciple of Bichat, has properly expressed it, “a mode of action;” and to say that an assemblage of the modes in which any thing acts, is that
which acts, or “forms” that which acts, is the greatest possible trifling and folly.

But Bichat is not the only one of modern materialists who refuse honestly to pursue the inquiry, “what is life?” when even affecting to describe or defend it. Cuvier, another great authority in the same school, at one time says, that be life what it may, it cannot be what the vulgar suppose it, a particular principle. (Principe particulier.) In another place he acknowledges that life can proceed only from life. (La vie naît que de la vie.) Then again he considers it an internal principle; (un principe interieur d’entretien et de reparation;) and last of all says, what Mr. Lawrence has since repeated verbatim, that life consists in the sum total of all the functions. (Il consiste dans l’ensemble des functions qui servent a nourir le corps, c’est a dire la digestion, l’absorption, la circulation, &c.) Thus he makes life a cause which owes its existence to its own operations, and consequently a cause which, had it not operated to produce itself, had never operated nor existed at all! (Vide Medical Review, Sept. 1822, Art. 1.) “It is truly pitiful,” says a physiologist of other opinions, “to think of a man with so many endowments, natural and acquired, driven as if blindfold by the fashion of the times, a contemptible vanity, or some wretched inclination, endeavouring to support with all his energy the extravagant idea that the phenomena of design and intelligence displayed in the form and structure of his species might have been the effects of some impulse or motion, or of some group of functions, as digestion, circulation, respiration, &c, which have accidentally happened to meet without any assignable cause to bring them together, to hold them together, or to direct them.” (Dr. Barclay on Life and Organization.)

These and many other examples are in proof, that the cause of vital properties cannot, we do not say be explained, but cannot even be indicated on the material system; and we are no nearer, for any thing which these physiologists say, to any satisfactory account of that life which is peculiar to animals and which has been distinguished from the organic life that is common to them and to vegetables. It is not the result of organization, for that “is no living principle, no active cause.” “An organ is an instrument. Organization therefore is nothing more than a system of parts so constructed and arranged as to co-operate to one common purpose. It is an arrangement of instruments, and there must be something beyond to bring these instruments into action.” (Rennell’s Remarks on Skepticism.) If life cannot therefore be organization or the effect of it, it is
not that inherent, mechanical, and chemical motion which is called life in vegetables, and which the physiologists have decided to be the same kind of life which they call organic in animals; for even the materialist acknowledges that to be a different species of life in animals, on which sensation, volition, and passion depend. What then is it? It is not a material substance; in that all agree. It is not the material effect of the material cause, organization; that has been shown to be absurd. It is not that mechanical and chemical inherent motion which performs so many functions in vegetables and in animals, so far as they have it in common with them; for no sensation or other mental phenomena are allowed to result from these. It is therefore plainly no material cause and no effect of matter at all; for no other hypothesis remains but that which places its source in an immaterial subject, operating upon and by material organs. For, to quote from a writer just mentioned, “that there is some invisible agent in every living organized system, seems to be an inference to which we are led almost irresistibly. When we see an animal starting from its sleep, contrary to the known laws of gravitation, without an external or elastic impulse, without the appearance of electricity, galvanism, magnetism, or chemical attraction: when we see it afterward moving its limbs in various directions, with different degrees of force and velocity, sometimes suspending and sometimes renewing the same motions, at the sound of a word or the sight of a shadow, can we refrain a moment from thinking that the cause of these phenomena is internal, that it is something different from the body, and that the several bodily organs are nothing more than the mere instruments which it employs in its operations? Not instruments indeed that can be manufactured, purchased, or exchanged, or that can at pleasure be varied in form, position, number, proportion, or magnitude; not instruments whose motions are dependent upon an external impulse, on gravity, elasticity, magnetism, galvanism, on electricity or chemical attraction; but instruments of a peculiar nature, instruments that grow, that are moved by the will, and which can be regulated and kept in repair by no agent but the one for which they were primarily destined; instruments so closely related to that agent, that they cannot be injured, handled or breathed upon, approached by cold, by wind, by rain, without exciting in it certain sensations of pleasure or of pain; sensations which, if either unusual or excessive, are generally accompanied with joy or grief, hopes or alarms: instruments, in short, that exert so constant and powerful reaction on the agent that employs them, that they modify almost every phenomenon which it exhibits, and to such an extent, that no person can
confidently say what would be the effect of its energies if deprived of instruments; or what would be the effect of its energies if furnished with instruments of a different species, or if furnished with instruments of different materials, less dependent on external circumstances, and less subject to the laws of gross and inert matter.” (Barclay on Life and Organization.)

Life, then, whether organic or animal, is not the cause of intelligence, and thus all true reasoning upon these phenomena brings us to the philosophy of the Scriptures, that the presence of an immaterial soul with the body, is the source of animal life; and that the separation of the soul from the body is that circumstance which causes death. Farther proofs however are not wanting, that matter is incapable of thought and that its various qualities are inconsistent with mental phenomena.

“Extension is a universal quality of matter; being that cohesion and continuity of its parts by which a body occupies space. The idea of extension is gained by our external senses of sight and of touch. But thought is neither visible nor tangible, it occupies no external space, it has no contiguous or cohering parts. A mind enlarged by education and science, a memory stored with the richest treasures of varied knowledge, occupies no more space than that of the meanest and most illiterate rustic.

“In body again we find a *vis inertiae*, that is, a certain quality by which it resists any change in its present state. We know by experiment, that a body, when it has received an impulse, will persevere in a direct course and a uniform velocity, until its motion shall be either disturbed or retarded by some external power; and again, that, being at rest, it will remain so for ever, unless motion shall have been communicated to it from without. Since matter therefore necessarily resists all change of its present state, its motion and its rest are purely passive; spontaneous motion, therefore, must have some other origin. Nor is this spontaneous motion to be attributed to the simple powers of life, for we have seen that in the life of vegetation there is no spontaneous motion; the plant has no power either to remove itself out of the position in which it is fixed, or even to accelerate or retard the motion which takes place within it. Nor has man himself, in a sleep perfectly sound, the power of locomotion any more than a plant, nor any
command over the various active processes which are going on within his own body. But when he is awake, he will rise from his resting place — if mere matter, whether living or dead were concerned, he would have remained there like a plant or a stone for ever. He will walk forward — he will change his course — he will stop. Can matter, even though endowed with the life of vegetation, perform any such acts as these? Here is motion fairly begun without any external impulse, and stopped without any external obstacle. The activity of a plant, on the contrary, is neither spontaneous nor locomotive; it is derived in regular succession from parent substances, and it can be stopped only by external obstacles, such as the disturbance of the organization. A mass even of living matter requires something beyond its own powers to overcome the vis inertiae which still distinguishes it, and to produce active and spontaneous motion.

“Hardness and impenetrability are qualities of matter; but no one of common sense, without a very palpable metaphor, could ever consider them as the properties of thought.

“There is another property of matter, which is, if possible, still more inconsistent with thought than any of the former, I mean its divisibility. Let us take any material substance, the brain, the heart, or any other body; which we would have endowed with thought, and inquire of what is this substance composed. It is the aggregate of an indefinite number of separable and separate parts. Now the experience of what passes within our minds will inform us, that unity is essential to a thinking being. That consciousness which establishes the one individual being, which every man knows himself to be, cannot, without a contradiction in terms, be separated, or divided. No man can think in two separate places at the same time: nor, again, is his consciousness made up of a number of separate consciousesses; as the solidity, the colour, and motion of the whole body is made up of the distinct solidities, colours, and motions of its parts. As a thinking and a conscious being, then, man must be essentially one. As a partaker of the life of vegetation he is separable into ten thousand different parts. If then it is the brain of a man which is conscious and thinks, his consciousness and thought must be made up of as many separate parts as there are particles in its material substance, which is
contrary to common sense and experience. Whatever, therefore, our thought may be, or in whatever it may reside, it is essentially indivisible; and, therefore, wholly inconsistent with the divisibility of a material substance.

“From every quality, therefore, of matter, with which we are acquainted, we shall be warranted in concluding, that without a contradiction in terms, it cannot be pronounced capable of thought. A thinking substance may be combined with a stone, a tree, or an animal body, but not one of the three can of itself become a thinking being.” (*Rennell on Skepticism.*)

“The notions we annex to the words, MATTER and MIND, as is well remarked by Dr. Reid, are merely relative. If I am asked, what I mean by matter? I can only explain myself by saying, it is that which is extended, figured, coloured, movable, hard or soft, rough or smooth, hot or cold; — that is, I can define it in no other way than by enumerating its sensible qualities. It is not matter or body which I perceive by my senses; but only extension, figure, colour, and certain other qualities, which the constitution of my nature leads me to refer to something which is extended, figured, and coloured. The case is precisely similar with respect to mind. We are not immediately conscious of its existence, but we are conscious of sensation, thought, and volition; operations which imply the existence of something which feels, thinks, and wills. Every man too is impressed with an irresistible conviction, that all these sensations, thoughts, and volitions, belong to one and the same being; to that being, which he calls himself; a being which he is led, by the constitution of his nature, to consider as something distinct from his body, and as not liable to be impaired by the loss or mutilation of any of his organs.

“From these considerations, it appears that we have the same evidence for the existence of mind, that we have for the existence of body; nay, if there be any difference between the two cases, that we have stronger evidence for it; inasmuch as the one is suggested to us by the subjects of our own consciousness, and the other merely by the objects of our perceptions.” (*Stewart’s Essays.*)

Farther observations on the immateriality of the human soul will be adduced in their proper place. The reason why the preceding argument on
this subject has been here introduced, is not only that the spirituality of the Divine nature might be established by proving that *intelligence* is not a material attribute; but to keep in view the connection between the spirituality of *God*, and that of *man*, who was made in his image; and to show the relation which also exists between the doctrine of the materialism of the human soul, and absolute Atheism, and thus to hold out a warning against such speculations. There is no middle course in fact, though one may be effected. If we materialize man, we must materialize God, or, in other words, deny a First Cause, one of whose *essential* attributes is intelligence, it is then of little consequence what scheme of Atheism is adopted. On the other hand, if we allow spirituality to God, it follows as a necessary corollary, that we must allow it to man. These doctrines stand or fall together.

On a subject which arises out of the foregoing discussion, a single observation will be sufficient. It is granted that, on the premises laid down, not only must an immaterial principle be allowed to man, but to all animals possessed of volition; and few, perhaps none, are found without this property. But though this has often been urged as an objection, it can cost the believer in revelation nothing to admit it. It strengthens, and does not weaken his argument; and it is perfectly in accordance with Scripture, which speaks of “the soul of a beast,” as well as of “the soul of man.” Vastly, nay, we might say, infinitely different are they in the *class* and degree of their powers, though of the same spiritual essence; but they have both properties which cannot be attributed to matter. It does not, however, follow that they are *immortal*, because they are *immaterial*. The truth is, that God only hath independent immortality, because he only is self-existent, and neither human nor brute souls are of *necessity* immortal. God hath given this privilege to man, not by a necessity of nature, which would be incompatible with dependence, but by his own will, and the continuance of his sustaining power. But he seems to have denied it to the inferior animals, and according to the language of Scripture, “the spirit of a beast goeth downward.” The doctrine of the *natural* immortality of man, will, however, be considered in its proper place.
CHAPTER 3. — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD — ETERNITY — OMNIPOTENCE — UBIQUITY.

FROM the Scriptures we have learned, that there is one God, the Creator of all things, and consequently living and intelligent. The demonstrations of this truth, which surround us in the works of nature, have been also adverted to. By the same sacred revelations we have also been taught, that, as to the Divine essence, God is a Spirit; and in the farther manifestations they have made of him, we learn, that as all things were made by him, he was before all things: that their being is dependent, his independent; that he is eminently BEING, according to his own peculiar appellation “I AM;” self-existent, and ETERNAL. In the Scripture doctrine of God, we, however, not only find it asserted that God had no beginning, but that he shall have no end. Eternity ad partem post is ascribed to him, for in the most absolute sense, he hath “immortality,” and he “only” hath it, by virtue of the inherent perfection of his nature. It is this which completes those sublime and impressive views of the eternity of God, with which the revelation he has been pleased to make of himself abounds. “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.” He “inhabiteth eternity,” fills and occupies the whole round of boundless duration, and “is the first and the last.”

In these representations of the eternal existence and absolute immortality of the Divine Being, something more than the mere idea of infinite duration is conveyed. No creature can, without contradiction, be supposed to have been from eternity; but even a creature may be supposed to continue to exist for ever, in as strict a sense as God himself will continue to exist for ever. Its existence, however, being originally dependent and derived, must continue so. It is not, so to speak, in its nature to live, or it would never have been non-existent; and what it has not from itself, it has received, and must through every moment of actual existence receive from its Maker. But the very phrase in which the Scriptures speak of the eternity of God, suggests a meaning deeper than that of mere duration. They contrast the stability of the Divine existence with the vanishing and changing nature of
all his works, and represent them as reposing upon him for support, while
he not only depends not upon any, but rests upon himself. He lives by
virtue of his nature, and is essentially unchangeable. For to the nature of
that which exists without cause, life must be essential. In him who is “the
fountain of life,” there can be no principle of decay. There can be no desire
to cease to be, in him who is perfectly blessed, because of the unbounded
excellence of his nature. To him existence must be the source of infinite
enjoyment, both from the contemplation of his own designs, and the
manifestation of his glory, purity, and benevolence, to the intelligent
creatures he has made to know and to be beatified by such discoveries and
benefits. No external power can control, or in any way affect his felicity,
his perfection or his being. Such are the depths of glory and peculiarity into
which the Divine eternity, as stated in the Scriptures, leads the wondering
mind; and of which the wisest of heathens, who ascribed immortality to
one, or to many gods, had no conception. They were ever fancying
something out of God, as the cause of their immortal being; fate, or
external necessity, or some similar and vague notion, which obscured, as to
them, one of the peculiar glories of the “eternal power and Godhead,” who
of and from his own essential nature, IS, and WAS, and SHALL BE.

Some apprehensions of this great truth are seen in the sayings of a few of
the Greek sages, though much obscured by their other notions. Indeed, that
appropriate name of God, so venerated among the Jews, the nomen
tetragrammaton, which we render JEHOVAH, was known among the
heathens to be the name under which the Jews worshipped the supreme
God; and “from this Divine name,” says Parkhurst, sub voce, “the ancient
Greeks had their IH IH in their invocation of the gods. It expresses not the
attributes, but the essence of God, which was the reason why the Jews
deemed it ineffable. The Septuagint translators preserved the same idea in
the word Κυρίος, by which they translated it, from κυρω, sum, I am. This
word is said by critics not to be classically used to signify God, which
would mark the peculiarity of this appellation in the Septuagint version
more strongly, and convey something of the great idea of the self, or
absolute existence ascribed to the Divine nature in the Hebrew Scriptures,
to those of the heathen philosophers who met with that translation. That it
could not be passed over unnoticed, we may gather from St. Hilary, who
says, that before his conversion to Christianity, meeting with this
appellation of God in the Pentateuch, he was struck with admiration,
nothing being so proper to God as to be. Among the Jews, however, the
import of this stupendous name was preserved unimpaired by metaphysical speculations. It was registered in their sacred books: from the fulness of its meaning the loftiest thoughts are seen to spring up in the minds of the prophets, which amplify with an awful and mysterious grandeur their descriptions of his peculiar glories, in contrast with the vain gods of the heathen, and with every actual existence, however exalted, in heaven and in earth.

On this subject of the eternal duration of the Divine Being, many have held a metaphysical refinement. “The eternal existence of God,” it is said, “is not to be considered as successive; the ideas we gain from time are not to be allowed in our conceptions of his duration. As he fills all space with his immensity, he fills all duration with his eternity; and with him eternity is nunc stans, a permanent now, incapable of the relations of past, present, and future.” Such, certainly, is not the view given us of this mysterious subject in the Scriptures; and if it should be said that they speak popularly, and are accommodated to the infirmity of the thoughts of the body of mankind, we may reply, that philosophy has not, with all its boasting of superior light, carded our views on this attribute of the Divine nature at all beyond the revelation; and, in attempting it, has only obscured the conceptions of its disciples. “Filling duration with his eternity” is a phrase without any meaning: “For how can any man conceive a permanent instant, which co-exists with a perpetually flowing duration? One might as well apprehend a mathematical point co-extended with a line, a surface, and all dimensions.” (Abernethy’s Sermons.) As this notion has, however, been made the basis of some opinions, which will be remarked upon in their proper place, it may be proper briefly to examine it.

Whether we get our idea of time from the motion of bodies without us, or from the consciousness of the succession of our own ideas, or both, is not important to this inquiry. Time, in our conceptions, is divisible. The artificial divisions are years, months, days, minutes, seconds, &c. We can conceive of yet smaller portions of duration, and whether we have given to them artificial names or not, we can conceive no otherwise of duration, than continuance of being, estimated as to degree, by this artificial admeasurement, and therefore as substantially answering to it. It is not denied but that duration is something distinct from these its artificial measures; yet of this every man’s consciousness will assure him, that we can form no idea of duration except in this successive manner. But we are told, that the eternity of God is a fixed eternal now, from which all ideas of
succession, of past and future, are to be excluded; and we are called upon to conceive of eternal duration without reference to past or future, and to the exclusion of the idea of that flow under which we conceive of time. The proper abstract idea of duration is, however, simple continuance of being, without any reference to the exact degree or extent of it, because in no other way can it be equally applicable to all the substances of which it is the attribute. It may be finite or infinite, momentary or eternal, but that depends upon the substance of which it is the quality, and not upon its own nature. Our own observation and experience teach us how to apply it to ourselves. As to us, duration is dependent and finite; as to God, it is infinite; but in both cases the originality or dependence, the finity or infinity of it, arises not out of the nature of duration itself, but out of other qualities of the subjects respectively.

Duration, then, as applied to God, is no more than an extension of the idea as applied to ourselves; and to exhort us to conceive of it as something essentially different, is to require us to conceive what is inconceivable. It is to demand of us to think without ideas. Duration is continuance of existence, continuance of existence is capable of being longer or shorter, and hence necessarily arises the idea of the succession of the minutest points of duration into which we can conceive it divided. Beyond this the mind cannot go, it forms the idea of duration no other way; and if what we call duration be any thing different from this in God, it is not duration, properly so called, according to human ideas; it is something else, for which there is no name among men, because there is no idea, and therefore it is impossible to reason about it. As long as metaphysicians use the term, they must take the idea: if they spurn the idea, they have no right to the term, and ought at once to confess that they can go no farther. Dr. Cudworth defines infinity Of duration to be nothing else but perfection, as including in it necessary existence and immutability. This, it is true, is as much a definition of the moon, as of infinity of duration; but it is valuable, as it shows that, in the view of this great man, though an advocate of the *nunc stans*, the standing now of eternity, we must abandon the term duration, if we give up the only idea under which it can be conceived.

It follows from this, therefore, that either we must apply the term duration to the Divine Being in the same sense in which we apply it to creatures, with the extension of the idea to a duration which has no bounds and limits, or blot it out of our creeds, as a word to which our minds, with all the aid they may derive from the labours of metaphysicians, can attach no
meaning. The only notion which has the appearance of an objection to this successive duration, as applied to him, appears wholly to arise from confounding two very distinct things; succession in the duration, and change in the substance. Dr. Cudsorth appears to have fallen into this error. He speaks of the duration of an imperfect nature, as sliding from the present to the future, expecting something of itself which is not yet in being, and of a perfect nature being essentially immutable, having a permanent and unchanging duration, never losing any thing of itself once present, nor yet running forward to meet something of itself which is not yet in being. Now, though this is a good description of a perfect and immutable nature, it is no description at all of an eternally-enduring nature. Duration implies no loss in the substance of any being, nor addition to it. A perfect nature never loses any thing of itself, nor expects more of itself than is possessed; but this does not arise from the attribute of its duration, however that attribute may be conceived of, but from its perfection, and consequent immutability. These attributes do not flow from the duration, but the extent of the duration from them. The argument is clearly good for nothing, unless it could be proved, that successive duration necessarily implies change in the nature; but that is contradicted by the experience of finite beings — their natures are not at all determined by their duration, but their duration by their natures; and they exist for a moment, or for ages, according to the nature which their Maker has impressed upon them. If it be said that, at least, successive duration imports that a being loses past duration, and expects the arrival of future existence, we reply, that this is no imperfection at all. Even finite creatures do not feel it to be an imperfection to have existed, and to look for continued and interminable being. It is true, with the past, we lose knowledge and pleasure; and expecting in all future periods increase of knowledge and happiness, we are reminded by that of our present imperfection; but this imperfection does not arise from our successive and flowing duration, and we never refer it to that. It is not the past which takes away our knowledge and pleasure; nor future duration, simply considered, which will confer the increase of both. Our imperfections arise out of the essential nature of our being, not out of the manner in which our being is continued. It is not the flow of our duration, but the flow of our natures which produces these effects. On the contrary, we think that the idea of our successive duration, that is, of continuance, is an excellency, and not a defect. Let all ideas of continuance be banished from the mind, let these be to us a nunc semper stans, during the whole of our being, and we appear to gain nothing — our pleasures
surely are not diminished by the idea of long continuance being added to present enjoyment; that they have been, and, still remain, and will continue, on the contrary, greatly heightens them. Without the idea of a flowing duration, we could have no such measure of the continuance of our pleasures, and this we should consider an abatement of our happiness. What is so obvious an excellency in the spirit of man, and in angelic natures, can never be thought an imperfection in God, when joined with a nature essentially perfect and immutable.

But it may be said, that eternal duration, considered as successive, is only an artificial manner of measuring, and conceiving of duration; and is no more eternal duration itself than minutes and moments, the artificial measures of time, are time itself. Were this granted, the question would still be, whether there is any thing in duration, considered generally, or in time considered specially, which corresponds to these artificial methods of measuring, and conceiving of them. The ocean is measured by leagues; but the extension of the ocean, and the measure of it, are distinct. They, nevertheless, answer to each other. Leagues are the nominal divisions of an extended surface, but there is a real extension, which answers to the artificial conception and admeasurement of it. In like manner, days, and hours, and moments, are the measures of time; but there is either something in time which answers to these measures, or not only the measure, but the thing itself is artificial — an imaginary creation. If any man will contend, that the period of duration which we call time, is nothing, no farther dispute can be held with him, and he may be left to deny also the existence of matter, and to enjoy his philosophic revel in an ideal world. We apply the same argument to duration generally, whether finite or infinite. Minutes and moments, or smaller portions, for which we have no name, may be artificial, adopted to aid our conceptions; but conceptions of what? Not of any thing standing still, but of something going on. Of duration we have no other conception; and if there be nothing in nature which answers to this conception, then is duration itself imaginary, and we discourse about nothing. If the duration of the Divine Being admits not of past, present, and future, one of these two consequences must follow, — that no such attribute as that of eternity belongs to him, — or that there is no power in the human mind to conceive of it. In either case the Scriptures are greatly impugned; for “He who was, and is, and is to come,” is a revelation of the eternity of God, which is then in no sense true. It is not
true if used literally; and it is as little so if the language be figurative, for
the figure rests on no basis, it illustrates nothing, it misleads.

God is OMNIPOTENT: Of this attribute also we have the most ample
revelation, and in the most impressive and sublime language. From the
annunciation in the Scriptures of a Divine existence who was “in the
beginning” before all things, the very first step is the display of his almighty
power in the creation out of nothing, and the immediate arrangement in
order and perfection, of the “heaven and the earth;” by which is meant
not this globe only with its atmosphere, or even with its own celestial
system, but the universe itself; for “he made the stars also.” We are thus
placed at once in the presence of an agent of unbounded power, “the strict
and correct conclusion being, that a power which could create such a
world as this, must be beyond all comparison, greater than any which we
experience in ourselves, than any which we observe in other visible agents,
greater also than any which we can want for our individual protection and
preservation, in the Being upon whom we depend; a power likewise to
which we are not authorized by our observation or knowledge to assign
any limits of space or duration.” (Paley.)

That the sacred writers should so frequently dwell upon the omnipotence
of God, has an important reason which arises out of the very design of that
revelation which they were the instruments of communicating to mankind.
Men were to be reminded of their obligations to obedience, and God is
therefore constantly exhibited as the Creator, the Preserver, and Lord of all
things. His reverent worship and fear was to be enjoined upon them, and by
the manifestation of his works the veil was withdrawn from his glory and
majesty. Idolatry was to be checked and reproved, and the true God was
thus placed in contrast with the limited and powerless gods of the heathen.
“Among the gods of the nations, is there no god like unto thee, neither are
there any works like thy works.” Finally, he was to be exhibited as the
object of trust to creatures, constantly reminded by experience of their own
infirmity and dependence, and to whom it was essential to know, that his
power was absolute, unlimited, and irresistible.

In the revelation which was thus designed to awe and control the bad, and
to afford strength of mind and consolation to the good under all
circumstances, the omnipotence of God is therefore placed in a great
variety of impressive views, and connected with the most striking
illustrations.
It is presented by the fact of creation, the creation of beings out of nothing, which itself, though it had been confined to a single object, however minute, exceeds finite comprehension, and overwhelms the faculties. This with God required no effort — “He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.” The vastness and variety of his works enlarge the conception. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work.” “He spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; he maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; he doeth great things, past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in the thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them; he hath compassed the waters with bounds until the day and night come to an end.” The ease with which he sustains, orders, and controls the most powerful and unruly of the elements, presents his omnipotence under an aspect of ineffable dignity and majesty. “By him all things consist.” He brake up for the sea “a decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” “He looketh to the end of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds, to weigh the waters by measure, to make a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder.” “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the winds in a balance?” The descriptions of the Divine power are often terrible. “The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof; he divideth the sea by his power.” “He removeth the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger, he shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; he commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars.” The same absolute subjection of creatures to his dominion is seen among the intelligent inhabitants of the material universe, and angels, men the most exalted, and evil spirits, are swayed with as much ease as the least resistless elements. “He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” They veil their faces before his throne, and acknowledge themselves his servants. “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers,” “as the dust of the balance, less than nothing and vanity.” “He bringeth princes to nothing.” “He setteth up one and putteth down another,” “for the kingdom is the Lord’s, and he is governor among the nations.” “The angels that sinned, he
cast down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be
reserved unto judgment.” The closing scenes of this world complete these
transepted conceptions of the majesty and power of God. The dead of all
ages shall rise from their graves at his voice; and the sea shall give up the
dead which are in it. Before his face heaven and earth flee away, the stars
fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven are shaken. The dead, small
and great, stand before God, and are divided as a shepherd divideth his
sheep from the goats; the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but
the righteous into life eternal.

Of these amazing views of the omnipotence of God, spread almost through
evety page of the Scripture, the power lies in their truth. They are not
eastern exaggerations, mistaken for sublimity. Every thing in nature
answers to them, and renews from age to age the energy of the impression
which they cannot but make upon the reflecting mind. The order of the
astral revolutions indicates the constant presence of all invisible but
incomprehensible power: — the seas hurl the weight of their billows upon
the rising shores, but every where find a “bound fixed by a perpetual
decree;” — the tides reach their height; if they flowed on for a few hours,
the earth would change places with the bed of the sea; but under an
invisible control they become refluent. “He toucheth the mountains and
they smoke,” is not mere imagery. Every volcano is a testimony of that
truth to nature which we find in the Scriptures; and earthquakes teach, that
before him, “the pillars of the world tremble.” Men collected into armies,
and populous nations, give us vast ideas of human power: but let an army
be placed amidst the sand storms and burning winds of the desert, as, in the
east, has frequently happened: or before “his frost,” as in our own day, in
Russia, where one of the mightiest armaments was seen retreating before,
or perishing under an unexpected visitation of snow and storm; or let the
utterly helpless state of a populous country which has been visited by
famine, or by a resistless pestilential disease, be reflected upon, and it is no
figure of speech to say, that “all nations are before him less than nothing
and vanity.”

Nor in reviewing this doctrine of Scripture, ought the fine practical uses
made of the omnipotence of God, by the sacred writers, to be overlooked.
In them there is nothing said for the display of knowledge, as, too often, in
heathen writers; no speculation without a moral subservient to it, and that
by evident design. To excite and keep alive in man the fear and worship of
God, and to bring him to a felicitous confidence in that almighty power
which pervades and controls all things, we have observed, are the reasons for those ample displays of the omnipotence of God, which roll through the sacred volume with a sublimity that inspiration only could supply. "Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvellous works among all nations; for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Glory and honour are in his presence, and strength and gladness in his place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? If God be for us, who then can be against us? Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.” Thus, as one observes, “our natural fears, of which we must have many, remit us to God, and remind us, since we know what God is, to lay hold on his almighty power.”

Ample however as are the views afforded us in Scripture of the power of God, we are not to consider the subject as bounded by them. As when the Scriptures declare the eternity of God, they declare it so as to unveil to us something of that fearful peculiarity of the Divine nature, that he is the fountain of being to himself, and that he is eternal, because he is the “I AM;” so we are taught not to measure his omnipotence by the actual displays of it which have been made. They are the manifestations of the principle, but not the measure of its capacity; and should we resort to the discoveries of modern philosophy, which, by the help of instruments, has so greatly enlarged the known boundaries of the visible universe, and add to the stars, visible to the naked eye, new exhibitions of the Divine power in those nebulous appearances of the heavens which are resolvable into myriads of distinct celestial luminaries, whose immense distances commingle their light before it reaches our eyes; we thus almost infinitely expand the circle of created existence, and enter upon a formerly unknown and overwhelming range of Divine operation; but we are still reminded, that his power is truly almighty and measureless — “Lo, all these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is known of him, and the thunder of his power who can understand?” It is a mighty conception to think of a power from which all other power is derived, and to which it is subordinate; which nothing can oppose; which can beat down and annihilate all other powers whatever; a power which operates in the most perfect manner; at once, in an instant, with the utmost ease: but the Scriptures lead us to the contemplation of greater depths, and those unfathomable. The
omnipotence of God is inconceivable and boundless. It arises from the infinite perfection of God, that his power can never be actually exhausted; and in every imaginable instant in eternity, that inexhaustible power of God can, if it please him, be adding either more creatures to those in existence, or greater perfection to them; since “it belongs to self-existent being, to be always full and communicative, and to the communicated, contingent being, to be ever empty and craving.” (Howe.)

One limitation only we can conceive, which however detracts nothing from this perfection of the Divine nature.

“Where things in themselves imply a contradiction, as that a body may be extended and not extended, in a place and not in a place, at the same time; such things, I say, cannot be done by God, because contradictions are impossible in their own nature: nor is it any derogation from the Divine power to say, they cannot be done; for as the object of the understanding, of the eye, and the ear, is that which is intelligible, visible, and audible; so the object of power must be that which is possible; and as it is no prejudice to the most perfect understanding, or sight, or hearing, that it does not understand what is not intelligible, or see what is not visible, or hear what is not audible; so neither is it any diminution to the most perfect power, that it does not do what is not possible. (Bishop Wilkins.) In like manner, God cannot do any thing that is repugnant to his other perfections: he cannot lie, nor deceive, nor deny himself; for this would be injurious to his truth. He cannot love sin, nor punish innocence; for this would destroy his holiness and goodness: and therefore to ascribe a power to him that is inconsistent with the rectitude of his nature, is not to magnify, but debase him; for all unrighteousness is weakness, a defection from right reason, a deviation from the perfect rule of action, and arises from a defect of goodness and power. In a word, since all the attributes of God are essentially the same, a power in him which tends to destroy any other attribute of the Divine nature, must be a power destructive of itself. Well therefore may we conclude him absolutely omnipotent, who, by being able to effect all things consistent with his perfections, showeth infinite ability, and by not being able to do any thing repugnant to the same perfections, demonstrates himself subject to no infirmity.” (Pearson on the Creed.)
Nothing certainly in the finest writings of antiquity, were all their best thoughts collected as to the majesty and power of God, can bear any comparison to the views thus presented to us by Divine revelation. Were we to forget for a moment, what is the fact, that their noblest notions stand connected with fancies and vain speculations which deprive them of their force, their thought never rises so high, the current of it is broken, the round of lofty conception is not completed; and, unconnected as their views of Divine power were with the eternal destiny of man, and the very reason of creation, we never hear in them, as in the Scriptures, “the THUNDER of his power.” One of the best specimens of heathen devotion is given below in the hymn of Cleanthes the Stoic; and, though noble and just, it sinks infinitely in the comparison.

“Hail, O Jupiter, most glorious of the immortals, invoked under many names, always most powerful, the first ruler of nature, whose law governs all things, — hail! for to address thee is permitted to all mortals. — For our race we have from thee; we mortals who creep upon the ground, receiving only the echo of thy voice. I therefore, I will celebrate thee, and will always sing thy power. All this universe rolling round the earth, obeys thee wherever thou guidest, and willingly is governed by thee. So vehement, so fiery, so immortal is the thunder which thou holdest subservient in thy unshaken hands; for, by the stroke of this, all nature was rooted; by this, thou directest the common reason which pervades all things, mixed with the greater and lesser luminaries; so great a king art thou, supreme through all; nor does any work take place without thee on the earth, nor in the ethereal sky, nor in the sea. except what the bad perform in their own folly. But do thou, O Jupiter, giver of all blessings, dwelling in the clouds, ruler of the thunder, defend mortals from dismal misfortune; which dispel, O Father, from the soul, and grant it to attain that judgment, trusting to which thou governest all things with justice; that, being honoured, we may repay thee with honour, singing continually thy works, as becomes a mortal; since there is no greater meed to men or gods, than always to celebrate justly the universal law.”

The OMNIPOTENCE or UBIQUITY of God, is another doctrine of Scripture; and it is corroborated by facts obvious to all reflecting beings, though to us, and perhaps to all finite minds, the mode is incomprehensible. The statement of this doctrine in the inspired records, like that of all the other
attributes of God, is made in their own peculiar tone and emphasis of
majesty and sublimity. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall
I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; if I make
my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and
dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me. — Can any hide himself in secret places
that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? Am
I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? — Thus saith the
Lord, behold heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. —
Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. — Though
he dig into hell, thence shall my hand take him; though he climb up into
heaven, thence will I bring him down; and though he hide himself in the top
of Carmel, I will search and take him out from thence. — In him we live,
and move, and have our being. — He filleth all things.”

Some striking passages on the ubiquity of the Divine presence may be
found in the writings of some of the Greek philosophers, arising out of this
notion, that God was the soul of the world; but their very connection with
this speculation, notwithstanding the imposing phrase occasionally
adopted, strikingly marks the difference between their most exalted views,
and those of the Hebrew prophets on this subject.

“To a large proportion of those who hold a distinguished rank
among the ancient Theistical philosophers, the idea of the
personality of the Deity was in a great measure unknown. The
Deity by them was considered, not so much an intelligent being as
an animating power, diffused throughout the world, and was
introduced into their speculative system to account for the motion
of that passive mass of matter, which was supposed coeval, and
indeed coexistent with himself.” (Sumner’s Records of the
Creation.) These defective notions are confessed by Gibbon, a
writer not disposed to undervalue their attainments.

‘The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature
of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however on
the Divine nature, as a very curious and important speculation; and
in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness
of the human understanding. Of the four most considerable sects,
the Stoics and the Platonicians endeavoured to reconcile the jarring
interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime
proofs of the existence and perfections of the First Cause; but as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman, in the Stoic philosophy, was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; while on the contrary, the spiritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled more an idea than a substance.” (Decline and Fall, &c.)

Similar errors have been revived in the infidel philosophy of modern time, from Spinoza down to the latter offspring of the German and French schools. The same remark applies also to the oriental philosophy, which, as before remarked, presents at this day a perfect view of the boasted wisdom of ancient Greece, which was “brought to nought” by “the foolishness” of apostolic preaching. But in the Scriptures there is nothing confused in the doctrine of the Divine ubiquity. God is every where, but he is not every thing. All things have their being in him, but he is distinct from all things; he fills the universe, but is not mingled with it. He is the intelligence which guides, and the power which sustains, but his personality is preserved, and he is independent of the works of his hands, however vast and noble. So far is his presence from being bounded by the universe itself, that, as in the passage above quoted from the Psalms, we are taught that were it possible for us to wing our way into the immeasurable depths and breadths of space, God would there surround us, in as absolute a sense as that in which he is said to be about our bed and our path in that part of the world where his will has placed us.

On this as on all similar subjects, the Scriptures use terms which are taken in their common sense acceptation among mankind; and though the vanity of the human mind disposes many to seek a philosophy in the doctrine thus announced deeper than that which its popular terms convey, we are bound to conclude, if we would pay but a common respect to an admitted revelation, that where no manifest figure of speech occurs, the truth of the doctrine lies in the tenor of the terms by which it is expressed. Otherwise there would be no revelation, I do not say: of the modus, for that is confessedly incomprehensible; but of the fact. In the case before us, the terms presence, and place, are used according to common notions, and must be so taken, if the Scriptures are intelligible. Metaphysical refinements are not Scriptural doctrines, when they give to the terms chosen by the Holy Spirit an acceptation out of their general and proper use, and make them the signs of a perfectly distinct class of ideas; if it, deed all distinctness of idea is not lost in the attempt. It is therefore in the popular,
and just because Scriptural, manner, that we are to conceive of the omnipresence of God.

“If we reflect upon ourselves we may observe that we fill but a small space, and that our knowledge or power reaches but a little way. We can act at one time in one place only, and the sphere of our influence is narrow at largest. Would we be witnesses to what is done at any distance from us, or exert there our active powers, we must remove ourselves thither. For this reason we are necessarily ignorant of a thousand things which pass around or, incapable of attending and managing any great variety of affairs, or performing at the same time any number of actions, for our own good, or for the benefit of others.

“Although we feel this to be the present condition of our being, and the limited state of our intelligent and active powers, yet we can easily conceive, there may exist beings more perfect, and whose presence may extend far and wide. Any one of whom present in, what to us are, various places, at the same time, may know at once what is done in all these, and act in all of them; and thus be able to regard and direct a variety of affairs at the same instant. And who farther being qualified, by the purity and activity of their nature, to pass from one place to another with great ease and swiftness, may thus fill a large sphere of action, direct a great variety of affairs, confer a great number of benefits, and observe a multitude of actions at the same time, or in so swift a succession, as to us would appear but one instant. Thus perfect we may easily believe the angels of God.

“We can farther conceive this extent of presence, and of ability for knowledge and action, to admit of degrees of ascending perfection approaching to infinite. And when we have thus raised our thoughts to the idea of a being, who is not only present throughout a large empire, but throughout our world; and not only in every part of our world, but in every part of all the numberless suns and worlds which roll in the starry heavens — who is not only able to enliven and actuate the plants, animals, and men who live upon this globe, but countless varieties of creatures every where in an immense universe — yea, whose presence is not confined to the universe, immeasurable as that is by any finite mind, but who is present every
where in infinite space; and who is therefore able to create still new worlds and fill them with proper inhabitants, attend, supply, and govern them all — when we have thus gradually raised and enlarged our conceptions, we have the best idea we can form, of the universal presence of the great Jehovah, who filleth heaven and earth. There is no part of the universe, no portion of space uninhabited by God, none wherein this Being of perfect power, wisdom, and benevolence is not essentially present. Could we with the swiftness of a sunbeam dart ourselves beyond the limits of the creation, and for ages continue our progress in infinite space, we should still be surrounded with the Divine presence: nor ever be able to reach that space where God is not.

“His presence also penetrates every part of our world; the most solid parts of the earth cannot exclude it; for it pierces as easily the centre of the globe, as the empty air. All creatures live and move, and have their being in him. And the inmost recesses of the human heart can no more exclude his presence, or conceal a thought from his knowledge, than the deepest caverns of the earth.” (Amory’s Sermons.)

The illustrations and confirmatory proofs of this doctrine which the material world furnishes, are numerous and striking.

“It is a most evident and acknowledged truth that a being cannot act where it is not; if therefore actions and effects, which manifest the highest wisdom, power, and goodness in the author of them, are continually produced every where, the author of these actions, or God, must be continually present with us, and wherever he thus acts. The matter which composes the world is evidently lifeless and thoughtless; it must therefore be incapable of moving itself, or designing or producing any effects which require wisdom or power. The matter of our world, or the small parts which constitute the air, the earth, and the waters, is yet continually moved, so as to produce effects of this kind; such are the innumerable herbs, and trees, and fruits which adorn the earth, and support the countless millions of creatures who inhabit it. There must therefore be constantly present, all over the earth, a most wise, mighty, and good being, the author and director of these motions.
“We cannot, it is true, see him with our bodily eyes, because he is a pure Spirit; yet this is not any proof that he is not present. A judicious discourse, a series of kind actions, convince us of the presence of a friend, a person of prudence and benevolence. We cannot see the present mind, the seat and principle of these qualities; yet the constant regular motion of the tongue, the hand, and the whole body, (which are the instruments of our souls, as the material universe and all the various bodies in it are the instruments of the Deity,) will not suffer us to doubt, that there is an intelligent and benevolent principle within the body, which produces all these skilful motions and kind actions. The sun, the air, the earth, and the waters, are no more able to move themselves, and produce all that beautiful and useful variety of plants, and fruits, and trees, with which our earth is covered, than the body of a man, when the soul hath left it, is able to move itself, form an instrument, plough a field, or build a house. If the laying out judiciously and well cultivating a small estate, sowing it with proper grain at the best time of the year, watering it in due season and quantities, and gathering in the fruits when ripe, and laying them up in the best manner — if all these effects prove the estate to have a manager, and the manager possessed of skill and strength — certainly the enlightening and warming the whole earth by the sun, and so directing its motion and the motion of the earth as to produce in a constant useful succession day and night summer and winter, seed time and harvest; the watering the earth continually by the clouds, and thus bringing forth immense quantities of herbage, grain, and fruits — certainly all these effects continually produced, must prove that a being of the greatest power, wisdom, and benevolence, is continually present throughout our world, which he thus supports, moves, actuates, and makes fruitful.

“The fire which warms us, knows nothing of its serviceableness to this purpose, nor of the wise laws according to which its particles are moved to produce this effect. And that it is placed in such a part of the house, where it may be greatly beneficial, and no way hurtful, is ascribed without hesitation to the contrivance and labour of a person who knew its proper place and uses. And if we came daily into a house wherein we saw this was regularly done, though we never saw an inhabitant therein, we could not doubt that the house
was occupied by a rational inhabitant. That huge globe of fire in the heavens, which we call the sun, and on the light and influences of which the fertility of our world, and the life and pleasure of all animals depend, knows nothing of its serviceableness to these purposes, nor of the wise laws according to which its beams are dispensed; nor what place or motions were requisite for these beneficial purposes. Yet its beams are darted constantly in infinite numbers, every one according to those well-chosen laws, and its proper place and motion are maintained. Must not then its place be appointed, its motion regulated, and beams darted, by almighty wisdom and goodness; which prevent the sun’s ever wandering in the boundless spaces of the heavens, so as to leave us in disconsolate cold and darkness: or coming so near, or emitting his rays in such a manner as to burn us up? Must not the great Being who enlightens and warms us by the sun, his instrument, who raises and sends down the vapours, brings forth and ripens the grain and fruits, and who is thus ever acting around us for our benefit, be always present in the sun, throughout the air, and all over the earth, which he thus moves and actuates?

“This earth is in itself a dead motionless mass, and void of all counsel; yet proper parts of it are continually raised through the small pipes which compose the bodies of plants and trees, and are made to contribute to their growth, to open and shine in blossoms and leaves, and to swell and harden into fruit. Could blind thoughtless particles thus continually keep on their way, through numberless windings, without once blundering, if they were not guided by an unerring hand? Can the most perfect human skill from earth and water form one grain, much more a variety of beautiful and relishing fruits? Must not the directing mind, who does all this constantly, be most wise, mighty, and benevolent? Must not the Being who thus continually exerts his skill and energy around us, for our benefit, be confessed to be always present and concerned for our welfare?

“Can these effects be ascribed to any thing below an all-wise and Almighty Cause? And must not this cause be present, wherever he acts? Were God to speak to us every month from heaven, and with a voice loud as thunder declare, that he observes, provides for, and governs us, this would not be a proof in the judgment of sound
reason by many degrees so valid. Since much less wisdom and power are required to form such sounds in the air, than to produce these effects; and to give not merely verbal declarations, but substantial evidences of his presence and care over us.” (Amory’s Sermons.)

“In every part and place of the universe, with which we are acquainted, we perceive the exertion of a power, which we believe mediatelty or immediately, to proceed from the Deity. For instance: In what part or point of space, that has ever been explored, do we not discover attraction? In what regions do we not find light? In what accessible portion of our globe do we not meet with gravity, magnetism, electricity; together with the properties also and powers of organized substances, of vegetable or of animated nature? Nay, farther, we may ask, What kingdom is there of nature, what corner of space, in which there is any thing that can be examined by us, where we do not fall upon contrivance and design? The only reflection perhaps which arises in our minds from this view of the world around us is, that the laws of nature every where prevail; that they are uniform and universal. But what do we mean by the laws of nature, or by any law? Effects are produced by power, not by laws. A law cannot execute itself. A law refers us to an agent.” (Paley.)

The usual argument à priori, on this attribute of the Divine nature, has been stated as follows: but amidst so much demonstration of a much higher kind, it cannot be of much value.

“The First Cause, the supreme all-perfect mind, as he could not derive his being from any other cause, must be independent of all other, and therefore unlimited. He exists by an absolute necessity of nature; and as all the parts of infinite space are exactly uniform and alike, for the same reason that he exists in any one part, he must exist in all. No reason can be assigned for excluding him from one part, which would not exclude him from all. But that he is present in some parts of space, the evident effects of his wisdom, power, and benevolence continually produced, demonstrate, beyond all rational doubt. He must therefore be alike present every where: and fill infinite space with his infinite being.” (Amory.)
Among metaphysicians, it has been matter of dispute, whether God is present every where by an infinite extension of his essence. This is the opinion of Newton, Dr. S. Clarke, and their followers; others have objected to this notion, that it might then be said, God is neither in heaven or in earth, but only a part of God in each. The former opinion, however, appears most in harmony with the Scriptures; though the term *extension*, through the inadequacy of language, conveys too material an idea. The objection just stated is wholly grounded on notions taken from material objects, and is therefore of little weight, because it is not applicable to an immaterial substance. It is best to confess with one who had thought deeply on the subject, “there is an incomprehensibleness in the *manner* of every thing about which no controversy can or ought to be concerned.”

That we cannot comprehend how God is fully, and completely, and undividedly present every where, need not surprise us, when we reflect that the manner in which our own minds are present with our bodies is as incomprehensible, as the manner in which the supreme mind is present with every thing in the universe.
CHAPTER 4. — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. — OMNISCIENCE.

The omniscience of God is constantly connected in Scripture with his omnipresence, and forms a part of almost every description of that attribute; for as God is a spirit, and therefore intelligent, if he is everywhere, if nothing can exclude him, not even the most solid bodies, nor the minds of intelligent beings, then are all things “naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” “Where he acts, he is, and where he is, he perceives.” “He understands and considers things absolutely, and as they are in their own natures, powers, properties, differences, together with all the circumstances belonging to them.” (Bishop Wilkins’s Principles.) “Known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world,” rather απιστοίχωμα from all eternity — known, before they were made, in their possible, and known, now they are made, in their actual existence. “Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. — The darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day. — The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings; he searcheth their hearts, and understandeth every imagination of their thoughts.” Nor is this perfect knowledge to be confined to men, or angels; it reaches into the state of the dead, and penetrates the regions of the damned. “Hell, hades, is naked before him; and destruction (the seats of destruction) hath no covering.” No limits at all are to be set to this perfection. “Great is the Lord, his understanding is INFINITE.”

In Psalm 94, the knowledge of God is argued from the communication of it to men. “Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?” This argument is as easy as it is conclusive, obliging all who acknowledge a First Cause to admit his perfect intelligence, or to take refuge in Atheism itself. It fetches not the proof from a distance, but refers us to our bosoms for the constant
demonstration that the Lord is a God of knowledge, and that by him actions are weighed.

“We find in ourselves such qualities as thought and intelligence, power and freedom, &c, for which we have the evidence of consciousness as much as for our own existence. Indeed, it is only by our consciousness of these that our existence is known to ourselves. We know likewise that these are perfections, and that to have them is better than to be without them. We find also that they have not been in us from eternity. They must, therefore, have had a beginning and consequently some cause, for the very same reason that a being beginning to exist in time requires a cause. Now this cause, as it must be superior to its effect, must have those perfections in a superior degree; and if it be the first cause, it must have them in an infinite or unlimited degree, since bounds or limitation, without a limiter, would be an effect without a cause.”

“If God gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to men of understanding, if he communicates this perfection to his creatures, the inference must be that he himself is possessed of it in a much more eminent degree than they, that his knowledge is deep and intimate, reaching to the very essence of things, theirs but slight and superficial; his clear and distinct, theirs confused and dark; his certain and infallible, theirs doubtful and liable to mistake; his easy and permanent, theirs obtained with much pains, and soon lost again by the defects of memory or age; his universal and extending to all objects, theirs short and narrow, reaching only to some few things, while that which is wanting cannot be numbered; and therefore as the heavens are higher than the earth, so, as the prophet has told us, are his ways above their, ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts.” (Tillotson’s Sermons.)

But His understanding is infinite; a doctrine which the sacred writers not only authoritatively announce, but confirm by referring to the wisdom displayed in his works. The only difference between wisdom and knowledge is, that the former always supposes action, and action directed to an end. But wherever there is wisdom, there must be knowledge; and as the wisdom of God in the creation consists in the formation of things which, by themselves, or in combination with others, shall produce certain effects, and that in a variety of operation which is to us boundless, the
previous knowledge of the possible qualities and effects inevitably supposes a knowledge which can have no limit. For as creation out of nothing argues a power which is omnipotent, so the knowledge of the possibilities of things which are not, a knowledge which, from the effect, we are sure must exist in God, argues that such a Being must be omniscient. For “all things being not only present to him, but also entirely depending upon him, and having received both their being itself, and all their powers and faculties from him, it is manifest that, as he knows all things that are, so he must likewise know all possibilities of things, that is, all effects that can be. For, being himself alone self-existent, and having alone given to all things all the powers and faculties they are endued with, it is evident he must of necessity know perfectly what all and each of those powers and faculties, which are derived wholly from himself, can possibly produce, and seeing, at one boundless view, all the possible compositions and divisions, variations and changes, circumstances and dependencies of things; all their possible relations one to another, and their dispositions or fitnesses to certain and respective ends, he must, without possibility of error, know exactly what is best and properest in every one of the infinite possible cases or methods of disposing things: and understand perfectly how to order and direct the respective means, to bring about what he so knows to be, in its kind, or in the whole, the best and fittest in the end. This is what we mean by infinite wisdom.”

On the subject of the Divine ubiquity and omniscience, many fine sentiments are found, even among pagans; for an intelligent First Cause being in any sense admitted, it was most natural and obvious to ascribe to him a perfect knowledge of all things. They acknowledged “that nothing is hid from God, who is intimate to our minds, and mingles himself with our very thoughts;” nor were they all unaware of the practical tendency of such a doctrine, and of the motive it affords to a cautious and virtuous conduct. But among them it was not held, as by the sacred writers, in connection with other correct views of the Divine nature, which are essential to give to this its full moral effect. Not only on this subject does the manner in which the Scriptures state this doctrine far transcend that of the wisest pagan Theists; but the moral of the sentiment is infinitely more comprehensive and impressive. With them it is connected with man’s state of trial; with a holy law, all the violations of which, in thought, word, and deed, are both infallibly known, and strictly marked; with promises of grace; and of mild and protecting government, as to all who have sought
and found the mercy of God, forgiving their sins and admitting them into his family. The wicked are thus reminded that their hearts are searched, and their sins noted; that the eyes of the Lord are upon their ways; and that their most secret works will be brought to light in the day when God the witness, shall become God the Judge. In like manner, “the eyes of the Lord are said to be over the righteous;” that such persons are kept by him “who never slumbers nor sleeps;” that he is never “far from them,” and that “his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf;” that foes, to them invisible, are seen by his eye, and controlled by his arm; and that this great attribute, so appalling to wicked men, affords to them, not only the most influential reason for a perfectly holy temper and conduct, but the strongest motive to trust, and joy, and hope, amidst the changes and afflictions of the present life. Socrates, as well as other philosophers, could express themselves well, so long as they expressed themselves generally, on this subject. The former could say, “Let your own frame instruct you. Does the mind inhabiting your body dispose and govern it with ease? Ought you not then to conclude, that the universal mind with equal ease actuates and governs universal nature; and that, when you can at once consider the interests of the Athenians at home, in Egypt, and in Sicily, it is not too much for the Divine wisdom to take care of the universe? These reflections will soon convince you that the greatness of the Divine mind is such, as at once to see all things, hear all things, be present every where, and direct all the affairs of the world.” These views are just; but they wanted that connection with others relative both to the Divine nature and government, which we see only in the Bible, to render them influential; they neither gave correct moral distinctions nor led to a virtuous practice, no not in Socrates, who on some subjects, and especially on the personality of the Deity, and his independence on matter, raised himself far above the rest of his philosophic brethren, but in moral feeling and practice was as censurable as they. fn3

The foreknowledge of God, or his prescience of future things, though contingent, is by divines generally included in the term omniscience, and for this they have unquestionably the authority of the Holy Scriptures. From the difficulty which has been supposed to exist, in reconciling this with the freedom of human actions, and man’s accountability, some have however refused to allow prescience, at least of contingent actions, to be a property of the Divine nature; and others have adopted various modifications of opinion, as to the knowledge of God, in order to elude, or
to remove the objection. This subject was glanced at in part i, chap. 9, but in this place, where the omniscience of God is under consideration, the three leading theories, which have been resorted to for the purpose of maintaining unimpugned the moral government of God, and the freedom and responsibility of man seem to require examination, that the true doctrine of Scripture may be fully brought out and established. f14

The Chevalier Ramsay, among his other speculations, holds “it a matter of choice in God, to think of finite ideas;” and similar opinions, though variously worded, have been occasionally adopted. In substance these opinions are, that though the knowledge of God be infinite, as his power is infinite, there is no more reason to conclude that his knowledge should be always exerted to the full extent of its capacity, than that his power should be employed to the extent of his omnipotence; and that if we suppose him to choose not to know some contingencies, the infiniteness of his knowledge is not thereby impugned. To this it may be answered, “that the infinite power of God is in Scripture represented, as in the nature of things it must be, as an infinite capacity, and not as infinite in act; but that the knowledge of God is on the contrary never represented there to us as a capacity to acquire knowledge, but as actually comprehending all things that are, and all things that can be. 2. That the notion of God’s choosing to know some things, and not to know others, supposes a reason why he refuses to know any class of things or events, which reason, it would seem, can only arise out of their nature and circumstances, and therefore supposes at least a partial knowledge of them, from which the reason for his not choosing to know them arises. The doctrine is therefore somewhat contradictory. But 3, it is fatal to this opinion, that it does not at all meet the difficulty arising out of the question of the congruity of Divine prescience, and the free actions of man; since some contingent actions, for which men have been made accountable, we are sure have been foreknown by God, because by his Spirit in the prophets they were foretold; and if the freedom of man can in these cases be reconciled to the prescience of God, there is no greater difficulty in any other case which can possibly occur.

A second theory is, that the foreknowledge of contingent events, being in its own nature impossible, because it implies a contradiction, it does no dishonour to the Divine Being to affirm, that of such events he has, and can have no prescience whatever; and thus the prescience of God, as to moral actions being wholly denied, the difficulty of reconciling it with human freedom and accountability has no existence. f15
To this the same answer must be given as to the former. It does not meet the case, so long as the Scriptures are allowed to contain prophecies of rewardable and punishable actions.

That man is accountable to God for his conduct, and therefore free, that is, laid under no invincible necessity of acting in a given manner, are doctrines clearly contained in the Bible, and the notion of necessity has here its full and satisfactory reply; but if a difficulty should be felt in reconciling the freedom of an action with the prescience of it, it affords not the slightest relief to deny the foreknowledge of God as to actions in general, while the Scriptures contain predictions of the conduct of men whose actions cannot have been determined by invincible necessity, because they were actions for which they received from God a just and marked punishment. Whether the scheme of relief be, that the knowledge of God, like his power, is arbitrary; or that the prescience of contingencies is impossible; so long as the Scriptures are allowed to contain predictions of the conduct of men, good or bad, the difficulty remains in all its force. The whole body of prophecy is founded on the certain prescience of contingent actions, or it is not prediction, but guess and conjecture — to such fearful results does the denial of the Divine prescience lead! No one can deny that the Bible contains predictions of the rise and fall of several kingdoms; that Daniel, for instance, prophesied of the rise, the various fortune, and the fall of the celebrated monarchies of antiquity. But empires do not rise and fall wholly by immediate acts of God; they are not thrown up like new islands in the ocean, they do not fall like cities in an earthquake, by the direct exertion of Divine power. They are carried through their various stages of advance and decline, by the virtues and the vices of men, which God makes the instruments of their prosperity or destruction. Counsels, wars, science, revolutions, all crowd in their agency; and the predictions are of the combined and ultimate results of all these circumstances, which, as arising out of the vices and virtues of men, out of innumerable acts of choice, are contingent. Seen they must have been through all their stages, and seen in their results, for prophecy has registered those results. The prescience of them cannot be denied, for that is on the record; and if certain prescience involves necessity, then are the daily virtues and vices of men not contingent. It was predicted that Babylon should be taken by Cyrus in the midst of a midnight revel, in which the gates should be left unguarded and open. Now, if all the actions which arose out of the warlike disposition and ambition of Cyrus were contingent, what becomes of the principle, that it is
impossible to foreknow contingencies? — they were foreknown, because the result of them was predicted. If the midnight revel of the Babylonian monarch was contingent, (the circumstance which led to the neglect of the gates of the city,) that also was foreknown, because predicted; if not contingent, the actions of both monarchs were necessary, and to neither of them can be ascribed virtue or vice.

Our Lord predicts, most circumstantially, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. If this be allowed, then the contingencies involved in the conduct of the Jews who provoked that fatal war — in the Roman senate who decreed it — in the Roman generals who carried it on — in the Roman and Jewish soldiers who were engaged in it — were all foreseen, and the result of them predicted: if they were not contingencies, that is, if they were not free actions, then the virtues and vices of both parties, and all the acts of skill, and courage, and enterprise; and all the cruelties and sufferings of the besieged and the besiegers, arising out of innumerable volitions, and giving rise to the events so circumstantially marked in the prophecy, were determined by an irreversible necessity. The 53d chapter of Isaiah predicts, that Messiah should be taken away by a violent death, inflicted by men in defiance of all the principles of justice. The record cannot be blotted out; and if the conduct of the Jews was not, as the advocates of this scheme will contend it was not, influenced by necessity, then we have all the contingencies of their hatred, and cruelties, and injustice predicted, and therefore foreknown. The same observations might be applied to St. Paul’s prediction of a “falling away,” in the Church; of the rise of the “man of sin;” and, in a word, to every prediction which the sacred volume contains. If there be any predictions in the Bible at all, every scheme which denies the prescience of contingencies must compel us into the doctrine of necessity, which in this place it is not necessary to discuss.

On the main principle of the theory just mentioned, that the prescience of contingent events is impossible, because their nature would be destroyed by it, we may add a few remarks. That the subject is incomprehensible as to the manner in which the Divine Being foreknows future events of this or of any kind, even the greatest minds, which have applied themselves to such speculations, have felt and acknowledged. The fact, that such a property exists in the Divine nature is, however, too clearly stated in Scripture to allow of any doubt in those who are disposed to submit to its authority; and it is not left to the uncertainty of our speculations on the properties of spiritual natures, either to be confirmed or disproved. Equally clear is it
that the moral actions of men are not necessitated, because human accountability is the main pillar of that moral government, whose principles, conduct, and ends, are stated so largely in Divine revelation. Whatever, therefore, becomes of human speculations, these points are sufficiently settled on an authority which is abundantly sufficient. To the objection of metaphysicians of different classes, against either of these principles, that such is not the sense of the Scriptures, because the fact “can not be so, it involves a contradiction,” not the least importance is to be attached, when the plain, concurrent, and uniform sense of Scripture, interpreted as any other book would be interpreted, determines to the contrary. It surely does not follow that a thing cannot be, because men do not see, or pretend not to see, that it can be. This would lay the foundation of our faith in the strength or weakness of other men’s intellect. We are not, however, in many cases, left wholly to this answer, and it may be shown that the position, that certain prescience destroys contingency, is a mere sophism, and that this conclusion is connected with the premise, by a confused use of terms.

The great fallacy in the argument, that the certain prescience of a moral action destroys its contingent nature, lies in supposing that contingency and certainty are the opposites of each other. It is, perhaps, unfortunate, that a word which is of figurative etymology, and which consequently can only have an ideal application to such subjects, should have grown into common use in this discussion, because it is more liable on that account to present itself to different minds under different shades of meaning. If, however, the term contingent in this controversy has any definite meaning at all, as applied to the moral actions of men, it must mean their freedom, and stands opposed not to certainty, but to necessity. A free action is a voluntary one; and an action which results from the choice of the agent, is distinguished from a necessary one in this, that it might not have been, or have been otherwise, according to the self-determining power of the agent. It is with reference to this specific quality of a free action, that the term contingency is used, — it might have been otherwise, in other words, it was not necessitated. Contingency in moral actions is, therefore, their freedom, and is opposed, not to certainty, but to necessity. The very nature of this controversy fixes this as the precise meaning of the term. The question is not, in point of fact, about the certainty of moral actions, that is, whether they will happen or not; but about the nature of them, whether free or constrained, whether they must happen or not. Those who advocate
this theory care not about the *certainty* of actions, simply considered, that is, whether they will take place or not; the reason why they object to a certain prescience of moral actions is, that they conclude, that such a prescience renders them *necessary*. It is the *quality* of the action for which they contend, not whether it will happen or not. If contingency meant *uncertainty*, the sense in which such theorists take it, the dispute would be at an end. But though an *uncertain* action cannot be foreseen as certain, a free, unnecessitated action may; for there is nothing in the knowledge of the action, in the least, to affect its nature. Simple knowledge is, in no sense, a cause of action, nor can it be conceived to be causal, unconnected with *exerted* power; for mere knowledge, therefore, an action remains free or necessitated, as the case may be. A necessitated action is not made a voluntary one by its being foreknown: a free action is not made a necessary one. Free actions foreknown will not, therefore, cease to be contingent. But how stands the case as to their *certainty*? Precisely on the same ground. The certainty of a *necessary* action foreknown, does not result from the knowledge of the action, but from the operation of the necessitating cause; and in like manner, the certainty of a *free* action does not result from the knowledge of it, which is no cause at all, but from the voluntary cause, that is, the determination of the will. It alters not the case in the least, to say that the voluntary action might have been otherwise. Had it been otherwise, the knowledge of it would have been otherwise; but as the will, which gives birth to the action, is not dependent upon the previous knowledge of God, but the knowledge of the action upon foresight of the choice of the will, neither the will nor the act is controlled by the knowledge, and the action, though foreseen, is still free or contingent.

The foreknowledge of God has then no influence upon either the freedom or the certainty of actions, for this plain reason, that it is *knowledge*, and not *influence*; and actions may be certainly foreknown, without their being rendered necessary by that foreknowledge. But here it is said, If the result of an absolute contingency be certainly foreknown, it *can* have no other result, it *cannot* happen otherwise. This is not the true inference. It *will* not happen otherwise; but I ask, why *can* it not happen otherwise? *Can* is an expression of potentiality, it denotes power or possibility. The objection is, that it is not possible that the action should otherwise happen. But why not? What deprives it of that power? If a necessary action were in question, it could not otherwise happen than as the necessitating cause
shall compel; but then that would arise from the necessitating cause solely and not from the prescience of the action, which is not causal. But if the action be free, and it enter into the very nature of a voluntary action to be unconstrained, then it might have happened in a thousand other ways or not have happened at all; the foreknowledge of it no more affects its nature in this case than in the other. All its potentiality, so to speak, still remains, independent of foreknowledge, which neither adds to its power of happening otherwise, nor diminishes it. But then we are told, that the prescience of it, in that case, must be uncertain: not unless any person can prove, that the Divine prescience is unable to dart through all the workings of the human mind, all its comparison of things in the judgment, all the influences of motives on the affections, all the hesitancies, and haltings of the will, to its final choice. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for us,” but it is the knowledge of Him who “understandeth the thoughts of man afar off.”

But if a contingency will have a given result, to that result it must be determined. Not in the least. We have seen that it cannot be determined to a given result by mere precognition, for we have evidence in our own minds that mere knowledge is not causal to the actions of another. It is determined to its result by the will of the agent; but even in that case, it cannot be said, that it must be determined to that result, because it is of the nature of freedom to be unconstrained; so that here we have an instance in the case of a free agent that he will act in some particular manner, but that it by no means follows from what will be, whether foreseen or not, that it must be.

On this subject, so much controverted, and on which so much, in the way of logical consequence, depends, I add a few authorities.

Dr. S. Clarke observes,

“They who suppose that events, which are called contingent, cannot be certainly foreknown, must likewise suppose that when there is not a chain of necessary causes, there can be no certainty of any future events; but this is a mistake, for let us suppose that there is in man a power of beginning motion, and of acting with what has, of late, been called philosophical freedom; and let us suppose farther, that the actions of such a man cannot possibly be foreknown; will there not yet be in the nature of things, notwithstanding this supposition, the same certainty of event in every one of the
man’s actions, as if they were ever so fatal and necessary? For instance, suppose the man, by an internal principle of motion, and an absolute freedom of mind, to do some particular action to-day, and suppose it was not possible that this action should have been foreseen yesterday, was there not, nevertheless, the same certainty of event, as if it had been foreseen, and absolutely necessary? That is, would it not have been as certain a truth yesterday, and from eternity, that this action was an event to be performed to-day, notwithstanding the supposed freedom, as it is now a certain and infallible truth that it is performed? Mere certainty of event, therefore, does not, in any measure, imply necessity. And surely it implies no contradiction to suppose, that every future event which, in the nature of things, is now certain, may now be certainly known by that intelligence which is omniscient. The manner how God can foreknow future events, without a chain of necessary causes, it is indeed impossible for us to explain, yet some sort of general notion of it we may conceive. For, as a man who has no influence over another person’s actions, can yet often perceive beforehand what that other will do; and a wiser and more experienced man, with still greater probability will foresee what another, with whose disposition he is perfectly acquainted, will in certain circumstances do; and an angel, with still less degree of error, may have a farther prospect into men’s future actions: so it is very reasonable to conceive, that God, without influencing men’s wills by his power, or subjecting them to a chain of necessary causes, cannot but have a knowledge of future free events, as much more certain than men or angels can possibly have, as the perfection of his nature is greater than that of theirs. The distinct manner how he foresees these things, we cannot, indeed, explain; but neither can we explain the manner of numberless other things, of the reality of which, however, no man entertains a doubt.”

Dr. Copleston judiciously remarks: —

“The course indeed of the material world seems to proceed upon such fixed and uniform laws, that short experience joined to close attention is sufficient to enable a man, for all useful purposes, to anticipate the general result of causes now in action. In the moral world much greater uncertainty exists. Every one feels, that what depends upon the conduct of his fellow creatures is less certain,
than what is to be brought about by the agency of the laws of matter: and yet even here, since man is a being of a certain composition, having such and such faculties, inclinations, affections, desires, and appetites, it is very possible for those who study his nature attentively, especially for those who have practical experience of any individual or of any community of men, to foretell how they will be affected, and how they will act under any supposed circumstances. The same power (in an unlimited degree as before) it is natural and reasonable to ascribe to that Being, who excels the wisest of us infinitely more than the wisest of us excels his fellow creatures.

“It never enters the mind of a person who reflects in this way, that his anticipation of another’s conduct lays any restraint upon that man’s conduct when he comes to act. The anticipation indeed is relative to himself, not to the other. If it affected him in the remotest degree, his conduct would vary in proportion to the strength of the conviction in the mind of the thinker that he will so act. But no man really believes in this magical sympathy. No man supposes the certainty of the event (to use a common, but, as I conceive, an improper term,) to correspond at all with the certainty of him who foretells or expects it. In fact, every day’s experience shows, that men are deceived in the event, even when they regarded themselves as most certain, and when they would readily have used the strongest phrases to denote that certainty, not from any intention to deceive, but from an honest persuasion that such an event must happen. How is it then? God can never be deceived — his knowledge therefore is always accompanied or followed by the event — and yet if we get an idea of what his knowledge is, by our own, why should we regard it as dragging the event along with it, when in our own case we acknowledge the two things to have no connection?

“But here the advocate for necessity interposes, and says, True, your knowledge does not affect the event, over which you have no power: but God, who is all-powerful, who made all things as they are, and who knows all that will come to pass, must be regarded as rendering that necessary which he foreknows — just as even you may be considered accessory to the event which you anticipate, exactly in proportion to the share you have had in preparing the
instruments or forming the minds of those who are to bring it about.

“To this I answer, that the connection between knowledge and the event is not at all established by this argument. It is not because I knew what would follow, but because I contributed toward it, that it is influenced by me. You may if you please contend, that because God made every thing, therefore all things that happen are done by him. This is taking another ground, for the doctrine of necessity, which will be considered presently. All I maintain now is, that the notion of God’s foreknowledge ought not to interfere in the slightest degree with our belief in the contingency of events, and the freedom of human actions. The confusion has, I conceive, arisen chiefly from the ambiguity of the word certainty, used as it is even by learned writers, both in its relation to the mind which thinks, and to the object about which it is thinking.” (Inquiry into Necessity, &c.)

To the above I add a passage from a divine of much older date, who has stated the argument with admirable clearness: —

In answer to the common argument,

“As a thing is, such is the knowledge of it: future contingencies are uncertain, therefore they cannot be known as certain,” he observes, “It is wonderful, that acute minds should not have detected the fallacy of this paralogism. For the major, which is vaunted as an axiom of undoubted truth, is most false unless it be properly explained. For if a thing is evil, shall the knowledge of it be evil? Then neither God nor angels could know the sins of men, without sinning themselves! Again, should a thing be necessary, will the knowledge of it, on that account, be also necessary? But many things are necessary in the nature of things, which either are unknown to us, or only known doubtfully. Many persons doubt even the existence of God, which in the highest sense is necessary, so far are they from having a necessary knowledge of him. That proposition, therefore, is only true in this sense, that our knowledge must agree with the things which are known, and that we know them as they are a reality, and not otherwise. Thus I ought to think, that the paper on which I write is white and the ink black; for if I fancy the ink white, and the paper black, this is not knowledge, but
ignorance, or rather deception. In like manner true knowledge ought to regard things *necessary* as *necessary*, and things *contingent* as *contingent*: but it requires not that necessary things should be known necessarily, and contingent things contingently; for the contrary often happens.

“But the *minor* of the above syllogism is ambiguous and improper. The things about Which our minds are exercised, are in themselves neither *certain* nor *uncertain*. They are called so only in respect of him who knows them; but they themselves are *necessary* or *contingent*. But if you understand by a *certain* thing, a *necessary* one, and by an *uncertain* thing that which is *contingent*, as many by an abuse of terms do, then your *minor* will appear to be identical and nugatory, for it will stand, ‘Future contingencies are contingent,’ from which no conclusion can be drawn. It is to be concluded, that certitude and incertitude are not affections of the things which are or may be known, but of the intellect of him who has knowledge of them, and who forms different judgments respecting them. For one and the same thing, without any change in itself, may be certain and uncertain at the same time; *certain* indeed to him who knows it certainly, but to him who knows it not, *uncertain*. For example, the same future eclipse of the sun shall be certain to a skilful astronomer who has calculated it: uncertain to him who is ignorant of the laws of the heavenly bodies. But that cannot be said concerning the necessity and contingency of things. They remain such as they are in their own nature, whether we know them or not; for an eclipse, which from the laws of nature must necessarily take place, is not made contingent by my ignorance and uncertainty whether it will or will not happen. For this reason they are mistaken who say that things determined by the decree of God, are necessary in respect of God; but that to us, who know not his decrees, they are contingent; for our ignorance cannot make that which is future and necessary, because God hath decreed it, change its nature, and become contingent. It is no contradiction indeed to say, that one and the same thing may be at once *necessary* and yet *uncertain*, but that it should be *necessary* and *contingent* is a manifest contradiction. To God, therefore, whose knowledge is infinite, future contingencies are indeed certain, but to angels and men uncertain; nor are they made necessary because God knows
them certainly. The knowledge of God influences nothing extrinsically, nor changes the nature of things in any wise. He knows future necessary things as necessary, but contingencies as contingencies; otherwise he would not know them truly, but be deceived, which cannot happen to God.” (Curcellæus, De Jure Dei, 1645.)

The rudiments of the third theory which this controversy has called forth, may be found in many theological writers, ancient and modern; but it is stated at large in the writings of Archbishop King, and requires some notice, because the views of that writer have of late been again made a subject of controversy. They amount, in brief, to this, that the foreknowledge of God must be supposed to differ so much from any thing of the kind we perceive in ourselves, and from any ideas which we can possibly form of that property of the Divine nature, that no argument respecting it can be grounded upon our imperfect notions; and that all controversy on subjects connected with it is idle and fruitless.

In establishing this view, Archbishop King, in his Sermon on Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge, has the following observations: —

“It is in effect agreed on all hands, that the nature of God is incomprehensible by human understanding; and not only his nature, but likewise his powers and faculties, and the ways and methods in which he exercises them, are so far beyond our reach, that we are utterly incapable of framing exact and adequate notions of them.

“We ought to remember, that the descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, or of the Divine attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate perceptions that we have of him or them; but from some observations we have made of his works, and from the consideration of those qualifications, that we conceive would enable us to perform the like.

“It doth truly follow from hence, that God must either have these, or other faculties equivalent to them, and adequate to these mighty effects which proceed from them. And because we do not know what his faculties are in themselves, we give them the names of those powers, that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such effects, and call them wisdom, understanding, and foreknowledge; yet at the same time we cannot but be sensible, that
they are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that we have no direct and proper notion or conception of them. Only we are sure, that they have effects like unto those that proceed from wisdom, understanding, and foreknowledge in us; and that when our works fail to resemble them in any particular, it is by reason of some defect in these qualifications.

“Thus our reason teaches us to ascribe these attributes to God, by way of analogy to such qualities as we find most valuable in ourselves.

“If we look into the Holy Scriptures, and consider the representation, given us there of God or his attributes, we shall find them plainly borrowed from some resemblance to things, with which we are acquainted by our senses. Thus when the Holy Scriptures speak of God, they ascribe hands, and eyes, and feet to him: not that we should believe he has any of these members, according to the literal signification; but the meaning is, that he has a power to execute all those acts, to the effecting of which these parts in us are instrumental, that is, he can converse with men, as well as if he had a tongue and mouth; he can discern all that we do or say, as perfectly as if he had eyes and ears; he can reach us as well as if he had hands and feet; he has as true and substantial a being as if he had a body; and he is as truly present every where, as if that body were infinitely extended.

“After the same manner, we find him represented as affected with such passions as we perceive to be in ourselves, namely, as angry and pleased, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his resolutions, as full of mercy and provoked to revenge. And yet on reflection we cannot think, that any of these passions literally affect the Divine nature.

“And as the passions of men are thus by analogy ascribed to God, because these would in us be the principles of such outward actions, as we see he has performed; so by the same condescension to the weakness of our capacities, we find the powers and operations of our minds ascribed to him.

“The use of foreknowledge with us is to prevent any surprise when events happen, and that we may not be at a loss what to do by
things coming upon us unawares. Now inasmuch as we are certain that nothing can surprise God, and that he can never be at a loss what to do; we conclude that God has a faculty to which our foreknowledge bears some analogy, therefore we call it by that name.

“But it does not follow from hence that any of these are literally in God, after the manner they are in us, any more than hands or eyes, than love or hatred are; on the contrary we must acknowledge, that those things, which we call by these names, when attributed to God, are of so very different a nature from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that in reality there is no more likeness between them, than between our hand and God’s power. Nor can we draw consequences from the real nature of one to that of the other, with more justness of reason, than we can conclude, because our hand consists of fingers and joints, therefore the power of God is distinguished by such parts.

“So that to argue, ‘because foreknowledge, as it is in us, if supposed infallible, cannot consist with the contingency of events, therefore what we call so in God cannot,’ is as far from reason, as it would be to conclude, because our eyes cannot see in the dark, therefore when God is said to see all things, his eyes must be enlightened with a perpetual sunshine; or because we cannot love or hate without passion, therefore when the Scriptures ascribe these to God, they teach us that he is liable to these affections as we are.

“We ought, therefore, to interpret all these things, when attributed to God only by way of condescension to our capacities, in order to help us to conceive what we are to expect from him, and what duty we are to pay him. Particularly, the terms of foreknowledge, predestination, nay, of understanding and will, when ascribed to him, are not to be taken strictly or properly, nor are we to think that they are in him in the same sense that we find them in ourselves; on the contrary, we are to interpret them only by way of analogy and comparison.”

These views have recently been advocated by Dr. Copleston, in his “Inquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination;” but, to this theory, the first objection is, that, like the former, it does not in the least relieve the difficulty, for the entire subduing of which it was adopted.
For though foreknowledge in God should be admitted to be something of a “very different nature” to the same quality in man, yet as it is represented as something equivalent to foreknowledge, whatever that something may be; as, in consequence of it, prophecies have actually been uttered and fulfilled, and of such a kind, too, as relate to actions for which men have in fact been held accountable; all the original difficulty of reconciling contingent events to this something, of which human foreknowledge is a “kind of shadow,” as “a map of China is to China itself,” remains in full force. The difficulty is shifted, but not removed; it cannot even be with more facility slided past; and either the Christian world must be content to forego all inquiries into these subjects, — a consummation not to be expected, however it may be wished, — or the contest must be resumed on another field, with no advantage from better ground or from broader daylight.

A farther objection to these notions is, that they are dangerous.

For if it be true, that the faculties we ascribe to God are “of a nature altogether different from our own, and that we have no direct and proper notion or conception of them,” then, in point of fact, we have no proper revelation at all of the nature of God, and of his attributes, in the Scriptures; and what we esteem to be such, is a revelation of terms, to which we can attach no “proper notion.” If this conclusion be well founded, then it is so monstrous that the premises on which it hangs must be unsound and anti-Scriptural. This alone is a sufficient general refutation of the hypothesis: but a more particular examination will show that it rests upon false assumptions; and that it introduces gratuitous difficulties, not called for by the supposed difficulty of reconciling the foreknowledge of God with the freedom of human actions.

1. It is assumed that the descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, are taken from the observations we have made on his works, and from the consciousness of those qualifications which, we conceive, would enable us to perform the like. This might be, in part, true of heathens left without the light of revelation; but it is not true of those who enjoy that advantage. Our knowledge of God comes from the Scriptures, which are taught to us in our infancy, and with which, either by reading or hearing, we become familiar as we grow up. The notions we have of God, so far as they agree with the Scriptures, are, therefore, not those which we have framed by the process assumed by the archbishop, but those which have been declared to
us in the Scriptures by God himself, as descriptions of his own nature. This makes a great difference. Our own modes of forming conceptions of the Divine nature would have no authority higher than ourselves; the announcements of Scripture are the word of God, communicating by human language the truth and reality of things, as to himself. This is the constant profession of the sacred writers; they tell us, not what there is in man which may support an analogy between man and God, but what God is in himself.

2. It is assumed, that because the nature of God is “incomprehensible,” we have no “proper notion or conception of it.” The term “proper notion” is vague. It may mean “an exact and adequate notion,” which it may be granted without hesitation that we have not; or it may mean a notion correct and true in itself, though not complete and comprehensive. A great part of the fallacy lies here. To be incomprehensible, is not, in every case, and assuredly not in this, to be unintelligible. We may know God, though we cannot fully know him; and our notions may be true, though not adequate; and they must be true, if we have rightly understood God’s revelation of himself. Of being, for instance, we can form a true notion, because we are conscious of our own existence; and though we cannot extend the conception to absolute being or self-existence, because our being is a dependent one, we can yet supply the defect, as we are taught by the Scriptures, by the negative notion of independence. Of spirit we have a true notion, and understand, therefore, what is meant, when it is said, that “God is a spirit;” and though we can have but an imperfect conception of an infinite spirit, we can supply that want also, to all practical purposes, by the negative process of removing all imperfection, or limit of excellence, from our views of the Divine nature. We have a true notion of the presence of one being with other beings, and with place; and though we cannot comprehend the mode in which God is omnipresent, we are able to conceive without difficulty the fact, that the Divine presence fills all things. We have true notions of power and knowledge; and can suppose them infinite, though how they should be so, we know not. And as to the moral attributes, such as truth, justice, and goodness, we have not only true, but comprehensive, and for any thing that appears to the contrary, adequate notions of them; for our difficulties as to these attributes do not arise from any incapacity to conceive of what is perfect truth, perfect justice, and perfect goodness, but from our inability to show how many things, which occur in the Divine government, are to be reconciled to these attributes; —
and that, not because our notions of the attributes themselves are obscure, but because the things, out of which such questions arise, are either in themselves, or in their relations, but partially understood or greatly mistaken. — Job and his friends did not differ in abstract views of the justice of the moral government of God, but in reconciling Job’s afflictions with it.

3. It is assumed that the nature of God is essentially different from the spiritual nature of man. This is not the doctrine of Scripture. — When it says, that “God is a spirit;” we have no reason to conclude that a distant analogy, such a one as springs out of mere relation, which, in a poetic imagination, might be sufficient to support a figure of speech, is alone intended. The very argument connected with these words, in the discourse of our Lord with the woman of Samaria, forbids this. It is a declaration of the nature of God, and of the worship suited to his nature; and the word employed is that by which both Jews and Samaritans had been taught by the same inspired records, which they each possessed, to designate and conceive of the intellectual nature of man. The nature of God, and the nature of man, are not the same; but they are similar, because they bear many attributes in common, though on the part of the Divine nature in a degree of perfection infinitely exceeding. The difference of degree, however, cannot prove a difference of essence, — no, nor the circumstance that one has attributes which the other has not, — in any sense of the word difference which could be of service to the advocates of this hypothesis. But if a total difference is proved as to the intellectual attributes of God and men, that difference must be extended to the moral attributes also; and so the very foundation of morals and religion would be undermined. This point was successfully pressed by Edwards against Archbishop King, and it is met very feebly by Dr. Copleston. “Edwards,” he observes, “raises a clamour about the moral attributes, as if their nature also must be held to be different in kind from human virtues, if the knowledge of God be admitted to be different in kind from ours.” Certainly this follows from the principles laid down by Archbishop King; and if his followers take his conclusions as to the intellectual attributes, they must take them as to the moral attributes also. If the faculties of God be “of a nature altogether different from ours,” we have no more reason to except from this rule the truth and the justice, than the wisdom and the prescience of God; and the reasoning of Archbishop King is as conclusive in the one case as in the other.
The fallacy of the above assumptions is sufficient to destroy the hypothesis which has been built upon them; and the argument from Scripture may be shown to be as unfounded. It is, as the above extract will show, in brief this, that as the Scriptures ascribe, by analogy, hands, and eyes, and feet to God, and also the passions of love, hatred, anger, &c, “because these would be in us the principles of such outward actions as we see he has performed; so, by the same condescension to the weakness of our capacities, we find the powers and operations of our minds ascribed to him.” But will the advocates of this opinion look steadily to its legitimate consequences? We believe not; and those consequences must, therefore, be its total refutation. For if both our intellectual and moral affections are made use of but as distant analogies, and obscure intimations, to convey to us an imperfect knowledge of the intellectual powers and affections of the Divine nature, in the same manner as human hands, and human eyes, are made to represent his power and his knowledge, — it follows that there is nothing in the Divine nature which answers more truly and exactly to knowledge, justice, truth, mercy, and other qualities in man, than the knowledge of God answers to human organs of vision, or his power to the hands or the feet; and from this it would follow, that nothing is said in the Scriptures of the Divine Being, but what is, in the highest sense, figurative, and purely metaphorical. We are no more like God in our minds than in our bodies, and it might as truly have been said with respect to man’s bodily shape, as to his mental faculties, that man was made “in the image of God.” 117

It is also to be observed, that when the Scriptures speak of the knowledge, power, and other attributes of God, in figurative language, taken from the eyes or hands of the body, it is sufficiently obvious that this language is metaphorical, not only from the reason of things itself, but because the same ideas are also quite as often expressed without figure; and the metaphor therefore never misleads us. We have sufficient proof also that it never did mislead the Jews, even in the worst periods of their history, and when their tendency to idolatry and gross superstition was most powerful. They made images in human shape of other gods; but never of JEHOVAH: the Jews were never anthropomorphites, whatever they might be beside. But it is equally certain, that they did give a literal interpretation to those passages in their Scriptures which speak of the knowledge, justice, mercy, &c, of God, as the same in kind, though infinitely higher in their degree of excellence, with the same qualities in men. The reason is obvious: they
could not interpret those passages of their holy writings which speak of the hands, the eyes, and the feet of God literally; because every part of the same sacred revelation was full of representations of the Divine nature, which declared his absolute spirituality: and they could not interpret those passages figuratively which speak of the intellectual and moral qualities of God in terms that express the same qualities in men; because their whole revelation did not furnish them with any hint, even the most distant, that there was a more literal or exact sense in which they could be taken. It was not possible for any man to take literally that sublimely figurative representation of the upholding and ruling power of God, where he is said to “hold the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his hand,” unless he could also conclude that where he is said to “weigh the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance,” he was to understand this literally also. The idea suggested is that of sustaining, regulating, and adjusting power; but if he were told, that he ought to take the idea of power in as figurative a sense as that of the waters being held in the hollow of the hand of God, and his weighing the mountains in scales, he would find it impossible to form any idea of the thing signified at all. The first step in the attempt would plunge him into total darkness. The figurative hand assists him to form the idea of managing and controlling power, but the figurative power suggests nothing; and so this scheme blots out entirely all revelation of God of any kind, by resolving the whole into figures, which represent nothing of which we can form any conception.

The argument of ARCHBISHOP KING, from the passions which are ascribed to God in Scripture, is not more conclusive. “After the same manner we find him represented as affected with such passions as we perceive to be in ourselves, as angry and pleased, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his resolutions, as full of mercy, and provoked to revenge; and yet, on reflection, we cannot think that any of these passions literally affect the Divine nature.” But why not? As they are represented in Scripture to be affections of the Divine nature, and not in the gross manner in which they are expressed in this extract, there seems nothing improper in taking them literally; and no necessity is made out to compel us to understand them to signify somewhat for which we have not a name, and of which we can form no idea. The Scriptures nowhere warrant us to consider God as a cold metaphysical abstraction; and they nowhere indicate to us that when they ascribe affections to him, they are to be taken as mere figures of speech. On the contrary, they teach us to consider them as answering substantially,
though not circumstantially to the innocent affections of men and angels. Why may not anger be “literally” ascribed to God, not indeed as it may be caricatured to suit a theory, but as we find it ascribed in the Scriptures? It is not malignant anger, nor blind, stormy, and disturbing anger, which is spoken of; nor is this always, nor need it be at any time, the anger of creatures. There is an anger which is without sin in man, — “a perception of evil, and opposition to it, and also an emotion of mind, a sensation, or passion, suitable thereto.” (Wesley.) There was this in our Lord, who was without sin; nor is it represented by the evangelists, who give us the instances, as even an infirmity of the nature He assumed. In God it may be allowed to exist in a different manner to that in which it is found even in men who are “angry and sin not;” it is accompanied with no weakness, it is allied to no imperfection; but that it does exist as truly in him as in man, is the doctrine of Scripture; and there is no perfection ascribed to God, to which it can be proved contrary, or with which we cannot conceive it to coexist. Not only anger, we are told, is ascribed to God, but “the being pleased.” Let the term used be complacency, instead of one which seems to have been selected to convey a notion of a lower and less worthy kind; and there is no incongruity in the idea. HE is the blessed or happy God, and therefore capable of pleasure. He looked upon his works, and saw that they were “good,” “very good,” — words which suggest the idea of his complacency upon their completion; and this, when separated from all connection with human infirmity, appears to be a perfection, and not a defect. To be incapable of complacency and delight, is the character of the Supreme Being of Epicurus and of the modern Hindoos, of whose internal state, so to speak, deep sleep, and the surface of an unruffled lake, are favourite figurative representations. But of this refinement we have nothing in the Bible, nor is it in the least necessary to our idea of infinite perfection. And why should not love exist in God, in more than a figurative sense? For this affection to be accompanied with perturbation, anxiety, and weak or irrational partiality, is a mere accident. So we often see it in human beings; but though this affection, without any concurrent infirmity, be ascribed to God, it surely does not follow that it exists in him, as something in nature “wholly different” from love in wise and holy creatures, in angels and in saints. Not only the beauty, the force, and the encouragement of a thousand passages of Scripture would be lost, upon this hypothesis; but their meaning also. Love in God is something, we are told, which is so called, because it produces similar effects to those which are produced by love in man; but what this something is, we are not informed; and the
revelation of Scripture as to God, is thus reduced to a revelation of his acts only, but not, in the least, of the principles from which they flow.\footnote{119}

The same observations may be applied to "mercy and revenge," by the latter of which the archbishop can mean nothing more than judicial vengeance, or retribution, though an equivocal term has been adopted, ad captandum. "Repenting, and changing his resolutions," are improperly placed among the affections; but, freed from ideas of human infirmity, they may be, without the least dishonour to the fulness of the Divine perfections, ascribed to God in as literal a sense as we find them stated in the Scriptures. They there clearly signify no more than the change which takes place in the affections of God, his anger or his love, as men turn from the practice of righteousness, or repent and turn back again to him; and the consequent changes in his dispensations toward them as their Governor and Lord. This is the Scriptural doctrine, and there is nothing in it which is not most worthy of God, though literally interpreted; nothing which is not consistent with his absolute immutability. He is unchangeably the lover and the rewarder of righteousness, unchangeably the hater and the judge of iniquity; and as his creatures are righteous or wicked, or are changed from the one state to the other, they become the objects of the different regards, and of the different administrations, of the same righteous and gracious Sovereign, who, by these very changes, shows that he is without variableness, or shadow of turning.

If then there is no reason for not attributing even certain affections of the human mind to God, when connected with absolute perfection and excellence, in their nature and in their exercise, no reason certainly can be given for not considering his intellectual attributes, represented, as to their nature though not as to their degree, by terms taken from the faculties of the human mind, as corresponding with our own. But the matter is placed beyond all doubt by the appeal which is so often made in the Bible to these properties in man, not as illustrations only of something distantly and indistinctly analogous to properties in the Divine nature, but as representations of the nature and reality of these qualities in the Supreme Being, and which are, therefore, made the grounds of argument, the basis of duty, and the sources of consolation.

With respect to the nature of God, it is sufficient to refer to the passage before mentioned, — "GOD is a SPIRIT; — where the argument is, that he requires not a ceremonial but a spiritual worship, the worship of man’s
because he himself is a Spirit. How this argument could be brought out on Archbishop King’s and Dr. Copleston’s theory, it is difficult to state. It would be something of this kind: — God is a Spirit; that is, he is called a Spirit, because his nature is analogous to the spiritual nature of man: but this analogy implies no similarity of nature: it is a mere analogy of relation; and therefore, though we have no direct and proper notion of the nature of God, yet, because he is called a Spirit, “they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” This is indeed far from being an intelligible, and it is still less a practical, argument.

With respect to his intellectual attributes, it is argued in Scripture, “He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?” Here the knowledge of God is supposed to be of the same nature as the knowledge of man. This is the sole foundation of the argument; which would have appeared indescribably obscure, if, according to Archbishop King’s hypothesis, it had stood, — “He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not have somewhat in his nature, which, because it gives rise to actions similar to those which proceed from knowledge, we may call knowledge, but of which we have no direct or proper notion?”

With respect to his moral attributes, we find the same appeals, — “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?” Here the abstract term right is undoubtedly used in the sense commonly received among men, and is supposed to be comprehensible by them. — “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” The righteousness in man which he loveth, is, clearly, correspondent in its kind to that which constitutes him eminently” the righteous Lord.” — Still more forcibly, the house of Israel is called upon “to judge between him and his vineyard:” he condescends to try his own justice by the notions of justice which prevail among men; in which there could be no meaning, if this moral quality were not in God and in man of the same kind. — “Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal?” But what force would there be in this challenge, designed to silence the murmurs of a people under correction, as though they had not been justly dealt with, if justice among men had no more resemblance to justice in God than a hand to power, or an eye to knowledge, or “a map of China to China itself?” The appeal is to a standard common to both, and by which one might be as explicitly determined as the other. Finally, the ground of all praise and adoration of God for works of mercy and judgment, — of all trust in God, on account of his faithfulness and truth, — and of all imitation of God in his mercy and compassion, — is laid in every part of
the word of God, not surely in this, that there are unknown and unapprehended qualities of some kind in God, which lead him to perform actions similar to those which flow from justice, truth and mercy in men; but in the consideration that he is justice itself, truth itself, and goodness itself. The hypothesis is therefore contradicted by the Scripture; and though it has been assumed in favour of a great truth, — that the prescience of God does not destroy the liberty of man, — that truth needs not so cumbrous and mischievous an auxiliary. Divine foreknowledge and the freedom of human agency are compatible, not because foreknowledge in God is a figure of speech, or something different in kind to foreknowledge in man; but because knowledge, simply considered, whether present, past, or future, can have no influence upon action at all, and cannot therefore change a contingent action into a necessary one.

For, after all, where does the great theological difficulty lie, for the evasion of which so much is to be sacrificed? The prescience, counsels, and plans of God, are prescience, counsels, and plans, which respect free agents, as far as men are concerned; and unless we superadd influence to necessitate, or plans to entice irresistibly and to entrap inevitably, into some given course of conduct, there is clearly no incongruity between these and human freedom. There is a difficulty in conceiving how foreknowledge should be absolute, as there is a difficulty in conceiving how God’s present knowledge should penetrate the heart of man, and know his present thoughts: but neither party argues from the incomprehensibility of the mode to the impossibility of the thing. The great difficulty does not then lie here. It seems to be planted precisely in this, that God should prohibit many things, which he nevertheless knows will occur, and in the prescience of which he regulates his dispensations to bring out of these circumstances various results, which he makes subservient to the displays of his mercy and his justice; and particularly, that in the case of those individuals who, he knows, will finally perish, he exhorts, warns, invites, and, in a word, takes active and influential means to prevent a foreseen result. This forms the difficulty; because, in the case of man, the prescience of failure would, in many cases, paralyze all effort, — whereas, in the government of God, men are treated, in our views, with as much intensity of care and effort, as though the issue of things was entirely unknown. But if the perplexity arises from this, nothing can be more clear than that the question is not, how to reconcile God’s prescience with the freedom of man; but how to reconcile the conduct of God toward man, considered as a free agent, with
his own prescience; how to assign a congruity to warnings, exhortations, and other means adopted to prevent destruction as to individuals, with the certain foresight of that terrible result. In this, however, no moral attribute of God is impugned. On the contrary, mercy requires the application of means of deliverance, if man be under a dispensation of grace; and justice requires it, if man is to be judged for the use or abuse of mercy. The difficulty then entirely resolves itself into a mere matter of feeling, which, of course, — as we cannot be judges of a nature infinite in perfection, though similar to what is excellent in our own, nor of proceedings which, in the unlimited range of the government of God, may have connections and bearings beyond all our comprehension, — we cannot reduce to a human standard. Is it, then, to adjust a mere matter of feeling, that we are to make these outrageous interpretations of the word of God, in what he hath spoken of himself? And are we to deny that we have no “proper or direct notion of God,” because we cannot find him out to perfection? This difficulty, which we ought not to dare to try by human standards, is not one however, we again remark, which arises at all out of the relation of the Divine prescience to the liberty of human actions; and it is entirely untouched by any part of this controversy. We fall into new difficulties through these speculations, but do not escape the true one. If the freedom of man is denied, the moral attributes of God are impugned; and the difficulty, as a matter of feeling, is heightened. Divine prescience cannot be denied, because the prophetic Scriptures have determined that already; and if Archbishop King’s interpretation of foreknowledge be resorted to, the something substituted for prescience, and equivalent to it, comes in, to bring us back, in a fallacious circle, to the point from which we started.

It may therefore be certainly concluded, that the omniscience of God comprehends his certain prescience of all events however contingent; and if any thing more were necessary to strengthen the argument above given, it might be drawn from the irrational, and, above all, the unscriptural consequences, which would follow from the denial of this doctrine. These are forcibly stated by President Edwards: —

“It would follow from this notion, (namely; that the Almighty doth not foreknow what will be the result of future contingencies,) that as God is liable to be continually repenting what he has done; so he must be exposed to be constantly changing his mind and intentions as to his future conduct; altering his measures, relinquishing his old designs, and forming new schemes and projections. For his
purposes, even as to the main parts of his scheme, namely, such as belong to the state of his moral kingdom, must be always liable to be broken, through want of foresight; and he must be continually putting his system to rights, as it gets out of order, through the contingency of the actions of moral agents: he must be a Being, who, instead of being absolutely immutable, must necessarily be the subject of infinitely the most numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of any being whatsoever; for this plain reason, that his vastly extensive charge comprehends an infinitely greater number of those things which are to him contingent and uncertain. In such a situation he must have little else to do, but to mend broken links as well as he can, and be rectifying his disjointed frame and disordered movements, in the best manner the case will allow. The supreme Lord of all things must needs be under great and miserable disadvantages, in governing the world which he has made, and has the care of, through his being utterly unable to find out things of chief importance, which hereafter shall befall his system; which, if he did but know, he might make seasonable provision for. In many cases, there may be very great necessity that he should make provision, in the manner of his ordering and disposing things, for some great events which are to happen, of vast and extensive influence, and endless consequence to the universe; which he may see afterward, when it is too late, and may wish in vain that he had known beforehand, that he might have ordered his affairs accordingly. And it is in the power of man, on these principles, by his devices, purposes, and actions, thus to disappoint God, break his measures, make him continually to change his mind, subject him to vexation, and bring him into confusion.”
ANOTHER of the qualities of the Divine nature, on which the sacred writers often dwell, is his unchangeableness. This is indicated in his august and awful title, I Am. All other beings are dependent and mutable, and thus stand in striking contrast to him who is independent, and therefore capable of no mutation. “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish; but thou shalt endure, — yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. — He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. — His counsel standeth fast for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. — His mercy endureth for ever. — His righteousness is like the great mountains, firm and unmovable. — I am the Lord, I change not.”

Of this truth, so important to religion and to morals, there are many confirmations from subjects constantly open to observation. The general order of nature, in the revolutions of the heavenly bodies; the succession of seasons; the laws of animal and vegetable production; and the perpetuation of every species of beings, from which, if there be occasional deviations, they prove the general regularity and stability of this material system, or they would cease to attract attention. The ample universe, therefore, with its immense aggregate of individual beings and classes of being, displays not only the all-comprehending and pervading power of God; but, as it remains from age to age subject to the same laws, and fulfilling the same purposes, it is a visible image of the existence of a being of steady counsels, free from caprice, and liable to no control. The moral government of God gives its evidence also to the same truth. The laws under which we are now placed, are the same as those which were prescribed to the earliest generations of men. What was vice then, is vice now; and what is virtue now, was then virtue. Miseries of the same kind and degree inflict punishment on the former; peace and blessedness, as formerly, accompany the latter. God has manifested his will to men by successive revelations, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian, and those distant from each other many ages, but the moral principles on which each rests, are precisely the same, and the moral ends which each proposes.
Their differences are circumstantial, varying according to the age of the world, the condition of mankind, and his own plans of infinite wisdom; but the identity of their spirit, their influence, and their character, shows their author to be an unchangeable being of holiness, truth, justice, and mercy. Vicious men have now the same reason to tremble before God, as in former periods, for he is still “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” and the penitent and the pious have the same ground of hope, and the same sure foundation of trust. These are the cautionary and the cheering moral uses to which the sacred writers constantly apply this doctrine. He is “the Lord, the hope of their fathers;” and in all the changes and vicissitudes of life, this is the consolation of his people, that he will never leave them, nor forsake them. “Though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed.”

It is true, that the Stability of the Divine operations, and counsels, as indicated by the laws of the material universe, and the revelations of his will, only show the immutability of God through these periods within which these operations and dispensations have been in force; but in Scripture they are constantly represented as the results of an immutability which arises out of the perfection of the Divine nature itself, and which is therefore essential to it. “I am the Lord, I change not:” he changes not, because he is “the Lord.” — With him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning;” because he is “the Father of lights,” the source and fulness of all light and perfection whatever. Change in any sense which implies defect and infirmity, and therefore imperfection, is impossible to absolute perfection; and immutability is therefore essential to his Godhead. In this sense, he is never capable of any kind of change whatever, as even a heathen has so strongly expressed it, οὐδενποτε, οὐδαμὴ, οὐδαμῶς αλλοιωσίν, οὐδὲμιαν ἐνδεχεται (PLATO in Phaed.) For “if we consider the nature of God, that he is a self-existent and independent Being, the great Creator and wise Governor of all things; that he is a spiritual and simple being, void of all parts and all mixture, that can induce a change; that he is a sovereign and uncontrollable Being, which nothing from without can affect or work an alteration in; that he is an eternal being, which always has, and always will go on in the same tenor of existence; an omniscient being, who, knowing all things, has no reason to act contrary to his first resolves; and, in all respects, a most perfect being, that can admit of no addition or diminution; we cannot but believe, that both in his
essence, in his knowledge, and in his will and purposes, he must of necessity be unchangeable. To suppose him otherwise, is to suppose him an imperfect being: for if he change, it must be either to a greater perfection than he had before, or to a less; if to a greater perfection, then was there plainly a defect in him, and a privation of something better than what he had, or was; then again was he not always the best, and consequently not always God: if he change to a lesser perfection, then does he fall into a defect again; lose a perfection he was possessed once of, and so ceasing to be the best being, cease at the same time to be God. The sovereign perfection of the Deity therefore is an invincible bar against all mutability; for, which way soever we suppose him to change, his supreme excellency is nulled or impaired by it: for since in all changes, there is something from which, and something to which, the change is made, a loss of what the thing had, or an acquisition of what it had not, it must follow, that if God change to the better, he was not perfect before, and so not God; if to be worse, he will not be perfect, and so no longer God, after the change. We esteem changeableness in men either an imperfection or a fault: their natural changes, as to their persons, are from weakness and vanity; their moral changes, as to their inclinations and purposes, are from ignorance or inconstancy, and therefore this quality is no way compatible with the glory and attributes of God.” (Charnock.)

In his being and perfections, God is therefore eternally THE SAME. He cannot cease to be, he cannot be more perfect because his perfection is absolute; he cannot be less so, because he is independent of all external power, and has no internal principle of decay. We are not however so to interpret the immutability of God, as though his operations admitted no change, and even no contrariety; or that his mind was incapable of different regards and affections toward the same creatures under different circumstances. He creates and he destroys; he wounds and he heals; he works and ceases from his works; he loves and hates; but these, as being under the direction of the same immutable wisdom, holiness, goodness, and justice, are the proofs, not of changing, but of unchanging principles, as stated in the preceding chapter. They are perfections, not imperfections. Variety of operation, the power to commence, and cease to act, show the liberty of his nature; the direction of this operation to wise and good ends shows its excellence. Thus in Scripture language “he repents” of threatened, or commenced punishment, and shows mercy; or “is weary of forbearing” with the obstinately guilty, and so inflicts vengeance. Thus,
“he hates the evil doer,” and “loveth the righteous.” That love too may be lost, “if the righteous turn away from his righteousness;” and that hatred may be averted, “when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness.” There is a sense in which this may be called change in God, but it is not the change of imperfection and defect. It argues precisely the contrary. If when “the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness,” God’s love to him were unchangeable, he could not be the unchangeably holy God, the hater of iniquity; and “when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness,” and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, becomes a new creature, if he did not become the object of God’s love, God would not be the unchangeable lover of righteousness. By these Scriptural doctrines, the doctrine of the Divine immutability is not therefore contradicted, but confirmed.

Various speculations, however, on the Divine immutability occur in the writings of divines and others, which, though often well intended, ought to be received with caution, and sometimes even rejected as bewildering or pernicious. Such are the notions, that God knows every thing by intuition; that there is no succession of ideas in the Divine mind, that he can receive no new idea; that there are no affections in God, for to suppose that would suppose that he is capable of emotion; that if there are affections in God, as love, hatred, &c, they always exist in the same degree, or else he would suffer change: for these and other similar speculations, recourse may be had to the schoolmen, and metaphysicians, by those who are curious in such subjects; but the impression of the Divine character, thus represented, will be found very different to that conveyed by those inspired writings in which God is not spoken of by men, but speaks of himself; and nothing could be more easily shown than that most of these notions are either idle, as assuming that we know more of God than is revealed; or such as tend to represent the Divine Being as rather a necessary, than a free agent, and his moral perfections as resulting from a blind physical necessity of nature, more than from an essential moral excellence, or, finally, as unintelligible, or absurd. As a specimen of the latter, the following passages may be taken from a work in some repute. The arguments are drawn from the schoolmen, and though broadly given by the author, will be found more or less to tinge the remarks on the immutability of God, in the most current systems of theology, and discourses on the attributes: —

“His knowledge is independent upon the objects known, therefore whatever changes there are in them, there is none in him. Things
known are considered either as past, present, or to come, and these are not known by us in the same way; for concerning things past it must be said that we once knew them; or of things to come, that we shall know them hereafter; whereas God, with one view, comprehends all things past and future, as though they were present.

“If God’s knowledge were not unchangeable, he might be said to have different thoughts or apprehensions of things at one time, from what he has at another, which would argue a defect of wisdom. And indeed a change of sentiments implies ignorance, or weakness of understanding; for to make advances in knowledge, supposes a degree of ignorance: and to decline therein is to be reduced to a state of ignorance: now it is certain, that both these are inconsistent with the infinite perfection of the Divine mind; nor can any such defect be applied to him, who is called, The only wise God.” (RIDGELEY’S Body of Divinity.)

In thus representing the knowledge of God as “independent of the objects known;” in order to the establishing of such an immutability of knowledge, as is not only not inconsistent with the perfection of that attribute, but without which it could not be perfect; and in denying that knowledge in God has any respect to the past, present, and future of things, a very important distinction between the knowledge of things possible, and the knowledge of things actual, both of which must be attributed to God, is strangely overlooked.

In respect of possible beings, the Divine knowledge has no relation to time, and there is in it no past, no future; he knows his own wisdom and omnipotence, and that is knowing every thing respecting them. But to the possible existence of things, we must now add actual existence; that commenced with time, or time with that. Here then is another branch of the Divine knowledge, the knowledge of things actually existing, a distinction with which the operations of our own minds make us familiar; and from the actual existence of things arise order and succession, past, present, and future, not only in the things themselves, but in the Divine knowledge of them also; for as there could be no knowledge of things in the Divine mind as actually existing, which did not actually exist, for that would be falsehood, not truth, so if things have been brought into actual existence in succession, the knowledge of their actual existence must have been
successive also: for as actual existences they could not be known as existing before they were.

The actual being of things added nothing to the knowledge of the infinite mind as to their powers and properties. Those he knew from himself, the source of all being, for they all depended upon his will, power, and wisdom. There was no need, for instance, to set the mechanism of this universe in motion, that he might know how it would play, what properties it would exhibit, what would be its results; but the knowledge of the universe, as a congeries of beings in ideal, or possible existence, was not the knowledge of it as a real existence; that, as far as we can see, was only possible when “he spake and it was done, when he commanded and it stood fast:” the knowledge of the actual existence of things with God is therefore successive, because things come into being in succession, and, as to actual existences, there is foreknowledge, present knowledge, and after knowledge, with God as well as with ourselves.

But not only is a distinction to be made between the knowledge of God as to things possibly, and things actually existing; but also between his knowledge of all possible things, and of those things to which he determined before their creation to give actual existence. To deny that in the Divine mind any distinction existed between the apprehension of things which would remain possible only, and things which in their time were to come into actual being, would be a bold denial of the perfect knowledge of God.

Here however it is intimated, that this makes the knowledge of God to be derived from something out of himself, and if he derive his knowledge from something out of himself, then it must be dependent.

And what evil follows from this? The knowledge of the nature, properties, and relations of things, God has from himself, that is from the knowledge he has of his own wisdom and omnipotence, by which the things that are have been produced, and from which only they could be produced, and in this respect his knowledge is not dependent; but the knowledge that they actually exist is not from himself, except as he makes them to exist; and when they are made to be, then is the knowledge of their actual existence derived from them, that is, from the fact itself. As long as they are, he knows that they are; when they cease to be, he knows that they are not; and before they exist he knows that they do not yet exist. His knowledge of the crimes of men, for instance, as actually committed, is dependent upon
the committal of those crimes. He knows what crime is, independent of its actual existence; but the knowledge of it as committed, depends not on himself, but upon the creature. And so far is this from derogating from the knowledge of God, that, according to the common reason of things, it is thus only that we can suppose the knowledge of God to be exact and perfect.

But this is not all which sustains the opinion, that there is order and succession also in the knowledge of the Divine Being. It is not only as far as the knowledge of the successive and transient actual existence of things is concerned, that both fore and after knowledge are to be ascribed to God, but also in another respect. Authors of the class just quoted, speak as though God himself had no ideas of time, and order, and succession; as though past, and present, and to come, were so entirely and exclusively human, that even the infinite mind itself had not the power of apprehending them. But if there be actually a successive order of events as to us, and if this be something real, and not a dream, then must there be a corresponding knowledge of it in him, and therefore, in all things which respect us, a knowledge of them as past, present, or to come, that is, as they are in the experience of mankind, and in the truth of things itself. Beside this, if there be what the Scriptures call “purposes” with God; if this expression is not to be ranked with those figures of speech which represent Divine power by a hand and an arm, then there is foreknowledge, strictly and properly so called, with God. The knowledge of any thing actually existing is collateral with its existence; but as the intention to produce any thing, or to suffer it to be produced, must be before the actual existence of the thing, because that is finite and caused, so that very intention is in proof of the precognition of that which is to be produced, immediately by the act of God, or mediately through his permission. The actual occurrence of things in succession as to us, and in pursuance of his purpose or permission, is therefore a sufficient proof of the existence of a strict and proper prescience of them by almighty God. As to the possible nature, and properties, and relations of things, his knowledge may have no succession, no order of time; but when those archetypes of things in the eternal mind, come into actual being by his power or permission, it is in pursuance of previous intention: ideas of time are thus created, so to speak, by the very order in which he produces them, or purposes to produce them, and his knowledge of them as realities corresponds to their nature and relations, because it is perfect knowledge. He knows them before they are produced,
as things which are to be produced or permitted; when they are produced, he knows them with the additional idea of their actual being; and when they cease to be, he knows them as things which have been.

Allied to the attribute of immutability is the liberty of God, which enables us to conceive of his unchangeableness in the noblest and most worthy manner, as the result of his will, and infinite moral excellence, and not as the consequence of a blind and physical necessity. “He doth whatever pleaseth him,” and his actions are the result of will and choice. This, as Dr. S. Clarke has well stated it, follows from his intelligence; for “intelligence without liberty, is really, in respect of any power, excellence, or perfection, no intelligence at all. It is indeed a consciousness, but it is merely a passive one; a consciousness, not of acting, but purely of being acted upon. Without liberty nothing can, in any tolerable propriety of speech, be said to be an agent, or cause of any thing. For to act necessarily, is really and properly not to act at all, but only to be acted upon.

“If the Supreme Cause is not a being endued with liberty and choice but a mere necessary agent, whose actions are all as absolutely and naturally necessary as his existence; then it will follow, that nothing which is not, could possibly have been; and that nothing which is, could possibly not have been; and that no mode or circumstance of the existence of any thing could possibly have been in any respect otherwise than it now actually is. All which being evidently most false and absurd, it follows on the contrary, that the Supreme Cause is not a mere necessary agent, but a being endued with liberty and choice.”

It is true, that God cannot do evil. “It is impossible for him to lie.” But “this is a necessity, not of nature and fate, but of fitness and wisdom; a necessity, consistent with the greatest freedom and most perfect choice. For the only foundation of this necessity, is such an unalterable rectitude of will, and perfection of wisdom, as makes it impossible for a wise being to resolve to act foolishly; or for a nature infinitely good, to choose to do that which is evil.”

Of the wisdom of God, it is here necessary to say little, because many instances of it in the application of knowledge to accomplish such ends as were worthy of himself and requisite for the revelation of his glory to his creatures, have been given in the proofs of an intelligent and designing cause, with which the world abounds. On this, as well as on the other
attributes, the Scriptures dwell with an interesting complacency, and lead us to the contemplation of an unbounded variety of instances in which this perfection of God has been manifested to men. He is “the only wise God;” and as to his works, “in wisdom hast thou made them all.” Every thing has been done by nice and delicate adjustment, by number, weight, and measure. “He seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds, to weigh the waters by measure, to make a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder.” Whole volumes have been written on this amazing subject “the Wisdom of God in the Creation,” and it is still unexhausted. Every research into nature, every discovery as to the laws by which material things are combined, decomposed, and transformed, throws new light upon the simplicity of the elements, which are the subjects of this ceaseless operation of Divine power, and the exquisite skill, and unbounded compass of the intelligence which directs it. The vast body of facts which natural philosophy has collected with so much laudable labour, and the store of which is constantly increasing, is a commentary on the words of inspiration, ever enlarging, and which will continue to enlarge as long as men remain on earth to pursue such inquiries; “he doeth great things past finding out, and wonders without number.” “Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!” The excellent books which have been written with the express design to illustrate the wisdom of God, and to exhibit the final causes of the creation, and preservation of the innumerable creatures with which we are surrounded, must be referred to on so copious a subject, and a few general remarks must suffice.

The first character of wisdom is to act for worthy ends. To act with design is a sufficient character of intelligence; but wisdom is the fit and proper exercise of the understanding; and though we are not adequate judges of what it is fit and proper for God to do in every case, yet for many of his acts the reasons are at least partially given in his own word, and they command at once our adoration and gratitude, as worthy of himself and benevolent to us. The reason of the creation of the world was the manifestation of the perfections of God to the rational creatures designed to inhabit it, and to confer on them, remaining innocent, a felicity equal to their largest capacity. The end was important, and the means by which it was appointed to be accomplished evidently fit. To be was itself made a source of satisfaction. God was announced to man as his Maker, Lord, and Friend, by revelation; but invisible himself, every object was fitted to make him present to the mind of his creature, and to be a remembrancer of his
power, glory, and care. The heavens “declared his glory;” the fruitful earth “his goodness.” The understanding of man was called into exercise by the number and variety, and the curious structure of the works of God; pleasures of taste were formed by their sublimity, beauty, and harmony. “Day unto day uttered speech, night unto night taught knowledge;” and God in his law, and in his creative munificence and preserving care, was thus ever placed before his creature, arrayed in the full splendour of his natural and moral attributes, the object of awe and love, of trust and of submission. The great moral end of the creation of man, and of his residence in the world, and the means by which it was accomplished, were, therefore, displays of the Divine wisdom.

It is another mark of wisdom when the process by which any work is accomplished is simple, and many effects are produced from one or a few elements. “When every several effect has a particular separate cause, this gives no pleasure to the spectator, as not discovering contrivance; but that work is beheld with admiration and delight as the result of deep counsel, which is complicated in its parts, and yet simple in its operation, when a great variety of effects are seen to arise from one principle operating uniformly.” (Abernethy on Attributes.) This is the character of the works of God. From one material substance, possessing the same essential properties, all the visible beings which surround us are made; the granite rock, and the central all-pervading sun; the moveless clod, the rapid lightning, and the transparent air. Gravitation unites the atoms which compose the world, combines the planets into one system, governs the regularity of their motions, and yet vast as is its power, and all-pervading as its influence, it submits to an infinite number of modifications, which allow of the motion of individual bodies; and it gives place to even contrary forces, which yet it controls and regulates. One act of Divine power in giving a certain inclination to the earth’s axis, produced the effect of the vicissitude of seasons, gave laws to its temperature, and covered it with increased variety of productions. To the composition, and a few simple laws impressed upon light, every object owes its colour, and the heavens and the earth are invested with beauty. A combination of earth, water, and the gasses of the atmosphere, forms the strength and majesty of the oak, the grace and beauty, and odour of the rose; and from the principle of evaporation, are formed clouds which “drop fatness,” dews which refresh the languid fields, springs and rivers that make the valleys, through which they flow, “laugh and sing.”
Variety of equally perfect operation is a character of wisdom. In the works of God the variety is endless, and shows the wisdom from which they spring to be infinite. Of that mind in which all the ideas after which the innumerable objects composing the universe must have had a previous and distinct existence, because after that pattern they were made; and not only the ideas of the things themselves, but of every part of which they are composed; of the place which every particle in their composition should fill, and the part it should act, we can have no adequate conception. The thought is overwhelming. This variety is too obvious to be dwelt upon; yet a few of its nicer shades may be adverted to, as showing, so to speak, the infinite resources, and the endlessly diversified conceptions of the Creator. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works!” All the three kingdoms of nature pour forth the riches of variety. The varied forms of crystalization and composition in minerals, the colours, forms, and qualities of vegetables; the kinds and properties, and habits of animals. The gradations from one class of beings to another from unformed to organic, from dead to living, from sluggishness to motion; from creeping to flying, from sensation to intellect, from instinct to reason, from mortal to immortality, from man to angel, from angel to seraph. Between similitude and total unlikeness variety has a boundless range; but its delicacy of touch, so to speak, is shown in the narrower field that lies between similarity and entire resemblance, of which the works of God present so many curious examples. No two things appear exactly alike, when even of the same kind. Plants of the same species, the leaves and flowers of the same plant, have all their varieties. Animals of the same kind have their individual character. Any two blades of grass, or particles of sand, shall show a marked difference when carefully compared. The wisdom of this appears more strongly marked when we consider that important ends, both intellectual and practical, often depend upon it. The resemblances of various natural things in greater or less degree, become the means of acquiring a knowledge of them with greater ease, because it is made the basis of their arrangement into kinds and sorts, without which the human memory would fail, and the understanding be confused. The differences in things are as important as their resemblances. This is strikingly illustrated in the domestic animals and in men. If the individuals of the former did not differ, no property could be claimed in them, or when lost they could not be recovered. The countenance of one human individual differs from all the rest of his species; his voice and his manner have the same variety. This is not only an illustration of the resources of creative
power and wisdom; but of design and intention to secure a practical end. Parents, children, and friends, could not otherwise be distinguished, nor the criminal from the innocent. No felon could be identified by his accuser, and the courts of judgment would be obstructed, and often rendered of no avail for the protection of life and property.

To variety of kind and form, we may add variety of magnitude. In the works of God, we have the extremes, and those extremes filled up in perfect gradation from magnificence to minuteness. We adore the mighty sweep of that power which scooped out the bed of the fathomless ocean, moulded the mountains, and filled space with innumerable worlds; but the same hand formed the animalcule, which requires the strongest magnifying power of optical instruments to make it visible. In that too the work is perfect. We perceive matter in its most delicate organization, bones, sinews, tendons, muscles, arteries, veins, the pulse of the heart, and the heaving of the lungs. The workmanship is as complete in the smallest as in the most massive of the works of God.

The connection and dependence of the works of God are as wonderful as their variety. Every thing fills its place, not by accident, but by design; wise regulation runs through the whole, and shows that that whole is the work of one, and of one alone. The meanest weed which grows, stands in intimate connection with the mighty universe itself. It depends upon the atmosphere for moisture, which atmosphere supposes an ocean, clouds, winds, gravitation; it depends upon the sun for colour, and, essentially, for its required degree of temperature. This supposes the revolution of the earth, and the adjustment of the whole planetary system. Too near the sun, it would be burned up; too far from it, it would be chilled. What union of extremes is here, — the grass of the earth, “which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven,” with the stupendous powers of nature, the most glorious works of the right hand of God!

So clearly does wisdom display itself, in the adoption of means to ends in the visible world, that there are comparatively few of the objects which surround us, and few of their qualities, the use of which is not apparent. In this particular, the degree in which the Creator has been pleased to manifest his wisdom is remarkably impressive.

“Among all the properties of things, we discover no inutility, no superfluity. Voluntary motion is denied to the vegetable creation, because mechanical motion answers the purpose. This raises, in
some plants, a defence against the wind, expands others toward the sun, inclines them to the support they require, and diffuses their seed. If we ascend higher toward irrational animals, we find them possessed of powers exactly suited to the rank they hold in the scale of existence.

“The oyster is fixed to his rock; the herring traverses a vast extent of ocean. But the powers of the oyster are not deficient; he opens his shell for nourishment, and closes it at the approach of an enemy. Nor are those of the herring superfluous; he secures and supports himself in the frozen seas, and commits his spawn in the summer to the more genial influence of warmer climates. The strength and ferocity of beasts of prey are required by the mode of subsistence allotted to them. If the ant has peculiar sagacity, it is but a compensation for its weakness; if the bee is remarkable for its foresight, that foresight is rendered necessary by the short duration of its harvest. Nothing can be more various than the powers allowed to animals, each in their order, yet it will be found, that all these powers, which make the study of nature so endless and so interesting, suffice to their necessities and no more.” (Sumner’s Records of Creation.)

“Equally conspicuous is the wisdom of God in the government of nations, of states, and of kingdoms: yea, rather more conspicuous; if infinite can be allowed to admit of any degrees. For the whole inanimate creation, being totally passive and inert, can make no opposition to his will. Therefore, in the natural world all things roll on in an even uninterrupted course. But It is far otherwise in the moral world, Here evil men and evil spirits continually oppose the Divine will, and create numberless irregularities. Here, therefore, is full scope for the exercise of all the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in counteracting all the wickedness and folly of men, and all the subtlety of Satan, to carry on his own glorious design, the salvation of lost mankind. Indeed, were he to do this by an absolute decree, and by his own irresistible power, it would imply no wisdom at all. But his wisdom is shown, by saving man in such a manner as not to destroy his nature, nor to take away the liberty which he has given him.” (Wesley’s Sermons.)
But in the means by which offending men are reconciled to God, the inspired writers of the New Testament peculiarly glory as the most eminent manifestations of the wisdom of God.

“For the wonderful work of redemption the apostle gives us this note, that ‘he hath therein abounded in all wisdom and prudence.’ Herein did the perfection of wisdom and prudence shine forth, to reconcile the mighty amazing difficulties and seeming contrarieties, real contrarieties indeed, if he had not some way intervened, to order the course of things, such as the conflict between justice and mercy; — that the one must be satisfied in such a way as the other might be gratified: which could never have had its pleasing grateful exercise without being reconciled to the former. And that this should be brought about by such an expedient, that there should be no complaint on the one hand, nor on the other. Herein hath the wisdom of a crucified Redeemer, that whereof the crucified Redeemer or Saviour was the effected object, triumphed over all the imaginations of men, and all the contrivances even of devils, by that death of his, by which the devil purposed the last defeat, the complete destruction of the whole design of his coming into the world, even by that very means, it is brought about so as to fill hell with horror, and heaven and earth with wonder.” (Howe’s Posthumous Works.)

“Wisdom in the treasure of its incomprehensible light, devised to save man, without prejudice to the perfections of God, by transferring the punishment to a Surety, and thus to punish sin as required by justice, and pardon the sinner as desired by mercy.” (Bates’s Harmony.)
CHAPTER 6. — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. — GOODNESS.

GOODNESS, when considered as a distinct attribute of God, is not taken in the sense of universal rectitude, but signifies benevolence, or a disposition to communicate happiness. From an inward principle of good will, God exerts his omnipotence in diffusing happiness through the universe, in all fitting proportion, according to the different capacities with which he has endowed his creatures, and according to the direction of the most perfect wisdom. “Thou art good, and doest good. — The Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. — O praise the Lord! for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.”

This view of the Divine character in the Holy Scriptures has in it some important peculiarities, too often overlooked, but which give to the revelation they make of God, a singular glory.

Goodness in God is represented as goodness of nature; as one of his essential perfections, and not as an accidental or an occasional affection; and thus he is set infinitely above the gods of the heathen, those imaginary creations of the perverted imaginations of corrupt men, whose benevolence was occasional, limited, and apt to be disturbed by contrary passions.

Such were the best views of pagans; but to us a being of a far different character is manifested as our Creator and Lord. One of his appropriate and distinguishing names, as proclaimed by himself, signifies “The gracious One,” and imports goodness in the principle; and another, “The all-sufficient and all-bountiful pourer forth of all good;” and expresses goodness in action. Another interesting view of this attribute is, that the goodness of God is efficient and inexhaustible; it reaches every fit case, it supplies all possible want; and “endureth for ever.” Hence the Talmudists explain יד ו שדד אי in Genesis 17:1, by “in aeternum sufficiens sum,” I am the eternally all-sufficient. Like his emblem, the sun, which sheds his rays upon the surrounding worlds and enlightens and cherishes the whole creation without being diminished in splendour, he imparts without being exhausted, and, ever living, has yet infinitely more to give.

A third and equally important representation is, that he takes pleasure in the exercise of benevolence; that “he delights in mercy.” It is not wrung
from him with reluctance; it is not stintedly measured out, it is not coldly imparted. God saw the works he had made, that “they were good,” with an evident gratification and delight in what he had imparted to a world “full of his goodness,” and into which sin and misery had not entered. “He is rich to all that call upon him; — he giveth liberally and upbraideth not; — exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” It is under these views, that the Scriptures afford so much encouragement to prayer and lay so strong a ground for that absolute trust in God, which they enjoin as one of our highest duties, as it is the source of our greatest comfort.

Another illustration of the Divine goodness, and which is also peculiar to the Scriptures, is, that nothing, if capable of happiness, comes immediately from his forming hands without being placed in circumstances of positive felicity. By heathens, acquainted only with a state of things in which much misery is suffered, this view of the Divine goodness could not be taken. They could not but suppose either many gods, some benevolent; and others, and the greater number, of an opposite character; or one, in whose nature no small proportion of malevolence was intermixed with milder sentiments. The Scriptures, on the contrary, represent misery as brought into the world by the fault of creatures; and that otherwise it had never entered. When God made the world, he made it good; when he made man, he made him happy, with power to remain so. He sows good seed in his field, and if tares spring up, “an enemy hath done this.” This is the doctrine of inspiration. Finally, the Scriptures, upon this lapse of man, and the introduction of natural and moral evil, represent God as establishing an order of perfectly sufficient means to remedy both. One of his names is therefore “a wg, GOEL, “the Redeemer,” and another, h nwβ, BONAH, “the Restorer.” The means by which he justifies these titles, display his goodness with such peculiar eminence, that they are called “the riches of his grace,” and sometimes “the riches of his glory.” By the incarnation and sacrificial death of the Son of God, he became the “GOEL,” the kinsman, and “Redeemer” of mankind; he bought back and “restored” the forfeited inheritance of happiness, present and eternal, into the human family, and placed it again within the reach of every human being. In anticipation of this propitiation, the first offender was forgiven and raised to eternal life, and the same mercy has been promised to all his descendants. No man perishes finally but by his own refusal of the mercy of his God. And though the restoration of individuals is not at once followed by the removal of the natural evils of pain, death, &c; for had the whole
race of man accepted the offered grace, they would not, in this present state, have been removed; yet beyond a short life on earth these evils are not extended, and, even in this life, they are made the means of moral ends, tending to a higher moral perfection, and greater happiness in another.

Such are the views of the Divine goodness as unfolded in the Scriptures; views of the utmost importance in an inquiry into the proofs of this attribute of the Divine nature, which are afforded by the actual circumstances of the world. Independent of their aid, no proper estimate can be taken of the sum of evil, which actually exists; nor of its bearing upon the Divine character. On these subjects there have been conflicting opinions; and the principal reason has been, that many persons on both sides, those who have impugned the goodness of God, and those who have defended it against objections taken from the existence of evil, have too often made the question a subject of pure "natural theology," and have therefore necessarily formed their conclusions on a partial and most defective view of the case. This is not indeed a subject for natural theology. It is absurd to make it so; and the best writers have either been pressed with the insuperable difficulties which have arisen from excluding the light which revelation throws upon the state of man in this world, and his connection with another; or, like Paley, they have burst the self-inflicted restraints, and confessed "that when we let in religious considerations, we let in light upon the difficulties of nature."

With respect to the illustrations of the Divine goodness which are presented in the natural and moral world, there are extremes of opinion on both sides. The views of some are too gloomy, and shut out much of the evidences of the Divine benignity: others embrace a system of Optimism, and exclude, on the other hand, the manifestations of the Divine justice and the retributive character of the universal Governor. The Scriptures enable us to adjust these extremes, and to give to God the glory of an absolute goodness, without limiting its tenderness by severity, or diminishing its majesty by weakness.

The dark side of the actual state of the world and of man, its inhabitant, has often, for insidious purposes, been very deeply shadowed. — The facts alleged may indeed be generally admitted. The globe, as the residence of man, has its inconveniences and positive evils; its variable, and often pernicious climates; its earthquakes, volcanoes, tempests, and inundations; its sterility in some places, which wears down man with labour; its
exuberance of vegetable and animal life in others, which generates disease or gives birth to annoying and destructive animals. The diseases of the human race; their short life and painful dissolution; their general poverty; their universal sufferings and cares; the distractions of civil society; oppressions, frauds, and wrongs; must all be acknowledged. To these may be added the sufferings and death of animals, and the universal war carried on between different creatures throughout the earth. This enumeration of evils might, indeed, be greatly enlarged without exaggeration.

But this is not the only view to be taken. It must be combined with others equally obvious; there are lights as well as shadows in the scene, and the darkest masses which it presents are mingled with bright and joyous colours.

For, as Paley has observed, “In a vast plurality of instances, in which contrivance is perceived, the design of the contrivance is beneficial.

“When God created the human species, either he wished their happiness, or he wished their misery, or he was indifferent and unconcerned about either.

“If he had wished our misery, he might have made sure of his purpose, by forming our senses to be so many sores and pains to us, as they are now instruments of gratification and enjoyment: or by placing us amidst objects so ill suited to our perceptions as to have continually offended us, instead of ministering to our refreshment and delight. He might have made, for example, every thing we tasted, bitter; every thing we saw, loathsome; every thing we touched, a sting; every smell, a stench; and every sound, a discord.

“If he had been indifferent about our happiness or misery, we must impute to our good fortune, (as all design by this supposition is excluded,) both the capacity of our senses to receive pleasure, and the supply of external objects fitted to produce it.

“But either of these, and still more both of them, being too much to be attributed to accident, nothing remains but the first supposition, that God, when he created the human species, wished their happiness; and made for them the provision which he has made, with that view and for that purpose.
“The same argument may be proposed in different terms, thus: — Contrivance proves design; and the predominant tendency of the contrivance indicates the disposition of the designer. The world abounds with contrivances; and all the contrivances which we are acquainted with, are directed to beneficial purposes. Evil no doubt exists, but is never, that we can perceive, the object of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache; their aching now and then is incidental to the contrivance, perhaps inseparable from it; or even, if you will, let it be called a defect in the contrivance; but it is not the object of it. — This is a distinction which well deserves to be attended to. In describing implements of husbandry, you would hardly, say of the sickle, that it is made to cut the reaper’s hand, though, from the construction of the instrument, and the manner of using it, this mischief often follows. But if you had occasion to describe instruments of torture or execution, this engine, you would say, is to extend the sinews; this to dislocate the joints; this to break the bones; this to scorch the soles of the feet. Here pain and misery are the very objects of the contrivance. Now nothing of this sort is to be found in the works of nature. We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or, in explaining the parts of the human body ever said, this is to irritate; this to inflame; this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys; this gland to secrete the humour which forms the gout. If by chance he come at a part of which he knows not the use, the most he can say is, that it is useless: no one ever suspects that it is put there to incommode, to annoy, or to torment.” (Natural Theology.)

The chief exceptions to this are those of venomous animals, and of animals preying upon one another; on the first of which it has been remarked, not only that the number of venomous creatures is few, but that “the animal itself being regarded, the faculty complained of is good; being conducive, in all cases, to the defence of the animal; in some cases, to the subduing of its prey; and in some probably to the killing of it, when caught, by a mortal wound inflicted in the passage to the stomach, which may be no less merciful to the victim, than salutary to the devourer. In the viper, for instance, the poisonous fang may do that which, in other animals of prey, is
done by the crush of the teeth. Frogs and mice might be swallowed alive without it.

“The second case, namely, that of animals devouring one another, furnishes a consideration of much larger extent. To judge whether, as a general provision, this can be deemed an evil, even so far as we understand its consequences, which probably is a partial understanding, the following reflections are fit to be attended to: —

“1. Immortality upon this earth is out of the question. Without death there could be no generation, no parental relation, that is, as things are constituted, no animal happiness. The particular duration of life, assigned to different animals, can form no part of the objection; because whatever that duration be, while it remains finite and limited, it may always be asked, why is it no longer? The natural age of different animals varies from a single day to a century of years. No account can be given of this; nor could any be given, whatever other proportion of life had obtained among them.

“The term, then, of life in different animals, being the same as it is, the question is, what mode of taking it away is the best even for the animal itself.

“Now, according to the established order of nature, (which we must suppose to prevail, or we cannot reason at all upon the subject,) the three methods by which life is usually put an end to, are acute diseases, decay, and violence. The simple and natural life of brutes is not often visited by acute distempers; nor could it be deemed an improvement of their lot if they were. Let it be considered, therefore, in what a condition of suffering and misery a brute animal is placed, which is left to perish by decay. In human sickness or infirmity; there is the assistance of man’s rational fellow creatures, if not to alleviate his pains, at least to minister to his necessities, and to supply the place of his own activity. A brute, in his wild and natural state, does every thing for himself. When his strength, therefore, or his speed, or his limbs, or his senses fail him, he is delivered over either to absolute famine, or to the protracted wretchedness of a life slowly wasted by scarcity of food. Is it then to see the world filled with drooping, superannuated, half-starved, helpless, and unhelped animals, that you would alter the present system of pursuit and prey?
2. This system is also to them the spring of motion and activity on both sides. The pursuit of its prey forms the employment, and appears to constitute the pleasure, of a considerable part of the animal creation. The using of the means of defence or flight, or precaution, forms also the business of another part. And even of this latter tribe we have no reason to suppose that their happiness is much molested by their fears. Their danger exists continually; and in some cases they seem to be so far sensible of it as to provide in the best manner they can against it: but it is only when the attack is actually made upon them that they appear to suffer from it. To contemplate the insecurity of their condition with anxiety and dread, requires a degree of reflection, which (happily for themselves) they do not possess. A hare, notwithstanding the number of its dangers and its enemies, is as playful an animal as any other.

It is to be observed, that as to animals, there is still much happiness.

The air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted existence. In a spring noon or a summer evening, on whichever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view. ‘The insect youth are on the wing.’ Swarms of new-born flies are trying their pinions in the air. Their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, their gratuitous activity, their continual change of place without use or purpose, testify their joy and the exultation which they feel in their lately-discovered faculties. A bee among the flowers, in spring, is one of the cheerfullest objects that can be looked upon. Its life appears to be all enjoyment; so busy and so pleased; yet it is only a specimen of insect life, with which, by reason of the animal being half domesticated, we happen to be better acquainted than we are with that of others. The whole winged insect tribe it is probable, are equally intent upon their proper employments, and, under every variety of constitution, gratified, and perhaps equally gratified, by the offices which the author of their nature has assigned to them. But the atmosphere is not the only scene of enjoyment for the insect race. Plants are covered with aphides, greedily sucking their juices, and constantly, as it should seem, in the act of sucking. It cannot be doubted but that this is a state of gratification. What else should fix them so close to the operation, and so long? Other species are running about with an alacrity in their motions which
carries with it every mark of pleasure. Large patches of ground are sometimes half covered with these brisk and sprightly natures. If we look to what the waters produce, shoals of the fry of fish frequent the margins of rivers, of lakes, and of the sea itself. These are so happy that they know not what to do with themselves. Their attitudes, their vivacity, their leaps out of the water, their frolics in it, (which I have noticed a thousand times with equal attention and amusement,) all conduce to show their excess of spirits, and are simply the effects of that excess.

“At this moment, in every given moment of time, how many myriads of animals are eating their food, gratifying their appetites, ruminating in their holes, accomplishing their wishes, pursuing their pleasures, taking their pastimes! In each individual how many things must go right for it to be at ease; yet how large a proportion out of every species are so in every assignable instant! Throughout the whole of life, as it is diffused in nature, and as far as we are acquainted with it, looking to the average of sensations, the plurality and the preponderancy is in favour of happiness by a vast excess. In our own species, in which perhaps the assertion may be more questionable than in any other, the prepollicity of good over evil, of health for example, and ease, over pain and distress, is evinced by the very notice which calamities excite. What inquiries does the sickness of our friends produce! What conversation their misfortunes! This shows that the common course of things is in favour of happiness; that happiness is the rule, misery the exception. Were the order reversed, our attention would be called to examples of health and competency instead of disease and want.”

(Paley’s Natural Theology.)

Various alleviations of positive evils, and their being connected with beneficial ends, are also to be taken into consideration. Pain teaches vigilance and caution, and renders its remission in a state of health a source of higher enjoyment. For numerous diseases also, remedies are, by the providence of God, and his blessing upon the researches of man, established. The process of mortal diseases has the effect of mitigating the natural horror we have of death. Sorrows and separations are smoothed by time. The necessity of labour obliges us to occupy time usefully, which is both a source of enjoyment, and the means of preventing much mischief in a world of corrupt and ill-inclined men; and familiarity and habit render
many circumstances and inconveniences tolerable, which, at first sight, we
conceive to be necessarily the sources of wretchedness. In all this, there is
surely an ample proof and an adorable display of the Divine benevolence.

In considering the actual existence of evils in the world, as it affects the
question of the goodness of God, we must also make a distinction between
those evils which are self inflicted, and those which are inevitable. The
question of the reconcilableness of the permission of evil with the
goodness of God, will be distinctly considered; but waiving this for the
moment, nothing can be more obvious than that man himself is chargeable
with by far the largest share of the miseries of the present life, and that they
draw no cloud over the splendour of universal goodness. View men
collectively, Sin, as a ruling habit, is not necessary. The means of
repressing its inward motions, and restraining its outward acts, are or have
been furnished to all mankind; and yet were all those miseries which are the
effects of voluntary vice removed, how little comparatively would remain
to be complained of in the world! Oppressive governments, private
wrongs, wars, and all their consequent evils, would disappear. Peace,
security, and industry, would cover the earth with fruits, in sufficient
abundance for all; and for accidental wants, the helpless, sick, and aged,
would find a prompt supply in the charity of others. Regulated passions,
and an approving conscience would create benevolent tempers, and these
would displace inward disquiet with inward peace. Disease would remain,
accidents to life and limb occur, death would ensue; but diseases would in
consequence of temperance be less frequent and formidable, men would
ordinarily attain a peaceful age, and sink into the grave by silent decay.

Beside the removal of so many evils, how greatly would the sum of
positive happiness be increased! Intellectual improvement would yield the
pleasures of knowledge; arts would multiply the comforts, and mitigate
many of the most wasting toils of life; general benevolence would unite
men in warm affections and friendships, productive of innumerable
reciprocal offices of kindness; piety would crown all with the pleasures of
devotion, the removal of the fear of death, and the hope of a still better
state of being. All this is possible. If it is not actual, it is the fault of the
human race, not of their Maker and Redeemer; and his goodness is not,
therefore, to be questioned, because they are perverse.

But let the world remain as it is, with all its self-inflicted evils, and let the
case of an individual only be considered, with reference to the number of
existing evils, from which, by the merciful provision of the grace of God he
may entirely escape, and of those which it is put into his power to mitigate, and even to convert to his benefit. It cannot be doubted as to any individual around us, but that he may escape from the practice and the consequence of every kind of vice, and experience the renewing effects of Christianity — that he may be justified by faith, adopted into the family of God, receive the hallowing influences of the Holy Ghost, and henceforth walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Why do men who profess to believe in Christianity, when employed in writing systems of “Natural Theology,” which oblige them to reason on the Divine goodness, and to meet objections to it, forgot this, or transfer to some other branch of theology what is so vital to their own argument? Here the benevolence of God to man comes forth in all its brightness, and throws its illustrations upon his dealings with man. What, in this case, would be the quantum of evil left to be suffered by this individual, morally so restored and so regenerated? No evils, which are the consequences of personal vice, often a long and fearful train. No inward disquiet, the effect of guilty or foolish passions, another pregnant source of misery. No restless pining of spirit after an unknown good, creating a distaste to present innocent enjoyments — he has found that good in the favour and friendship of God. No discontent with the allotments of Providence — he has been taught a peaceful submission. No irritable restlessness under his sufferings and sorrows, — “in patience he possesses his soul.” No fearful apprehension of the future — he knows that there is a guiding eye, and a supporting, hand above, employed in all his concerns. No tormenting anxiety as to life or death — “he has a lively hope” of an inheritance in heaven. What then of evil remains to him but the common afflictions of life, all of which he feels, but does not stink under, and which, as they exercise, improve his virtues, and by rendering them more exemplary and influential to others, are converted into ultimate benefits. Into this state any individual may be raised; and what is thus made possible to us by Divine goodness is of that attribute an adorable manifestation.

These views, however, while they remove the weight of any objections which may be made to the benevolence of the Divine character, taken from the existence of actual evils in the world, are at as great a distance as possible from that theory on this subject which has been denominated Optimism. This opinion is, briefly, not that the present system of being is the best that might be conceived; but the best which the nature of things would admit of. That between not creating at all, and creating material, and
sentient, and rational beings, as we find them now circumstanced, and with their present qualities, there was no choice. Accordingly, with respect to natural evils, the Optimists appear to have revived the opinion of the oriental and Grecian schools, that matter has in it an inherent defect and tendency to disorder, which baffled the skill of the great Artificer himself to form it into a perfect world; and that moral evil as necessarily follows from finite, and therefore imperfect, natures. No imputation, they infer, can be cast upon the Creator, whose goodness, they contend, is abundantly manifest in correcting many of these evils by skilful contrivances, and rendering them, in numerous instances, the occasion of good. Thus the storm, the earthquake, and the volcano, in the natural world, though necessary consequences of imperfection in the very nature of matter, are rendered by their effects beneficial, in the various ways which natural philosophy points out; and thus even moral evils are necessary to give birth, and to call into exercise the opposite qualities of virtue, which but for them could have no exercise; e.g. if no injuries were inflicted, there could be no place for the virtue of forgiveness. To this also is added the doctrine of general laws; according to which, they argue, the universe must be conducted; but that, however well set and constituted general laws may be, they will often thwart and cross one another; and that from thence particular inconveniencies will arise. The constitution of things is, however, good on the whole, and that is all which can be required.

The apology for the Divine goodness afforded by such an hypothesis, will not be accepted by those most anxious to defend this attribute from Atheistic cavils; and though it has had its advocates among some who have professed respect for the Scriptures, yet it could never have been adopted by them, had they not been too regardless of the light which they cast upon these subjects, and been led astray by the vain project of constructing perfect systems of natural religion, and by attempting to unite the difficulties which arise out of them, by the aid of unassisted reason. The very principle of this hypothesis, that the nature of things did not admit of a better world, implies a very unworthy notion of God. It was pardonable in the ancient advocates of the eternity of matter, to ascribe to it an essential imperfection, and inseparable evil qualities; but if the doctrine of creation in the proper sense be allowed, the omnipotence which could bring matter out of nothing, was just as able to invest it with good as with evil qualities; and he who arranged it to produce so much beauty, harmony, security, and benefit, as we actually find in the world, could be at no loss to render his
work perfect in every respect, and needed not the balancings and counteractions of one evil against another to effect his benevolent purposes. Accordingly, in fact, we find, that when God had finished his work, he pronounced it not merely good comparatively; but “very good,” or good absolutely. Nor is it true that, in the moral world, vice must necessarily exist in order to virtue; and that if we value the one, we must in the nature of things be content to take it with the other. We are told, indeed, that no forgiveness could be exercised by one human being, if injury were not inflicted by another; no meekness could be displayed, were there no anger; no long suffering were there no perverseness, &c. But the fallacy lies in separating the acts of virtue, from the principles of virtue. All the above instances may be reduced to one principle of benevolence, which may exist in as high a degree, when never called forth by such occasions; and express itself in acts quite as explicit, in a state of society from which sin is excluded. There are, for instance, according to Scripture, beings, called angels, who kept their first state, and have never sinned. In such a society as theirs, composed probably of different orders of intelligences, some more advanced in knowledge than others, some with higher, and others with lower degrees of perfection, “as one star differeth from another star in glory:” how many exercises of humility and condescension; how much kind communication of knowledge by some, and meek and grateful reception of it by others; how many different ways in which a perfect purity, and a perfect love, and a perfect freedom from selfishness may display themselves! When therefore, the principle of universal benevolence may be conceived to display itself so strikingly, in a sinless state of society, does it need injury to call it forth in the visible form of forgiveness; anger, in the form of meekness; obstinacy, in the form of forbearance? Certainly not; and it demands no effort of mind to infer, that did such occasions exist to call for it, it would be developed, not only in the particular modes just named, but in every other.

In opposition to the view taken by such theorists, we may deny, that “whatever is, is best.” We can not only conceive of a better state of things as possible; but can show that the evils which actually exist, whether natural or moral, do not exist necessarily. It is, indeed, a proof of the Divine goodness to bring good out of evil; to make storms and earthquakes, which are destructive to the few, beneficial to the many; to render the sins of men occasions to try, exercise, and perfect, various virtues in the good; but if man had been under an unmixed dispensation of
mercy, all these ends might obviously have been accomplished, independent of the existence of evils, natural or moral, in any degree. The true key to the whole subject is furnished by Divine revelation. Sin has entered the world. Man is under the displeasure of his Maker. Hence we see natural evils, and punitive acts of the Divine administration, not because God is not good, but because he is just as well as good. But man is not left under condemnation; through the propitiation made for his sins by the sacrifice of Christ, he is a subject of mercy. He is under correction, not under unmingled wrath, and hence the displays of the Divine benevolence, which the world and the acts of Providence everywhere, and throughout all ages, present; and in proportion as good predominates, kindness triumphs against severity, and the Divine character is emblazoned in our sight as one that “delighteth in mercy.”

To this representation of the actual relations in which the human race stand to God, and to no other hypothesis, the state of the world exactly answers, and thus affords an obvious and powerful confirmation of the doctrine of revelation. This view has been drawn out at length by a late ingenious writer, (Gisborne’s Testimony of Natural Philosophy to Christianity,) and in many instances, with great felicity of illustration. A few extracts will show the course of the argument. The first relates to the convulsions which have been undergone by the globe itself.

“Suppose a traveller, penetrating into regions placed beyond the sphere of his antecedent knowledge, suddenly to find himself on the confines of a city lying in ruins. Suppose the desolation, though beating marks of ancient date, to manifest unequivocal proofs that it was not effected by the mouldering hand of time, but has been the result of design and of violence. Dislocated arches, pendant battlements, interrupted aqueducts, towers undermined and subverted, while they record the primeval strength and magnificence of the structures, proclaim the determined purpose, the persevering exertions, with which force had urged forward the work of destruction. Suppose farther, that in surveying the reliques which have survived through the silent lapse of ages, the stranger discovers a present race of inhabitants, who have reared their huts amidst the wreck. He inquires the history of the scene before him. He is informed, that the city, once distinguished by splendour, by beauty, by every arrangement and provision for the security, the accommodation, the happiness of its occupiers, was reduced to its
existing situation by the deliberate resolve and act of its own lawful sovereign, the very sovereign by whom it had been erected, the emperor of that part of the world. ‘Was he a ferocious tyrant?’ — ‘No,’ is the universal reply. ‘He was a monarch pre-eminent for consistency, forbearance, and benignity.’ — ‘Was his judgment blinded, or misled, by erroneous intelligence as to the plans and proceedings of his subjects?’ — ‘He knew every thing but too well. He understood with undeviating accuracy; he decided with unimpeachable wisdom.’ — ‘The case, then,’ cries the traveller, ‘is plain: the conclusion is inevitable. Your forefathers assuredly were ungrateful rebels; and thus plucked down devastation upon their city, themselves, and their posterity.’

“The actual appearance of the globe on which we dwell, is in strict analogy with the picture of our hypothetical city.

“The earth, whatever may be the configuration, whatever may have been the perturbation or the repose, of its deep and hidden recesses, is, in its superior strata, a mass of ruins. It is not of one land, or of one clime, that the assertion is made; but of all lands, but of all climes, but of the earth universally. Wherever the steep front of mountains discloses their interior construction; wherever native caverns and fissures reveal the disposition of the component materials; wherever the operations of the miner have pierced the successive layers, beneath which coal or metal is deposited; convulsion and disruption and disarrangement are visible. Though the smoothness and uniformity which the hand of cultivation expands over some portions of the globe, and the shaggy mantle of thickets and forests with which nature veils other portions hitherto unreplenished and unsubdued by mankind, combine to obscure the vestiges of the shocks which our planet has experienced; as a fair skin and ornamental attire conceal internal fractures and disorganizations in the human frame: to the eye of the contemplative enquirer exploring the surface of the earth, there is apparent many a scar testifying ancient concussion and collision, and laceration; and many a wound yet unhealed, and opening into unknown and unfathomable profundity.

“From this universal scene of confusion in the superior strata of the earth, let the student of natural theology turn his thoughts to the
general works of God. What are the characteristics in which those works, however varied in their kinds, in their magnitudes, and in their purpose, obviously agree? What are the characteristics by which they are all, with manifest intention, imprinted? — Order and harmony. In every mode of animal life, from the human frame down to the atomic and unsuspected existences in water, which have been rendered visible by the lenses of modern science; in the vegetable world, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop by the wall; from the hyssop by the wall to the minutest plant discernible under the microscope: in the crystalizations of the mineral kingdom, of its metals, of its salts, of its spars, of its gems: in the revolution of the heavenly bodies, and in the consequent reciprocations of day, and night, and seasons: — all is regularity. In the works of God, order and harmony are the rule; irregularity and confusion form the rare exception. Under the Divine government, an exception so portentous as that which we have been contemplating, a transformation from order and harmony to irregularity and confusion involving the integuments of a world, cannot be attributed to any circumstance which, in common language, we term fortuitous. It proclaims itself to have been owing to a moral cause; to a moral cause demanding so vast and extraordinary an effect; a moral cause which cannot but be deeply interesting to man, cannot but be closely connected with man, the sole being on the face of this globe who is invested with moral agency; the sole being, therefore, on this globe who is subjected to moral responsibility; the sole being on this globe whose moral conduct can have had a particle of even indirect influence on the general condition of the globe which he inhabits.”

Another instance is supplied from the general deluge. After proving from a number of geological facts, that such a phenomenon must have occurred, the author observes: —

Thus, while the exterior strata of the earth, by recording in characters unquestionable and indelible the fact of a primeval and penal deluge, attest from age to age the holiness and the justice of God; the form and aspect of its surface are, with equal clearness, testifying from generation to generation his inherent and not less glorious attribute of mercy. For they prove that the very deluge, in its irruption employed as the instrument in his dispensation of
vengeance to destroy a guilty world, was, in its recess so regulated by him as to the varying rapidity of its subsidence, so directed by him throughout all its consecutive operations, as to prepare the desolated globe for the reception of a restored succession of inhabitants; and so to arrange the surface, as to adapt it in every climate for the sustenance of the animals, for the production of the trees and plants, and for the growth and commodious cultivation of the grain and the fruits, of which man, in that particular region, would chiefly stand in need.

“During the retirement of the waters, when a barrier of a rocky stratum, sufficiently strong for resistance, crossed the line of descent, a lake would be in consequence formed. These memorials of the dominion of that element which had recently been so destructive, remain also as memorials of the mercy of the Restorer of nature; and by their own living splendours, and by the beauty and the grandeur of their boundaries, are the most exquisite ornaments of the scenes in which we dwell.

“Would you receive and cherish a strong impression of the extent of the mercy displayed in the renewal of the face of the earth? Would you endeavour to render justice to the subject? Contemplate the number of the diversified effects on the surface of the globe, which have been wrought, arranged, and harmonized by the Divine benignity through the agency of the retiring deluge: and combine in your survey of them the two connected characteristics, utility and beauty; utility to meet the necessities and multiply the comforts of man; beauty graciously superadded to cheer his eye and delight his heart, with which the general aspect of nature is impressed. Observe the mountains, of every form and of every elevation. See them now rising in bold acclivities; now accumulated in a succession of gracefully sweeping ascents; now towering in rugged precipices; now rearing above the clouds their spiry pinnacles glittering with perpetual snow. View their sides now darkened with unbounded forests; now spreading to the sun their ample slopes covered with herbage, the summer resorts of the flocks and the herds of subjacent regions; now scooped into sheltered concavities; now enclosing within their ranges glens green as the emerald, and watered by streams pellucid and sparkling as crystal. Pursue these glens as they unite and enlarge themselves; mark their rivulets
uniting and enlarging themselves also; until the glen becomes a valley, and the valley expands into a rich vale or a spacious plain, each varied and bounded by hills, and knolls, and gentle uplands, in some parts chiefly adapted for pasturage, in others for the plough; each intersected and refreshed by rivers flowing onward from country to country, and with streams continually augmented by collateral accessions, until they are finally lost in the ocean. There new modes of beauty are awaiting the beholder; winding shores, bold capes, rugged promontories, deeply indented bays, harbours penetrating far inland and protected from every blast. But in these vast and magnificent features of nature, the gracious Author of all things has not exhausted the attractions with which he purposed to decorate inanimate objects. He pours forth beauties in detail, and with unsparing prodigality of munificence, and for whatever other reasons, for human gratification also, on the several portions, however inconsiderable, of which the larger component parts of the splendid whole consist: on the rock, on the fractured stone, on the thicket, on the single tree, on the bush, on the mossy bank, on the plant, on the flower, on the leaf. Of all these works of his wondrous hand, he is continually varying and enhancing the attractions by the diversified modes and accessions of beauty with which he invests them by the alterations of seasons, by the countless and rapid changes of light and shade, by the characteristic effects of the rising, the meridian, the setting sun, by the subdued glow of twilight, by the soft radiance of the moon; and by the hues, the actions, and the music of the animal tribes with which they are peopled.”

The human frame supplies another illustration: —

“Consider the human frame, naked against the elements, instantly susceptible of every external impression; relatively weak, unarmed; during infancy totally helpless; helpless again in old age; occupying a long period in its progress of growth to its destined size and strength; ungifted with swiftness to escape the wild beast of the forest; incapable, when overtaken, of resisting him; requiring daily supplies of food, and of beverage, not merely that sense may not be ungratified, not merely that vigour may not decline, but that closely impending destruction may be delayed. For what state does such a frame appear characteristically fitted? For what state does it appear
to have been originally designed? For a state of innocence and security; for a paradisiacal state; for a state in which all elements were genial, all external impressions innoxious; a state in which relative strength was unimportant, arms were needless; in which to be helpless was not to be insecure; in which the wild beast of the forest did not exist, or existed without hostility to man; a state in which food and beverage were either not precarious, or not habitually and speedily indispensable. Represent to yourself man as innocent, and in consequent possession of the unclouded favour of his God; and then consider whether it be probable, that a frame thus adapted to a paradisiacal state, thus designated by characteristic indications as originally formed for a paradisiacal state, would have been selected for the world in which we live. Turn to the contrary representation; a representation the accuracy of which we have already seen the pupil of natural theology constrained, by other irresistible testimonies which she has produced, to allow: regard man as having forfeited, by transgression, the Divine favour, and as placed by his God, with a view to ultimate possibilities of mercy and restoration, in a situation which, amidst tokens and means of grace, is at preset to partake of a penal character. For such a situation; for residence on the existing earth as the appointed scene of discipline at once merciful, moral, and penal; what frame could be more wisely calculated? What frame could be more happily adjusted to receive, and to convey, and to aid, and to continue the impressions, which if mercy and restoration are to be attained, must antecedently be wrought into the mind? Is not such a frame, in such a world, a living and a faithful witness, a constant and an energetic remembrancer, to natural reason, that man was created holy; that he fell from obedience: that his existence was continued for purposes of mercy and restoration; that he is placed in his earthly abode under a dispensation bearing the combined marks of attainable grace, and of penal discipline! Is not such a frame, in such a world, a preparation for the reception, and a collateral evidence to the truth, of Christianity?”

The occupations of man furnish other instances: —

“One of his most general and most prominent occupations will necessarily be the cultivation of the ground. As the products drawn from the soil form the basis, not only of human subsistence, but of
the wealth which expands itself in the external comforts and ornaments of social life; we should expect that, under a dispensation comprehending means and purposes of mercy, the rewards of agriculture would be found among the least uncertain and the most liberal of the recompenses, which Providence holds forth to exertion. Experience confirms the expectation, and attests that man is not rejected of his Creator. Yet how great, how continual is the toil annexed to the effective culture of the earth! How constant the anxiety, lest redundant moisture should corrupt the seed under the clod; or grubs and worms gnaw the root of the rising plant; or reptiles and insects devour the blade; or mildew blast the stalk; or ungenial seasons destroy the harvest! How frequently, from these, and other causes, are the unceasing labours, and the promising hopes of the husbandman terminated in bitter disappointment! Agriculture wears not, in this our planet, the characteristics of an occupation arranged for an innocent and a fully favoured race. It displays to the eye of natural theology traces of the sentence pronounced on the first cultivator, the representative of all who were to succeed: ‘Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.’ It bears, in its toils and in its solicitudes, plain indications that man is a sinner.

“Observations, in substance corresponding with those which have been stated respecting tillage, might be adduced concerning the care of flocks and herds. The return for labour in this branch of employment is, in the ordinary course of events, sufficient, as in agriculture, both to excite and sustain exertion, and to intimate the merciful benignity with which the Deity looks upon mankind. But the fatiguing superintendence, the watchful anxiety, the risks of loss by disease, by casualties, by malicious injury and depredation, and, in many countries, by the inroads of wild beasts, conspire in their amount to enforce the truth which has been inculcated. They inscribe the page of natural theology with the Scriptural denunciation: that the labour and the pain assigned to man are consequences of transgression.

“Another of the principal occupations of man consists in the extraction of the mineral contents of the earth, and in the reduction
of the metals into the states and the forms requisite for use. On the toil, the irksomeness and the dangers attendant on these modes of life, it is unnecessary to enlarge. They have been discussed; and have been shown to be deeply stamped with a penal character appropriate to a fallen and guilty race.

“Another and a very comprehensive range of employment consists in the fabrication of manufactures. These, in correspondence with the necessities, the reasonable desires, the self indulgence, the ingenuity, the caprices, and the luxury of individuals, are diversified beyond enumeration. But it may be affirmed generally concerning manufactures in extensive demand, that, in common with the occupations which have already been examined, they impose a pressure of labour, an amount of solicitude, and a risk of disappointment, such as we cannot represent to ourselves as probable in the case of beings holy in their nature, and thoroughly approved by their God. The tendency also of such manufactures is to draw together numerous operators within a small compass; to crowd them into close workshops and inadequate habitations, to injure their health by contaminated air, and their morals by contagious society.

“Another line of exertion is constituted by trade, subdivided into its two branches, domestic traffic and foreign commerce.” Both, at the same time that they are permitted in common with the modes of occupation already named to anticipate, on the whole, by the appointment of Providence, such a recompense as proves adequate to the ordinary excitement of industry, and to the acquisition of the moderate comforts of life; are marked with the penal impress of toil, anxiety, and disappointment, Natural theology still reads the sentence, ‘In the sweat of thy face, in sorrow, shalt thou eat bread.’ Vigilance is frustrated by the carelessness of associates, or profit intercepted by their iniquity. Uprightness in the dealer becomes the prey of fraud in the customer. The ship is wrecked on a distant shore, or sinks with the cargo, and with the merchant in the ocean.” (Testimony of Nature, &c.)

Numerous other examples are furnished by the author, and might be easily enlarged, so abundant is the evidence; and the whole directly connects itself with the subject under consideration. The voluntary goodness of God
is not impugned by the various evils which exist in the world, for we see them accounted for by the actual corrupt state of man, and by a righteous administration, by which goodness must be controlled to be an attribute worthy of God. It would otherwise be weakness, a blind passion, and not a wisely-regulated affection. On the other hand, there is clearly no reason for resorting to notions of necessity, and defects in the essential nature of created things, to prove that God is good; or, in other words, according to the hypothesis above stated, as good as the stubbornness of matter, and the necessity that vice and misery should exist, would allow. His goodness is limited by moral, not by physical reasons, but still, considering the globe as the residence of a fallen and perverse race, that glorious attribute is heightened in its lustre by this very circumstance; it arrays itself before us in all its affecting attributes of mercy, pity, long suffering, mitigation, and remission. It is goodness poured forth in the richest liberality, where moral order permits its unrestrained flow; and it is never withheld but where the general benefit demands it. Penal acts never go beyond the rigid necessity of the case; acts of mercy rise infinitely above all desert.

The above observations all suppose moral evil actually in the world, and infecting the whole human race; but the origin of evil requires distinct consideration. How did moral evil arise, and how is this circumstance compatible with the Divine goodness? However these questions may be answered, it is to be remembered that though the answer should leave some difficulties in full force, they do not press exclusively upon the Scriptures. Independent of the Bible, the fact is, that evil exists; and the Theist who admits the existence of a God of infinite goodness, has as large a share of the difficulty of reconciling facts and principles on this subject as the Christian, but with no advantage from that history of the introduction of sin into the world which is contained in the writings of Moses, and none from those alleviating views which are afforded by the doctrine of the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

As to the source of evil, the following are the leading opinions which have been held. Necessity, arising out of the nature of things; the Manichean principle of duality, or the existence of a good and an evil Deity; the doctrine that God is the efficient cause or author of sin; and finally, that evil is the result of the abuse of the moral freedom with which rational and accountable creatures are endowed. With respect to the first, as the necessity meant is independent of God, it refutes itself. For if all creatures are under the influence of this necessity, and they must be under it if it arise
out of the *nature of things* itself, no virtue could now exist: from the moment of creation the deteriorating principle must begin its operation, and go on until all good is extinguished. Nor could there be any return from vice to virtue, since the nature of things would on that supposition be counteracted, which is impossible.

The second is scarcely worth notice, since no one now advocates it. This heresy, which prevailed in several parts of the Christian world from the third to the sixteenth century, seems to have been a modification of the ancient Magian doctrine superadded to some of the tenets of Christianity. Its leading principle was, that our souls were made by the good principle, and our bodies by the evil one; these two principles being, according to Mani, the founder of the sect, co-eternal and independent of each other. These notions were supposed to afford an easy explanation of the origin of evil, and on that account were zealously propagated. It was, however, overlooked by the advocates of this scheme, that it left the difficulty without any alleviation at all, for “it is just as repugnant to infinite goodness to create what it foresaw would be spoiled by another, as to create what would be spoiled by the constitution of its nature.” (*King’s Origin of Evil.*)

The dogma which makes God himself the efficient cause, or author of sin, is direct blasphemy, and it is one of those culpable extravagances into which men are sometimes betrayed by a blind attachment to some favourite theory. This notion is found in the writings of some of the most unguarded advocates of the Calvinistic hypothesis, though now generally abandoned by the writers of that school. A modern defender of Calvinism thus puts in his disclaimer, “God is not the author of sin. A Calvinist who says so I regard as Judas, and will have no communion with him.” The general abandonment of this notion, so offensive and blamable, renders it unnecessary to enter into its refutation. If refutation were required it would be found in this, that the first pair who sinned were subjected to punishment for, and on account of sin; which they could not in justice have been, had not their crime been chargeable upon themselves.

The last opinion, and that which has been generally received by theologians, is, that moral evil is the result of a voluntary abuse of the freedom of the will in rational and moral agents; and that, as to the human race, the first pair sinned by choice, when the power to have remained innocent remained with them. “Why is there *sin* in the world? Because man
was created in the image of God; because he is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense or understanding, but a spirit like his Creator; a being endued not only with sense and understanding, but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty, a power of directing his own affections and actions, a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good and evil. Indeed, had not man been endued with this, all the rest would have been of no use. Had he not been a free, as well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of choosing good and evil, he chose the latter, he chose evil. Thus ‘sin entered into the world.’” (Wesley’s Sermons.)

This account unquestionably agrees with the history of the fact of the fall and corruption of man. Like every thing else in its kind, he was pronounced “very good;” he was placed under a law of obedience, which, if he had not had the power to observe it, would have been absurd; and that he had also the power to violate it, is equally clear from the prohibition under which he was laid, and its accompanying penalty. The conclusion therefore is, that “God made man upright,” with power to remain so, and, on the contrary, to sin and fall.

Nor was this liberty to sin inconsistent with that perfect purity and moral perfection with which he was endowed at his creation. Many extravagant descriptions have been indulged in by some divines as to the intellectual and moral endowments of the nature of the first man, which if admitted to the full extent, would render it difficult to conceive how he could possibly have fallen by any temptations which his circumstances allowed, or indeed how, in his case, temptation could at all exist. His state was high and glorious, but it was still a state not of reward but of trial, and his endowments and perfections were therefore suited to it. It is, indeed, perhaps going much too far to state, that all created rational beings, being finite, and endowed also with liberty of choice, must, under all circumstances, be liable to sin. It is argued by Archbishop King, that “God, though he be omnipotent, cannot make any created being absolutely perfect; for whatever is absolutely perfect, must necessarily be self-existent: but it is included in the very notion of a creature, as such, not to exist of itself; but of God. An absolutely perfect creature, therefore, implies a contradiction; for it would be of itself, and not of itself, at the same time. Absolute perfection, therefore, is peculiar to God; and should he
communicate his own peculiar perfection to another, that other would be God. Imperfection must therefore be tolerated in creatures, notwithstanding the Divine omnipotence and goodness; — for contradictions are no objects of power. God indeed might have refrained from acting, and continued alone self-sufficient and perfect to all eternity; but infinite goodness would by no means allow of this; and therefore since it obliged him to produce external things, which things could not possibly be perfect, it preferred these imperfect things to none at all; from whence it follows, that imperfection arose from the infinity of Divine goodness.”

(Origin of Evil.)

This in part may be allowed. Imperfection must, in comparison of God, and of the creature’s own capacity of improvement, remain the character of a finite being; but it is not so clear that this imperfection must, at all times, and throughout the whole course of existence, imply liability to sin. God is free, and yet cannot “be tempted of evil.” “It is impossible for God to lie;” not for want of natural freedom, but because of an absolute moral perfection. Liberty, and impeccability imply, therefore, no contradiction; and it cannot, even on rational grounds, be concluded, that a free finite moral agent may not, by the special favour of God, be placed in circumstances in which sinning is morally impossible. Revelation undoubtedly gives this promise to the faithful, in another state; a consummation to be effected, not by destroying their natural liberty, but by improving their moral condition. This was not however the case with man at his first creation, and during his abode in paradise. His state was not that of the glorified, for it was probationary, and it was yet inconceivably advanced above the present state of man; since, with a nature unstained and uncorrupted, it was easy for him to have maintained his moral rectitude, and to have improved and confirmed it. Obedience with him had not those clogs, and internal oppositions, and outward counteractions, as with us, It was, however, a state which required watchfulness, and effort, and prayer, and denial of the appetites and passions, since Eve fell by her appetite, and Adam by his passion: and slight as, in the first instance, every external influence which tended to depress the energy of the spiritual life, and lead man from God, might be, and easy to be resisted; it might become a step to a farther defection, and the nucleus of a fatal habit. Thus says Bishop Butler, with his accustomed acuteness: “Mankind, and perhaps all finite creatures, from the very constitution of their nature, before habits of virtue, are deficient, and in danger of deviating from what is right: and
therefore stand in need of virtuous habits, for a security against this danger. For, together with the general principle of moral understanding, we have in our inward frame various affections toward particular external objects. Those affections are naturally, and of right, subject to the government of the moral principle, as to the occasions upon which they may be gratified: as to the times, degrees and manner, in which the objects of them may be pursued: but then the principle of virtue can neither excite them, nor prevent their being excited. On the contrary, they are naturally felt, when the objects of them are present to the mind, not only before all consideration, whether they can be obtained by lawful means, but after it is found they cannot. For the natural objects of affection continue so: the necessaries, conveniences, and pleasures of life, remain naturally desirable; though they cannot be obtained innocently; nay, though they cannot possibly be obtained at all. And when the objects of any affection whatever cannot be obtained without unlawful means, but may be obtained by them; such affection, through its being excited, and its continuance some time in the mind, be it as innocent as it is natural and necessary; yet cannot but be conceived to have a tendency to incline persons to venture upon such unlawful means: and, therefore, must be conceived as putting them in some danger of it. Now, what is the general security against this danger, against their actually deviating from right? As the danger is, so also must the security be, from within; from the practical principle of virtue. And the strengthening or improving this principle, considered as practical, or as a principle of action, will lessen the danger, or increase the security against it. And this moral principle is capable of improvement, by proper discipline and exercise: by recollecting the practical impressions which example and experience have made upon us: and, instead of following humour and mere inclination, by continually attending to the equity and right of the case, in whatever we are engaged, be it in greater or less matters, and accustoming ourselves always to act upon it; as being itself the just and natural motive of action, and as this moral course of behaviour must necessarily, under Divine government, be our final interest. Thus the principle of virtue, improved into habit, of which improvement we are thus capable, will plainly be, in proportion to the strength of it, a security against the danger which finite creatures are in, from the very nature of propension, or particular affections.

“From these things we may observe, and it will farther show this our natural and original need of being improved by discipline, how
it comes to pass, that creatures made upright fall; and that those who preserve their uprightness, by so doing, raise themselves to a more secure state of virtue. To say that the former is accounted for by the nature of liberty, is to say no more than that an event’s actually happening is accounted for by a mere possibility: of its happening. But it seems distinctly conceivable from the very nature of particular affections or propensions. For, suppose creatures intended for such a particular state of life for which such propensions were necessary: suppose them endued with such propensions, together with moral understanding, as well including a practical sense of virtue, as a speculative perception of if: and that all these several principles, both natural and moral, forming an toward constitution of mind, were in the most exact proportion possible; i.e. in a proportion the most exactly adapted to their imended state of life; such creatures would be made upright, or finitely perfect. Now, particular propensions, from their very nature, must be felt, the objects of them being present; though they cannot be gratified at all, or not with the allowance of the moral principle. But if they can be gratified without its allowance, or by contradicting it; then they must be conceived to have some tendency, in how low a degree soever, yet some tendency, to induce persons to such forbidden gratification. This tendency, in some one particular propension, may be increased, by the greater frequency of occasions naturally exciting it, than of occasions exciting others. The least voluntary indulgence in forbidden circumstances, though but in thought, will increase this wrong tendency; and may increase it farther, till, peculiar conjunctures perhaps conspiring, it becomes effect; and danger of deviating from right, ends in actual deviation from it: a danger necessarily arising from the very nature of propension; and which, therefore, could not have been prevented, though it might have been escaped, or got innocently through. The case would be, as if we were to suppose a straight path marked out for a person, in which such a degree of attention would keep him steady: but if he would not attend in this degree, any one of a thousand objects, catching his eye, might lead him out of it. Now, it is impossible to say, how much even the first full overt act of irregularity might disorder the inward constitution, unsettle the adjustments, and alter the proportions which formed it, and in which the uprightness of its make consisted: but repetition of
irregularities would produce habits. And thus the constitution would be spoiled; and creatures made upright become corrupt and depraved in their settled character, proportionally to their repeated irregularities in occasional acts. But, on the contrary, these creatures might have improved and raised themselves to a higher and more secure state of virtue by the contrary behaviour: by steadily following the moral principle, supposed to be one part of their nature: and thus withstanding that unavoidable danger of defection, which necessarily arose from propension, the other part of it. For by thus preserving their integrity for some time, their danger would lessen; since propensions, by being inured to submit, would do it more easily and of course: and their security against this lessening danger would increase, since the moral principle would gain additional strength by exercise; both which things are implied in the notion of virtuous habits. Thus, then, vicious indulgence is not only criminal in itself, but also depraves the inward constitution and character. And virtuous self government is not only right in itself, but also improves the inward constitution or character: and may improve it to such a degree, that though we should suppose it impossible for particular affections to be absolutely coincident with the moral principle; and consequently should allow, that such creatures as have been above supposed, would for ever remain defectible: yet their danger of actually deviating from right may be almost infinitely lessened, and they fully fortified against what remains of it: if that may be called danger against which there is an adequate effectual security. But still, this their higher perfection may continue to consist in habits of virtue formed in a state of discipline, and this their more complete security remain to proceed from them. And thus it is plainly conceivable, that creatures without blemish, as they came out of the hands of God, may be in danger of going wrong; and so may stand in need of the security of virtuous habits, additional to the moral principle wrought into their natures by him. That which is the ground of their danger, or their want of security, may be considered as a deficiency in them, to which virtuous habits are the natural supply. And as they are naturally capable of being raised and improved by discipline, it may be a thing fit and requisite, that they should be placed in circumstances with an eye to it: in
circumstances peculiarly fitted to be, to them, a state of discipline for their improvement in virtue.” (Analogy.)

It is easy therefore to conceive, without supposing that moral liberty in all cases necessarily supposes liability to commit sin, how a perfectly pure and upright being might be capable of disobedience, though continued submission to God and to his law was not only possible, but practicable without painful and difficult effort. To be in a state of trial, the moral, as well as the natural freedom to choose evil was essential, and as far as this fact bears upon the question of the Divine goodness, it resolves itself into this, “whether it was inconsistent with that attribute of the Divine nature, to endow man with this liberty, or in other words to place him in a state of trial on earth, before his admission into that state from which the possibility of evil is for ever excluded.” To this, unassisted reason could frame no answer. By the aid of revelation we are assured, that benevolence is so absolutely the motive and the end of the Divine providence that thus to dispose of man, and consequently to permit his voluntary fall, is consistent with it; but in what manner it is so, is involved in obscurity: and the fact being established, we may well be content to wait for the developement of that great process which shall “justify the ways of God to man,” without indulging in speculations which, for want of all the facts of the case before us, must always be to a great extent without foundation, and may even seriously mislead. This we know, that the entrance of sin into the world has given occasion for the tenderest displays of the Divine goodness in the gift of the great Restorer; and opened, to all who will avail themselves of the blessing, the gate to “glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.” The observations of Doddridge on this subject, have a commendable modesty.

“It will still be demanded, why was moral evil permitted? To this it is generally answered, that it was the result of natural liberty; and it was fit that among all the other classes and orders of beings, some should be formed possessed of this, as it conduces to the harmony of the universe, and to the beautiful variety of beings in it. Yet still it is replied, Why did not God prevent this abuse of liberty? One would not willingly say, that he is not able to do it, without violating the nature of his creatures; nor is it possible that any should prove this. It is commonly said, that he permitted it, in order to extract from thence greater good. But it may be farther queried, Could he not have produced that greater good without such a
The MERCY of God is not a distinct attribute of his nature, but a mode of his goodness. It is the disposition whereby he is inclined to succour those who are in misery, and to pardon those who have offended.

“In Scripture language,” says Archbishop Tillotson, “it is usually set forth to us by the expressions of pity and compassion; which is an affection that causes a sensible commotion and disturbance in us, upon the apprehension of some great evil, either threatening or oppressing another; pursuant to which, God is said to be grieved and afflicted for the miseries of men. But though God be pleased in this manner to convey an idea of his mercy and tenderness to us, yet we must take heed how we clothe the Divine nature with the infirmities of human passions: we must not measure the perfections of God by the expressions of his condescension; and because he stoops to our weakness, level him to our infirmities. When therefore God is said to pity us, or to be grieved at our afflictions, we must be careful to remove the imperfection of the passion, the commotion and disturbance that it occasions, and then we may conceive as strongly of the Divine mercy and compassion as we please; and that it exerts itself in a very tender and affectionate manner.

“And therefore the Holy Scriptures not only tell us, that ‘the Lord our God is a merciful God,’ but that ‘he is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;’ that he ‘delights in mercy, — waits to be gracious, — rejoices over us to do good, — and crowneth us with his loving kindness:’ to denote the greatness and continuance of this affection, they not only tell us that ‘his mercy is above the heavens;’ that it extends itself ‘over all his works, — is laid up in store for a thousand generations, and is to endure for ever and ever:’ to express the intenseness of it, they not only tell us of the ‘multitude of his tender mercies, — the sounding of his bowels,’
the relentings of his heart, and ‘the kindlings of his repentance;’ but to give us as sensible an idea as possible of the compassions of God, they compare them to the tenderest affections among men; to that of a father toward his children: ‘As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;’ nay to the compassion of a mother toward her infant: ‘can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget,’ it is possible, though very unlikely; but though a mother may become unnatural, yet God cannot prove unmerciful.

“In short, the Scriptures every where magnify the mercy of God, and speak of it with all possible advantage, as if the Divine nature, which does in all perfections excel every other thing, did in this perfection excel itself: and of this we have a farther conviction, if we lift but up our eyes to God, and then turning them upon ourselves, begin to consider how many evils and miseries, that every day we are exposed to, by his preventing mercy are hindered, or, when they were coming upon us, stopped or turned another way: how oft our punishment has he deferred by his forbearing mercy, or, when it was necessary for our chastisement, mitigated and made light: how oft we have been supported in our afflictions by his comforting mercy, and visited with the light of his countenance, in the exigencies of our soul, and the gloominess of despair: how oft we have been supplied by his relieving mercy in our wants, and, when there was no hand to succour, and no soul to pity us, his arm has been stretched out to lift us from the mire and clay, and by a providential train of events, brought about our sustenance and support: and above all, how daily, how hourly, how minutely we offend against him, and yet, by the power of his pardoning mercy, we are still alive: for, considering the multitude, and heinousness of our provocations, ‘it is of his mercy alone that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. Whoso is wise will ponder these things, and he will understand the loving kindness of the Lord.’” (Sermons.)
CHAPTER 7. — ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. — HOLINESS.

IN creatures, *holiness* is conformity to the will of God, as expressed in his laws, and consists in abstinence from every thing which has been comprehended under the general term of *sin*, and in the habit and practice of *righteousness*. Both these terms are properly understood to include various principles, affections, and acts, which, considered separately, are regarded as vices or virtues; and, collectively, as constituting a holy or a polluted character. Our conception of holiness in creatures, both in its negative and its positive import, is therefore explicit; it is determined by the will of God. But when we speak of God, we speak of a Being who is a law to himself, and whose conduct cannot be referred to a higher authority than his own. This circumstance has given rise to various opinions on the subject of the holiness of the Divine Being, and to different modes of stating this glorious attribute of his moral nature. But without conducting the reader into the profitless question, whether there is a fixed and unalterable nature and fitness of things, independent of the Divine will on the one hand; or on the other, whether good and evil have their foundation, not in the nature of things, but only in the Divine will, which makes them such, there is a method, less direct it may be, but more satisfactory, of assisting our thoughts on this subject.

It is certain that various affections and actions have been enjoined upon all rational creatures under the general name of righteousness, and that their contraries have been prohibited. It is a matter also of constant experience and observation, that the good of society is promoted only by the one, and injured by the other; and also that every individual derives, by the very constitution of his nature, benefit and happiness from rectitude; injury and misery from vice. This constitution of human nature is therefore an indication, that the Maker and Ruler of men formed them with the intent that they should avoid vice, and practise virtue; and that the former is the object of his aversion, the latter of his regard. On this principle all the *laws*, which in his *legislative* character almighty God has enacted for the government of mankind, have been constructed. “The law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy, just, and good.*” In the administration of the world, where God is so often seen in his *judicial* capacity, the punishments which are inflicted, indirectly or immediately upon men, clearly tend to discourage
and prevent the practice of evil. “Above all, the Gospel, that last and most perfect revelation of the Divine will, instead of giving the professors of it any allowance to sin, because grace has abounded, (which is an injurious imputation cast upon it by ignorant and impious minds,) its chief design is to establish that great principle, God’s moral purity, and to manifest his abhorrence of sin, and inviolable regard to purity and virtue in his reasonable creatures. It was for this he sent his Son into the world to turn men from their iniquities, and bring them back to the paths of righteousness. For this, the blessed Jesus submitted to the deepest humiliations and most grievous sufferings. He gave himself, (as St. Paul speaks) for his Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy and without blemish: or, as it is elsewhere expressed, he gave himself for us, to redeem us from our iniquities, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In all this he is said to have done the will of his Father, and glorified him, that is, restored and promoted in the world, the cause of virtue and righteousness, which is the glory of God. And his life was the visible image of the Divine sanctity, proposed as a familiar example to mankind, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth. And as Christianity appears, by the character of its author, and by his actions and sufferings, to be a designed evidence of the holiness of God, or of his aversion to sin, and his gracious desire to turn men from it, so the institution itself is perfectly pure, it contains the clearest and most lively descriptions of moral virtue, and the strongest motives to the practice of it. It promises, as from God, the kindest assistance to men, for making the Gospel effectual to renew them in the spirit of their minds, and to reform their lives, by his Spirit sent down from heaven, on purpose to convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. To enlighten them who were in darkness, and turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to strengthen its converts to true religion, unto all obedience and long suffering, and patience, to enable them to resist temptation, to abound in the fruits of righteousness, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

(Abernethy’s Sermons.)

Since, then, it is so manifest, that “the Lord loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity,” it must be necessarily concluded, that this preference of the one, and hatred of the other, flow from some principle in his very nature. “That he is the righteous Lord. Of purer eyes than to behold evil,
— one who cannot look upon iniquity.” This principle is holiness, an attribute, which, in the most emphatic manner, is assumed by himself, and attributed to him, both by adoring angels in their choirs, and by inspired saints in their worship. He is, by his own designation, “the HOLY ONE of Israel;” the seraphs in the vision of the prophet, cry continually, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,” thus summing up all his glories in this sole moral perfection. The language of the sanctuary on earth is borrowed from that of heaven. “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art HOLY.”

If then there is this principle in the Divine mind, which leads him to prescribe, love, and reward truth, justice, benevolence, and every other virtuous affection and habit in his creatures which we sum up in the term holiness; and to forbid, restrain, and punish their opposites; that principle being essential in him, a part of his very nature and Godhead, must be the spring and guide of his own conduct; and thus we conceive without difficulty of the essential rectitude or holiness of the Divine nature, and the absolutely pure, and righteous character of his administration: “In him there can be no malice, or envy, or hatred, or revenge, or pride, or cruelty, or tyranny, or injustice, or falsehood, or unfaithfulness; and if there be any thing beside which implies sin, and vice, and moral imperfection, holiness signifies that the Divine nature is at an infinite distance from it.” (Tillotson.) Nor are we only to conceive of this quality negatively, but positively also, as “the actual, perpetual rectitude of all his volitions, and all the works and actions which are consequent thereupon; and an eternal propension thereto, and love thereof, by which it is altogether impossible to that will that it should ever vary.” (Howe.)

This attribute of holiness, exhibits itself in two great branches, justice and truth, which are sometimes also treated of as separate attributes.

JUSTICE, in its principle, is holiness, and is often expressed by the term righteousness; but when it relates to matters of government, the universal rectitude of the Divine nature shows itself in inflexible regard to what is right, and in an opposition to wrong, which cannot be warped or altered in any degree whatever. “Just and right is he.” Justice in God, when it is not regarded as universal, but particular, is either legislative or judicial.

Legislative justice determines man’s duty, and binds him to the performance of it, and also defines the rewards and punishments, which
shall be due upon the creature’s obedience, or disobedience. This branch of Divine justice has many illustrations in Scripture. The principle of it is, that absolute right which God has to the entire and perpetual obedience of the creatures which he has made. This right is unquestionable, and in pursuance of it, all moral agents are placed under law, and are subject to rewards or punishments. None are excepted. Those who have not God’s revealed law, have a law “written on their hearts,” and are “a law unto themselves.” The original law of obedience, given to man, was a law not to the first man, but to the whole human race; for if, as the apostle has laid it down, “the whole world,” comprising both Jews and Gentiles, is “guilty before God,” then the whole world is under a law of obedience. In this respect God is just in asserting his own right to be obeyed, and in claiming, from the creature he has made and preserved, the obedience, which in strict righteousness he owes; but this claim is strictly limited, and never goes beyond justice into rigour. “He is not a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed.” His law is however unchangeable in its demand upon man for universal obedience, because man is considered in it as a creature capable of yielding that obedience; but when the human race became corrupt, means of pardon, consistent with righteous government, were introduced, by the atonement for sin made by the death of Jesus Christ, received by faith; and supernatural aid was put within their reach, by which the evil of their nature might be removed, and the disposition and the power to obey the law of God imparted. The case of heathen nations to whom the Gospel is not yet preached, may hereafter be considered. It involves some difficulties, but it is enough for us to know, that “the Judge of the whole earth will do right,” and that this shall be made apparent to all creatures, when the facts of the whole case shall be disclosed, “in the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Judicial justice, more generally termed distributive justice, is that which respects rewards and punishments. God renders to men according to their works. This branch of justice is said to be remunerative, or præmiative, when he rewards the obedient; and vindictive, when he punishes the guilty. With respect to the first, it is indeed reward, properly speaking, not of debt, but of grace; for, antecedently, God cannot be a debtor to his creatures; but since he binds himself by engagements in his law, “this do and thou shalt live,” express or tacit, or attaches a particular promise of reward to some particular duty, it becomes a part of justice to perform the engagement. On this principle also, St. Paul says, Hebrews 6:10, “God
is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labour of love. And if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” “Even this has justice in it. It is upon one account, the highest act of mercy imaginable, considering with what liberty and freedom the course and method were settled wherein sins come to be pardoned: but it is an act of justice also, inasmuch as it is the observation of a method to which he had bound himself, and from which afterward, therefore, he cannot depart, cannot vary.” (Howe’s Post. Works.)

Vindictive or punitive justice, consists in the infliction of punishment. It renders the punishment of unpardoned sin certain, so that no criminal shall escape; and it guarantees the exact proportion of punishment to the nature and circumstances of the offence. Both these circumstances are marked in numerous passages of Scripture, the testimony of which on this subject may be summed up in the words of Elihu: “for the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways, yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.”

What is called commutative justice, relates to the exchange of one thing for another of equal value, and is called forth by contracts, bargains, and similar transactions among men; but this branch of justice belongs not to God because of his dignity. “He hath no equal, there are none of the same order with him to make exchanges with him or to transfer rights to him for any rights transferred from him.” “Our righteousness extendeth not to him, nor can man be profitable to his Maker.” The whole world of creatures is challenged and humbled by the question, “Who hath given him any thing, and it shall be recompensed to him again?”

Strict impartiality is, however, a prominent character in the justice of God. “There is no respect of persons with God.” As on the one hand he hateth nothing which he has made, and cannot be influenced by prejudices and prepossessions; so on the other, he can fear no one however powerful. No being is necessary to him, even as an agent to fulfil his plans, that he should overlook his offences; no combination of beings can resist the steady and equal march of his administration. The majesty of his Godhead sets him infinitely above all such considerations.

The Lord our God is the God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible, which regardeth not persons, neither taketh rewards.
— He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands.”

There are however many circumstances in the administration of the affairs of the world, which appear irreconcilable to that strict and exact exercise of justice we have ascribed to God as the supreme Ruler. These have sometimes been urged as objections, and the writers of systems of “natural religion” have often found it difficult to answer them. That has arisen from their excluding from such systems, as much as possible, the light of revelation; and on that account, much more than from the real difficulties of the cases adduced, it is, that their reasonings are often unsatisfactory. Yet if man is, in point of fact, under a dispensation of grace and mercy, and that is now in perfect accordance with the strictest justice of God’s moral government, neither his circumstances, nor the conduct of God toward him, can ever be judged of by systems which are constructed expressly on the principle of excluding all such views as are peculiar to the Scriptures. In attempting it the cause of truth has been injured rather than served; because a feeble argument has been often wielded when a powerful one was at hand; and the answer to infidel objectors has been partial, lest it should be said that the full and sufficient reply was furnished, not by human reason, but by the reason, the wisdom of God himself as embodied in his word. This is however little better than a solemn manner of trifling with truths which so deeply concern men.

But let the two facts which respect the relations of man to God as the Governor of the world, and which stamp their character upon his administration, be both taken into account; — that God is a just Ruler, — and yet, that offending man is under a dispensation of mercy, which provides, through the sacrifice of Christ meritoriously, and his own repentance and faith instrumentally, for his forgiveness, and for the healing of his corrupted nature; and a strong, and generally a most satisfactory light is thrown upon those cases which have been supposed most irreconcilable to an exact and righteous government.

The doctrine of a future and general judgment, which alone explains so many difficulties in the Divine administration, is grounded solely on the doctrine of redemption. Under an administration of strict justice, punishment must have followed offence without delay. This is indicated in the sanction of the first law, “in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” a threat which, we may learn from Scripture, would have been
executed fully, but for the immediate introduction of the redeeming scheme. If we suppose the first pair to have preserved their innocence, and any of their descendants at any period to have become disobedient, they must have borne their own iniquity; and punishment, to death and excision, must instantly have followed; for, in the case of a Divine government, where the parties are God and a creature, every sin must be considered capital, since the penalty of death is, in every case, the sentence of the Divine law against transgression. Under such an administration, no reason would seem to exist for a general judgment at the close of the world’s duration. That has its reason in the circumstances of trial in which men are placed by the introduction of a method of recovery. Justice, in connection with a sufficient atonement, admits of the suspension of punishment for offence, of long suffering, of the application of means of repentance and conversion; and that throughout the whole term of natural life. The judgment, the examination, and public exhibition of the use or abuse of this patience, and of those means, is deferred to one particular day, in which he who now offers grace shall administer justice, strict and unsparing. This world is not the appointed place of final judgment, under the new dispensation; the space of human life on earth is not the time appointed for it; and however difficult it may be, without taking these things into consideration, to trace the manifestations of justice in God’s moral government, or to reconcile certain circumstances to the character of a righteous governor, by their aid the difficulty is removed. Justice, as the principle of his administration, has a sufficiently awful manifestation in the miseries which, in this life, are attached to vice; in the sorrows and sufferings to which a corrupted race is subjected; and, above all, in the satisfaction exacted from the Son of God himself, as the price of human pardon: but since the final punishment of persevering and obstinate offenders is, by God’s own proclamation, postponed to “a day appointed, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained,” and since also the final rewards of the reconciled and recovered part of mankind are equally delayed, it is folly to look for a perfect exercise of justice in the present state.

We may learn therefore from this, —

1. That it is no impeachment of a righteous government, that external prosperity should be the lot of great offenders. It may be part of a gracious administration to bring them to repentance by favour, or it may be designed to make their fall and final punishment more marked; or it may be
intended to teach the important lesson of the slight value of outward advantages, separate from holy habits and a thankful mind.

2. That it is not inconsistent with rectitude, that even those who are forgiven and reconciled, those who are become dear to God, should be afflicted and oppressed, since their defects and omissions may require chastisement, and since also these are made the means of their excelling in virtue, of aiding their heavenly mindedness, and of qualifying them for a better state.

3. That as the administration under which man is placed is one of grace in harmony with justice, the dispensation of what is matter of pure favour, may have great variety and be even very unequal without any impeachment of justice. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard seems designed to illustrate this. To all God will be able, at the reckoning at the close of the day, to say, “I do thee no wrong;” no principle of justice will be violated; it will then appear that “he reaps not where he has not sown.” But the other principle will have been as strikingly made manifest, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?”

With nations the case is otherwise. Their rewards and punishments being of a civil nature, may be fully administered in this life, and, as bodies politic, they have no posthumous existence. Reward and retribution, in their case, have been therefore in all ages visible and striking, and, in the conduct of the great Ruler to them, “his judgments” are said to be “abroad in the earth.” In succession, every vicious nation has perished; and always by means so marked, and often so singular, as to bear upon them a broad and legible punitive character. With collective bodies of men, indeed, the government of God in this world is greatly concerned; and that both in their civil and religious character; with Churches, so to speak, as well as with states; and, in consequence, the cases of individuals, as all cannot be of equal guilt or innocence, must often be mixed and confounded. These apparent, and sometimes, perhaps, from the operation of a general system, real irregularities, can be compensated to the good, or overtaken as to the wicked, in their personal character in another state, to which we are constantly directed to look forward, as to the great and ample comment upon all that is obscure in this.

For the discoveries of the word of God as to this attribute of the Divine nature, we owe the most grateful acknowledgments to its Author. Without this revelation, indeed, the conceptions which heathens form of the justice
with which the world is administered, are exceedingly imperfect and unsettled. The course of the world is to them a flow without a direction, movement without control; and gloom and impatience must often be the result. Taught as we are, we see nothing loose or disjointed in the system. A firm hand grasps and controls and directs the whole. This governing power is also manifested to us as our friend, our father, and our God, delighting in mercy, and resorting only to severity when we ourselves oblige the reluctant measure. On these firm principles of justice and mercy, truth and goodness, every thing in private as well as public is conducted; and from these stable foundations, no change, no convulsion, can shake off the vast frame of human interests and concerns.

Allied to justice, as justice is allied to holiness, is the truth of God, which manifestation of the moral character of God has also an eminent place in the inspired volume. His paths are said to be “mercy and truth,” — his words, ways, and judgments, to be true and righteous. “His mercy is great to the heavens and his truth to the clouds. He keepeth truth for ever. The strength of Israel will not lie. It is impossible that God should lie. He is the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy: he abideth faithful.” From these and other passages, it is plain that truth is contemplated by the sacred writers in its two great branches, veracity and faithfulness, both of which they ascribe to God, with an emphasis and vigour of phrase which show at once their belief of the facts, their trust and confidence in them, and the important place which they considered the existence of such a being to hold in a system of revealed religion. It forms, indeed, the basis of all religion, to know the true God, and to know that that God is true. In the Bible this must of necessity be fully and satisfactorily declared, because of the other discoveries which it makes of the Divine nature. If it reveals to us as the only living and true God, a being of knowledge infinitely perfect, then he himself cannot be deceived; and his knowledge is true, because conformable to the exact and perfect reality of things. If he is holy, without spot or defect, then his word must be conformable to his knowledge, will, and intention. On this account he cannot deceive others. In all his dealings with us, he uses a perfect sincerity, and represents things as they are, whether laws to be obeyed, or doctrines to be believed. All is perfect and absolute veracity in his communications. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

His faithfulness relates to his engagements, and is confirmed to us with the same certainty as his veracity. If he enters into engagements, promises,
and covenants, he acts with perfect freedom. These are acts of grace to which he is under no compulsion, and they can never, therefore, be reluctant engagements which he would wish to violate; because they flow from a ceaseless and changeless inclination to bestow benefits, and a delight in the exercise of goodness. They can never be made in haste or unadvisedly, for the whole case of his creatures to the end of time is before him, and no circumstances can arise which to him are new or unforeseen. He cannot want the power to fulfil his promises, because he is omnipotent; he cannot promise beyond his ability to make good, because his fulness is infinite; finally, “he cannot deny himself,” because “he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent;” and thus every promise which he has made is guaranteed, as well by his natural attributes of wisdom, power, and sufficiency, as by his perfect moral rectitude. In this manner the true God stands contrasted with the “lying vanities” of the heathen deities; and in this his character of truth, the everlasting foundations of his religion are laid. That changes not, because the doctrines taught in it are in themselves true without error, and can never be displaced by new and better discoveries; it fails not, because every gracious promise must by him be accomplished; and thus the religion of the Bible continues from age to age, and from day to day, as much a matter of personal experience as it ever was. In its doctrines it can never become an antiquated theory, for truth is eternal. In its practical application it can never become foreign to man, for it enters now, and must ever enter into his concerns, his duties, hopes, and comforts, to the end of time. We know what is true as an object of belief, because the God of truth has declared it; and we know what is faithful, and, therefore, the object of unlimited trust, because “he is faithful that hath promised.” Whether, therefore, in the language of the old divines, we consider God’s word as “declaratory or promisory,” declaring “how things are or how they shall be,” or promising to us certain benefits, its absolute truth is confirmed to us by the truth of the Divine nature itself; it claims the undivided assent of our judgment, and the unsuspicious trust of our hearts; and presents, at once, a sure resting place for our opinions, and a faithful object for our confidence.

Such are the adorable attributes of the ever-blessed God which are distinctly revealed to us in his own word; in addition to which there are other and more general ascriptions of excellence to him, which though, from the very greatness of the subject, and the imperfection of human conception and human language, they are vague and indeterminate, serve,
for this very reason, to heighten our conceptions of him, and to set before the humbled and awed spirit of man an overwhelming height and depth of majesty and glory.

God is *perfect*. We are thus taught to ascribe to him every natural and moral excellence we can conceive; and when we have done that, we are to conclude, that if any nameless and unconceived glory be necessary to complete a perfection which excludes all deficiency; which is capable of no excess; which is unalterably full and complete — it exists in him. Every attribute in him is perfect in its *kind*, and is the most elevated of its kind. It is perfect in its *degree*, not falling in the least below the standard of the highest excellence, either in our conceptions, or those of angels, or in the possible nature of things itself. These various perfections are systematically distributed into *incommunicable*, as self existence, immensity, eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, and the like, because there is nothing in creatures which could be signified by such names; no common properties of which these could be the *common terms*, and therefore, they remain peculiarly and exclusively *proper* to God himself: and *communicable*, such as wisdom, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth, because, under the same names, they may be spoken of him and of us, though in a sense infinitely inferior. But all these perfections form the *one* glorious perfection and fulness of excellence which constitutes the Divine nature. They are not accidents, separable from that nature, or superadded to it; but they are his very nature itself, which is and must be perfectly wise and good, holy and just, almighty and all-sufficient. This idea of positive perfection, which runs through the whole of Scripture, warrants us also to conclude, that where *negative* attributes are ascribed to God, they imply always a *positive* excellence. *Immortality* implies “an undecaying fulness of life;” and when God is said to be *invisible*, the meaning is, that he is a being of too high an excellency, of too glorious and transcendent a nature, to be subject to the observation of sense.

God is *all-sufficient*. This is another of those declarations of Scripture, which exalt our views of God into a mysterious, unbounded, and undefined amplitude of grandeur. It is *sufficiency*, absolute plenitude and fulness from *himself*, eternally rising out of his own perfections; *for himself*, so that he is *ALL* to himself, and depends upon no other being; and *for all that communication*, however large and however lasting, on which the whole universe of existent creatures depends, and from which future creations, if any take place, can only be supplied. The same vast thought is expressed
by St. Paul, in the phrase “ALL IN ALL,” which, as Howe justly observes, (Posthumous Works,) “is a most godlike phrase, wherein God doth speak of himself with Divine greatness and majestic sense. Here is an ALL in ALL; an all comprehended and an all comprehending; one create, and the other uncreate; the former contained in the latter, and lost like a drop in the ocean, in the all-comprehending, all-pervading, all-sustaining uncreated fulness.” “In him we live, and move, and have our being.”

God is unsearchable. All we see or hear of him is faint and shadowy manifestation. Beyond the highest glory, there is yet an unpierced and unapproached light, a track of intellectual and moral splendour untravelled by the thoughts of the contemplating and adoring spirits who are nearest to his throne. The manifestation of this nature of God, never fully to be revealed, because infinite, is represented as constituting the reward and the felicity of heaven. This is “to see God.” This is “to be for ever with the Lord.” This is to behold his glory as in a glass, with unveiled face, and to be changed into his image, from glory to glory, in boundless progression and infinite approximation. Yet, after all, it will be as true, after countless ages spent in heaven itself, as in the present state, that none by “searching can find out God,” that is, “to perfection.” He will then be “a God that hideth himself;” and widely as the illumination may extend, “clouds and darkness will still be round about him. — His glorious name is exalted above all blessing and praise. — Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head over all. — BLESSED be the LORD GOD of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and BLESSED be his glorious NAME for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his GLORY. Amen and Amen.”
CHAPTER 8. — GOD. — THE TRINITY IN UNITY.

We now approach this great mystery of our faith, for the declaration of which we are so exclusively indebted to the Scriptures that not only is it incapable of proof à priori; but it derives no direct confirmatory evidence from the existence, and wise and orderly arrangement, of the works of God. It stands, however, on the unshaken foundation of his own word; that testimony which he has given of himself in both Testaments; and if we see no traces of it, as of his simple being and operative perfections, in the works of his creative power and wisdom, the reason is that creation in itself could not be the medium of manifesting, or of illustrating it. Some, it is true, have thought the trinity of Divine persons in the unity of the Godhead demonstrable by natural reason. Poiret and others, formerly, and Professor Kidd, recently, have all attempted to prove, not that this doctrine implies a contradiction, but that it cannot be denied without a contradiction; and that it is impossible but that the Divine nature should so exist. The former endeavours to prove that neither creation, nor indeed any action in the Deity was possible, but from this tri-unity. But his arguments, were they adduced, would scarcely be considered satisfactory, even by those whose belief in the doctrine is most settled. The latter argues from notions of duration and space, which themselves have not hitherto been satisfactorily established, and if they had, would yield but slight assistance in such an investigation. This, however, may be said respecting such attempts, that they at least show, that men, quite as eminent for strength of understanding, and logical acuteness, as any who have decried the doctrine of the trinity as irrational and contradictory, find no such opposition in it to the reason, or to the nature of things, as the latter pretend to be almost self evident. The very opposite conclusions reached by the parties, when they reason the matter by the light of their own intellect only, is a circumstance, it is true, which lessens our confidence in pretended rational demonstrations; but it gives neither party a right to assume any thing at the expense of the other. Such failures ought, indeed, to produce in us a proper sense of the inadequacy of human powers to search the deep things of God; and they forcibly exhibit the necessity of Divine teaching in every thing which relates to such subjects, and demand from us an entire docility of mind, where God himself has condescended to become our instructor.
More objectionable than the attempts which have been made to prove this mystery by mere argument, are pretensions to explain it; whether, by what logicians call immanent acts of Deity upon himself, from whence arise the relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or by assuming that the trinity is the same as the three “essential primalities, or active powers in the Divine essence, power, intellect, and will,” for which they invent a kind of personification; or, by alleging that the three persons are “Deus seipsum intelligens, Deus a seipso intellectus, et Deus a seipso amatus.” All such hypotheses either darken the counsel they would explain, by “words without knowledge,” or assume principles, which, when expanded into their full import, are wholly inconsistent with the doctrine as it is announced in the Scripture, and which their advocates have professed to receive.

It is a more innocent theory, that types and symbols of the mystery of the trinity are found in various natural objects. From the fathers, many have illustrated the trinity of persons in the same Divine nature by the analogy of three or more men having each the same human nature; by the union of two natures of man in one person; by the trinity of intellectual primary faculties in the soul, power, intellect, and will, “posse, scire, velle,” which they say are not three parts of the soul, “it being the whole soul quæ potest, quæ intelligit, et quæ vult;” by motion, light, and heat in the sun, with many others. Of these instances however, we may observe, that even granting them all to be philosophically true, they cannot be proofs; they are seldom, or very inapplicably illustrations: and the best use to which they have ever been put, or of which they are indeed capable, is to silence the absurd objections which are sometimes drawn from things merely natural and finite, by answers which natural and finite things supply; though both the objections and the answers often prove, that the subject in question is too elevated and peculiar to be approached by such analogies. Of these illustrations, as they have been sometimes called, Baxter, though inclined to make too much of them, well enough observes, — “It is one thing to show in the creatures a clear demonstration of this trinity of persons, by showing an effect that fully answereth it, and another thing to show such vestigia, adumbration, or image of it, as hath those dissimilitudes which must be allowed in any created image of God. This is it which I am to do.” (Christian Religion.) This excellent man has been charged, perhaps a little too hastily, with adopting one of the theories given above, as his own view of the trinity, a trinity of personified attributes, rather than of real persons.
It must, however, be acknowledged, that he has given some occasion for the allegation, but his conclusion is worthy of himself, and instructive to all: — “But for my own part, as I unfeignedly account the doctrine of the trinity the very sum and kernel of the Christian religion, (as exprest in our baptism,) and Athanasius his creed, the best explication of it that ever I read; so I think it very unmeet in these tremendous mysteries to go farther than we have God’s own light to guide us.” (Christ. Religion.)

The term *person* has been variously taken. It signifies in ordinary language an individual substance of a rational or intelligent nature. In the strict *philosophical* sense, it has been said, two or more persons would be two or more distinct beings. If the term person were so applied to the trinity in the Godhead, a plurality of Gods would follow; while if taken in what has been called a *political* sense, personality would be no more than relation, arising out of office. Personality in God is, therefore, not to be understood in either of the above senses, if respect be paid to the testimony of Scripture. God is *one being*; this is admitted on both sides. But he is more than one being in three relations; for *personal acts*, that is, such acts as we are used to ascribe to distinct persons, and which we take most unequivocally to characterize personality, are ascribed to each. The Scripture doctrine therefore is, that the persons are not *separate*, but *distinct*; that they “are united persons, or persons having no separate existence, and that they are so united as to be but one being, one God.” In other words, that the one Divine nature exists under the personal distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

“The word *person,*” Howe remarks, “must not be taken to signify the same thing, when spoken of God and of ourselves.” That is, not in *all respects.* Nevertheless it is the only word which can express the sense of those passages, in which personal acts are unequivocally ascribed to each of the Divine subsistences in the Godhead. Perhaps, however, one may be allowed to doubt whether, *in all respects,* the term *person* may not be taken to signify “the same thing” in us and in God. It is true, as before observed, that three *persons* among men or angels, would convey the idea of three different and separate beings; but it may be questioned whether this arises from any thing *necessarily* conveyed in the idea of *personality.* We have been accustomed to observe personality only in connection with separate beings; but this separation seems to be but a circumstance connected with personality: and not any thing which arises out of personality itself. Dr. Waterland clearly defines the term person, as it must
be understood in this controversy, to be “an intelligent agent, having the distinct characters, I, THOU, HE.” That one being should necessarily conclude one person only, is, however, what none can prove from the nature of things; and all that can be affirmed on the subject is, that it is so in fact among all intelligent creatures with which we are acquainted. Among them, distinct persons are only seen in separate beings, but this separation of being is clearly an accident of personality; for the circumstance of separation forms no part of the idea of personality itself, which is confined to a capability of performing personal acts. In God, the distinct persons are represented as having a common foundation in one being: but this union also forms no part of the idea of personality, nor can be proved inconsistent with it. The manner of the union, it is granted, is incomprehensible, and so is Deity himself, and every essential attribute with which his nature is invested.

It has been said, that the term person is not used in Scripture, and some who believe the doctrine it expresses, have objected to its use. To such it may be sufficient to reply, that provided that which is clearly stated in Scripture, be compendiously expressed by this term, and cannot so well be expressed, except by an inconvenient periphrasis, it ought to be retained. They who believe such a distinction in the Godhead as amounts to a personal distinction, will not generally be disposed to surrender a word which keeps up the force of the Scriptural idea; and they who do not, object not to the term, but to the doctrine which it conveys. It is not, however, so clear, that there is not Scripture warrant for the term itself. Our translators so concluded, when in Hebrews 1:3, they call the Son, “the express image” of the “person” of the Father. The original word is hypostasis; which was understood by the Greek fathers to signify a person, though not, it is true, exclusively so used. The sense of ὑπόστασις in this passage, must, however, be considered as fixed by the apostle’s argument, by all who allow the Divinity of the Son of God. For the Son being called “the express image” of the Father, a distinction between the Son and the Father is thus unquestionably expressed; but if there be but one God, and the Son be Divine, the distinction here expressed cannot be a distinction of essence, and must therefore be a personal one. Not from the Father’s essence, but from the Father’s hypostasis or person, can he be distinguished. This seems sufficient to have warranted the use of hypostasis in the sense of person in the early Church, and to authorize the latter term in our own language. In fact, it was by the adoption of the two great
theological terms ομοουσίος and υποσταδίς that the early Church at length reared up impregnable barriers against the two leading heresies into which almost every modification of error as to the person of Christ may be resolved. The former, which is compounded of ομος, the same, and ουσια, substance, stood opposed to the Arians, who denied that Christ was of the substance of the Father, that is, that he was truly God; the latter, when fixed in the sense of person, resisted the Sabellian scheme, which allowed the Divinity of the Son and Spirit, but denied their proper personality.

Among the leading writers in defence of the trinity, there are some shades of difference in opinion, as to what constitutes the unity of the three persons in the Godhead. Doddridge thus expresses these leading differences among the orthodox: —

“Mr. Howe seems to suppose, that there are three distinct, eternal spirits, or distinct intelligent hypostases, each having his own distinct, singular, intelligent nature, united in such an inexplicable manner, as that upon account of their perfect harmony, consent, and affection, to which he adds their mutual self consciousness, they may be called the one God, as properly as the different corporeal, sensitive, and intellectual natures united may be called one man.

“Dr. Waterland, Dr. A. Taylor, with the rest of the Athanasians, assert three proper distinct persons, entirely equal to, and independent upon each other, yet making up one and the same being; and that, though there may appear many things inexplicable in the scheme, it is to be charged to the weakness of our understanding, and not to the absurdity of the doctrine itself.

“Bishop Pearson, with whom Bishop Bull also agrees, is of opinion that though God the Father is the fountain of the Deity, the whole Divine nature is communicated from the Father to the Son, and from both to the Spirit, yet so as that the Father and the Son are not separate, nor separable from the Divinity, but do still exist in it, and are most intimately united to it. This was also Dr. Owen’s scheme.” (Lectures.)

The last view appears to comport most exactly with the testimony of Scripture, which shall be presently adduced.
Before we enter upon the examination of the Scriptural proofs of the trinity, it may be necessary to impress the reader with a sense of the importance of this revealed doctrine; and the more so as it has been a part of the subtle warfare of the enemies of this fundamental branch of the common faith, to represent it as of little consequence, or as a matter of useless speculation. Thus Dr. Priestley, “All that can be said for it is, that the doctrine, however improbable in itself, is necessary to explain some particular texts of Scripture; and that, if it had not been for those particular texts we should have found no want of it, for there is neither any fact in nature, nor any one purpose of morals, which are the object and end of all religion, that requires it.” (History of Early Opinions.)

The non-importance of the doctrine has been a favourite subject with its opposers in all ages, that by allaying all fears in the minds of the unwary, as to the consequences of the opposite errors, they might be put off their guard, and be the more easily persuaded to part with “the faith delivered to the saints.” The answer is, however, obvious.

1. The knowledge of God is fundamental to religion; and as we know nothing of him but what he has been pleased to reveal, and as these revelations have all moral ends, and are designed to promote piety and not to gratify curiosity, all that he has revealed of himself in particular, must partake of that character of fundamental importance, which belongs to the knowledge of God in the aggregate. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Nothing, therefore, can disprove the fundamental importance of the trinity in unity, but that which will disprove it to be a doctrine of Scripture.

2. Dr. Priestley allows, that this doctrine “is necessary to explain some particular texts of Scripture.” This alone is sufficient to mark its importance; especially as it can be shown, that these “particular texts of Scripture” comprehend a very large portion of the sacred volume; that they are scattered throughout almost all the books of both Testaments; that they are not incidentally introduced only, but solemnly laid down as revelations of the nature of God; and that they manifestly give the tone both to the thinking and the phrase of the sacred writers on many other weighty subjects. That which is necessary to explain so many passages of holy writ, and without which, they are so incorrigibly unmeaning, that the Socinians have felt themselves obliged to submit to their evidence, or to expunge them from the inspired record, carries with it an importance of the highest
character. So important, indeed, is it, upon the showing of these opposers of the truth themselves, that we can only preserve the Scriptures by admitting it; for they, first by excepting to the genuineness of certain passages, then by questioning the inspiration of whole books, and, finally, of the greater part, if not the whole New Testament, have nearly left themselves as destitute of a revelation from God as infidels themselves. No homage more expressive has ever been paid to this doctrine, as the doctrine of the Scriptures, than the liberties thus taken with the Bible, by those who have denied it; no stronger proof can be offered of its importance, than that the Bible cannot be interpreted upon any substituted theory, they themselves being the judges.

3. It essentially affects our views of God as the object of our worship, whether we regard him as one in essence, and one in person, or admit that in the unity of this Godhead there are three equally Divine persons. These are two very different conceptions. Both cannot be true. The God of those who deny the trinity, is not the God of those who worship the trinity in unity, nor on the contrary; so that one or the other worships what is “nothing in the world;” and, for any reality in the object of worship, might as well worship a pagan idol, which also, says St. Paul, “is nothing in the world.” “If God be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the duties owing to God will be duties owing to that triune distinction, which must be paid accordingly; and whoever leaves any of them out of his idea of God, comes so far short of honouring God perfectly, and of serving him in proportion to the manifestations he has made of himself.” (Waterland.)

As the object of our worship is affected by our respective views on this great subject, so also its character. We are between the extremes of pure and acceptable devotion, and of gross and offensive idolatry, and must run to one or the other. If the doctrine of the trinity be true, then those who deny it do not worship the God of the Scriptures, but a fiction of their own framing; if it be false, the trinitarian, by paying Divine honours to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, is equally guilty of idolatry, though in another mode.

Now it is surely important to determine this; and which is the most likely to have fallen into this false and corrupt worship, the very primâ facie evidence may determine: — the trinitarian, who has the letter, and plain, common-sense interpretation of Scripture for his warrant; — or he who confesses that he must resort to all the artifices of criticism, and boldly
challenge the inspiration of an authenticated volume, to get rid of the evidence which it exhibits against him, if taken in its first and most obvious meaning. It is not now attempted to prove the Socinian heresy from the Scriptures; this has long been given up, and the main effort of all modern writers on that side has been directed to cavil at the adduced proofs of the opposite doctrine. They are as to Scripture argument, wholly on the defensive, and thus allow, at least, that they have no direct warrant for their opinions. We acknowledge, indeed, that the charge of idolatry would lie against us, could we be proved in error; but they seem to forget, that it lies against them, should they be in error, and that they are in this error, they themselves tacitly acknowledge, if the Scriptures, which they now in great measure reject, must determine the question. On that authority, we may unhesitatingly account them idolaters, worshippers of what “is nothing in the world;” and not of the God revealed in the Bible. Thus, the only hope which is left to the Socinian, is held on the same tenure as the hope of the Deist, — the forlorn hope that the Scriptures, which he rejects, are not true; for if those texts they reject, and those books which they hold of no authority be established, then this whole charge, and its consequences, lie full against them.

4. Dr. Priestley objects, “that no fact in nature, nor any one purpose of morals, requires this doctrine.” The first part of the objection is futile and trifling, if he meant that the facts of nature do not require this doctrine for their philosophical illustration; for who seeks the explication of natural phenomena in theological doctrines? But there is one view in which even right views of the facts of nature depend upon proper views of the Godhead. All nature has a theological reason, and a theological end; and its interpretation in these respects, rests wholly upon the person and office of our Lord. All things were made by the Son and for him; a theological view of the natural world, which is large or contracted, emphatic or spiritless, according to the conceptions which we form of the Son of God, “by whom, and for whom” it was built, and is preserved. The reason why the present circumstances of the natural world are, as before shown, neither wholly perfect, nor without large remains of original perfection; neither accordant with the condition of condemned, nor of innocent creatures; but adapted only to such a state of man as the redeeming scheme supposes; cannot, on the Socinian hypothesis, be discovered; for that redeeming scheme depends for its character upon our views of the person of Christ. Without a settled opinion on these points, we are therefore, in
this respect also, without the key to a just and full explanation of the theological character of our present residence, the world.

Another relation of the natural world to theology, lies in its duration. It was made for Christ; and the reason which determines that it shall be burned up centres in him. He is appointed judge, and shall terminate the present scene of things, by destroying the frame of the visible universe, when the probation of its inhabitants shall have expired. I beg the reader to turn to the remarks before made on the reason of a general judgment being found in the fact, that man is under grace, and not strict law; and the argument offered to show, that if we were under a covenant of mere obedience, no cause for such an appointment, as that of a general judgment, would be obvious. If those views be correct, then the reason, both of a general judgment and the final destruction of the world, is to be found in the system of redemption, and consequently in such views of the person of Christ, as are not found in the Socinian scheme. The conclusion therefore is, that as “to facts in nature,” even they are intimately connected, in several very important respects, which no wise man can overlook, with the doctrine of the trinity. Socinianism cannot explain the peculiar physical state of the world as connected with a state of trial; and the general judgment, and the “end of all things,” bear no relation to its theology.

The connection of the orthodox doctrine with morals is, of course, still more direct and striking; and dim must have been that intellectual eye which could not discern that, granting to the believers in the trinity their own principles, its relation to morals is vital and essential. Whether those principles are supported by the Scripture, is another consideration. If they could be disproved, then the doctrine ought to be rejected on a higher ground than that here urged; but to attempt to push it aside, on the pretence of its having no connection with morals, was but a very unworthy mode of veiling the case. For what are “morals,” but conformity to a Divine law, which law must take its character from its author? The trinitarian scheme is essentially connected with the doctrine of atonement; and what is called the unitarian theory necessarily excludes atonement. From this arise opposite views of God, as the Governor of the world; of the law under which we are placed; of the nature and consequences of sin, the violation of that law; points which have an essential relation to morals, because they affect the nature of the sanctions which accompany the law of God. He who denies the doctrine of the trinity, and its necessary adjunct, the atonement, makes sin a matter of comparatively trifling moment: God
is not strict to punish it; and if punishment follow, it is not eternal. Whether, under these soft and easy views of the law of God, and of its transgression by sin, morals can have an equal sanction, or human conduct be equally restrained, are points too obvious to be argued; but a subject which involves views of the judicial character of God so opposite, and of the evil and penalty of offence, must be considered as standing in the most intimate relation with every question of morals. It is presumed, too, in the objection, that faith, or, in other words, a firm belief in the testimony of God, is no part of morality. It is, however, sufficient to place this matter in a very different light if we recollect, that to believe is so much a command that the highest sanction is connected with it. “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Nothing, therefore, can be more important to us than to examine, without captiousness and the spirit of unbelief, what God hath revealed as the object of our faith, since the rejection of any revealed truth, under the influence of pride, whether of the reason or the heart; or through affectation of independence; or love of the world; or any other corrupt motive; must be certainly visited with punishment: the law of faith having the same authority, and the same sanction as the law of works. It is, therefore, a point of duty to believe, because it is a point of obedience, and hence St. Paul speaks of “the obedience of faith.” For as it has been well observed, “As to the nature of faith, it is a matter of obligation, as being that natural homage which the understanding or will pays to God in receiving and assenting to what he reveals upon his bare word or authority. It is a humiliation of ourselves, and a glorification of God.” (Norris on Christian Prudence.) It may be added, too, that faith, which implies a submission to God, is an important branch also of discipline.

The objection, that there can be no faith where there is not sufficient evidence to command it, will not affect this conclusion. For when once the evidence of a Divine revelation is admitted, our duty to receive its doctrines does not rest upon the rational evidence we may have of their truth; but upon the much easier and plainer evidence, that they are among the things actually revealed. He, therefore, who admits a Divine revelation, and rejects its doctrines, because he has not a satisfactory rational evidence of them, is more obviously criminal in his unbelief than he who rejects the revelation itself; for he openly debates the case with his Maker, a circumstance which indicates, in the most striking manner, a corrupt habit of mind. It is, indeed, often pretended, that such truths are rejected, not so
much on this account, as that they do not appear to be the sense of the revelation itself. But this cannot be urged by those who openly lay it down as a principle, that a true revelation can contain nothing which to them appears unreasonable; or that if it does, they are bound by the law of their nature not to admit it. Nor will it appear to be any other than an unworthy and dishonest pretence in all cases where such kinds of criticism are resorted to, to alter the sense of a text, or to disprove its authority, as they would not allow in the case of texts supposed, by a partial construction, to favour their own opinion; or such as would be condemned by all learned and sober persons as hypercritical and violent, if applied to any other writings. It may also be added, that should any of the great qualities required in a serious and honest inquirer after truth have been uncultivated and unapplied, though a sincere conviction of the truth of an erroneous conclusion may exist the guilt of unbelief would not be removed by such kind of sincerity. If there has been no anxiety to be right; no prayer earnest and devout, offered to God, to be kept from error; if an humble sense of human liability to err has not been maintained; if diligence in looking out for proofs, and patience and perseverance in inquiry, have not been exerted; if honesty in balancing evidence, and a firm resolution to embrace the truth, whatever prejudices or interests it may contradict or oppose, have not been felt; even sincerity in believing that to be true, which in the present state of a judgment determined, probably, before all the means of information have been resorted to, and, perhaps, under the perverting influences of a worldly or carnal state of mind, may appear to be so, will be no excuse. We are under “a law of faith,” and that law cannot be supposed to be so pliable and nugatory, as they who contend for the right of believing only what they please, would make it.

These observations will show the connection of the doctrine of the trinity with morals, the point denied by Dr. Priestley.

But, to leave this objection for views of a larger extent; our love to God, which is the sum of every duty, its sanctifying motive, and consequently a compendium of all true religion, is most intimately and even essentially connected with the doctrine in question. God’s love to us is the ground of our love to him; and by our views of that, it must be heightened or diminished. The love of God to man in the gift of his Son is that manifestation of it on which the Scriptures most emphatically and frequently dwell, and on which they establish our duty of loving God and one another. Now the estimate which we are to take of the love of God,
must be the value of his gifts to us. His greatest gift is the gift of his Son, through whom alone we have the promise of everlasting life; but our estimate of the love which gives must be widely different, according as we regard the gift bestowed, — as a creature, or as a Divine person, — as merely a Son of man, or as the Son of God. If the former only, it is difficult to conceive in what this love, constantly represented as “unspeakable” and astonishing, could consist. Indeed, if we suppose Christ to be a man only, on the Socinian scheme, or as an exalted creature, according to the Arians, God might be rather said to have “so loved his Son” than us, as to send him into the world, on a service so honourable, and which was to be followed by so high and vast a reward, that he, a creature, should be advanced to universal dominion and receive universal homage as the price only of temporary sufferings, which, upon either the Socinian or Arian scheme, were not greater than those which many of his disciples endured after him, and, in many instances, not so great.  

For the same reason, the doctrine which denies our Lord’s Divinity diminishes the love of Christ himself, takes away its generosity and devotedness, presents it under views infinitely below those contained in the New Testament, and weakens the motives which are drawn from it to excite our gratitude and obedience. “If Christ was in the form of God, equal with God, and very God, it was then an act of infinite love and condescension in him to become man; but if he was no more than a creature, it was no surprising condescension to embark in a work so glorious; such as being the Saviour of mankind, and such as would advance him to be Lord and Judge of the world, to be admired, reverenced, and adored, both by men and angels.” (Waterland’s Importance.) To this it may be added, that the idea of disinterested generous love, such as the love of Christ is represented to be by the evangelists and the apostles, cannot be supported upon any supposition but that he was properly a Divine person. As a man and as a creature only, however exalted, he would have profited by his exaltation; but, considered as Divine, Christ gained nothing. God is full and perfect — he is exalted “above blessing and praise:” and, therefore, our Lord, in that Divine nature, prays that he might be glorified with the Father, with the glory he had before. Not a glory which was new to him; not a glory heightened in its degree; but the glory which he had with the Father “before the world was.” In a manner mysterious to us, even as to his Divine nature, “he emptied himself — he humbled himself;” but in that nature he returned to a glory which he had before the world was. The
whole, therefore, was in him *generous disinterested* love, ineffable and affecting condescension. The heresy of the Socinians and Arians totally annihilates, therefore, the true character of the love of Christ, “so that,” as Dr. Sherlock well observes, “to deny the Divinity of Christ, alters the very foundations of Christianity, and destroys all the powerful arguments of the *love, humility, and condescension* of our Lord, which are the peculiar motives of the Gospel.” (*Defence of Stillingfleet.*)

But it is not only in this view that the denial of the Divinity of our Lord would alter the foundation of the Christian scheme, but in others equally essential: For,

1. The doctrine of satisfaction or atonement depends upon his Divinity; and it is, therefore, consistently denied by those who reject the former. So important, however, is the decision of this case, that the very terms of our salvation, and the ground of our hope, are affected by it.

The Arians, now however nearly extinct, admitted the doctrine of atonement, though inconsistently. “No *creature* could *merit* from God, or do works of supererogation. If it be said that God might accept it as he pleased, it may be said upon the same principle, that he might accept the blood of bulls and of goats. Yet the apostle tells that *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin*; which words resolve the satisfaction, not merely into God’s free acceptance, but into the *intrinsic value* of the sacrifice.” (*Waterland’s Importance.*) Hence the Scriptures so constantly connect the atonement with the character, — the very *Divinity* of the person suffering. It was *Jehovah* who was pierced, Zechariah 12:11; *God* who purchased the Church with *his own blood*, Acts 20:28. It was Δεσπότης the *high Lord*, that bought us, 2 Peter 2:1. It was the *Lord of glory* that was *crucified*, 1 Corinthians 2:8.

It is no small presumption of the impossibility of holding, with any support from the common sense of mankind, the doctrine of atonement with that of an inferior Divinity, that these opinions have so uniformly slided down into a total denial of it, and by almost all persons, except those who have retained the pure faith of the Gospel, Christ is regarded as a man only; and no atonement, in any sense, is allowed to have been made by his death. The terms, then, of human salvation are entirely different on one scheme and on the other; and with respect to their advocates, one is “under law,” the other “under grace;” one takes the cause of his own salvation into his own hands.
to manage it as he is able, and to plead with God, either that he is just, or that he may be justified by his own penitence and acts of obedient virtue; the other pleads the meritorious death and intercession of his Saviour, in his name and mediation makes his requests known unto God, and asks a justification by faith, and a renewal of heart by the Holy Ghost. One stands with all his offences before his Maker, and in his own person, without a mediator and advocate; the other avails himself of both. A question which involves such consequences is surely not a speculative one; but deeply practical and vital, and must be found to be so in its final issue.

2. The manner in which the evil of sin is estimated must be very different, on these views of the Divine nature respectively; and this is a consequence of a directly practical nature. Whatever lowers in men a sense of what an apostle calls “the exceeding sinfulness of sin,” weakens the hatred and horror of it among men, and by consequence encourages it. In the Socinian view, transgressions of the Divine law are all regarded as venial, or, at most, to be subjected to slight and temporary punishment. In the orthodox doctrine, sin is an evil so great in itself, so hateful to God, so injurious in its effects, so necessary to be restrained by punishment, that it dooms the offender to eternal exclusion from God, and to positive endless punishment, and could only be forgiven through a sacrifice of atonement, so extraordinary as that of the death of the Divine Son of God. By these means, forgiveness only could be promised; and the neglect of them, in order to pardon and sanctification too, aggravates the punishment, and makes the final visitation of justice the more terrible.

3. It totally changes the character of Christian experience. Those strong and painful emotions of sorrow and alarm, which characterize the descriptions and example of repentance in the Scriptures, are totally incongruous and uncalled for, upon the theory which denies man’s lost condition, and his salvation by a process of redemption. Faith, too, undergoes an essential change. It is no longer faith in Christ. His doctrine or his mission are its objects; but not, as the New Testament states it, his person as a surety, a sacrifice, a mediator; and much less than any thing else can it be called, in the language of Scripture, “faith in his blood,” a phrase utterly incapable of an interpretation by Socinians. Nor is it possible to offer up prayer to God in the name of Christ, though expressly enjoined upon his disciples, in any sense which would not justify all the idolatry of the Roman Church, in availing themselves of the names, the interests, and the merits of saints. In a Socinian, this would even be more
inconsistent, because he denies the doctrine of mediation in any sense which would intimate, that a benevolent God may not be immediately approached by his guilty but penitent creatures. Love to Christ, which is made so eminent a grace in internal and experimental Christianity, changes also its character. It cannot be supreme, for that would be to break the first and great command, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” if Christ himself be not that Lord our God. It must be love of the same kind we feel to creatures from whom we have received any benefit, and a passion, therefore, to be guarded and restrained, lest it should become excessive and wean our hearts and thoughts from God. But surely it is not under such views that love to Christ is represented in the Scriptures; and against its excess, as against creaturely attachments, we have certainly no admonition, no cautions. The love of Christ to us also as a motive to generous service, sufferings, and death, for the sake of others, loses all its force and application. “The love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” That love of Christ which constrained the apostle was a love which led him to die for men. St. John makes the duty of dying for our brother obligatory upon all Christians, if called to it, and grounds it upon the same fact. “He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren.” The meaning, doubtless, is in order to save them; and though men are saved by Christ’s dying for them, in a very different sense from that in which they can be saved by our dying in the cause of instructing, and thus instrumentally saving each other; yet the argument is founded upon the necessary connection which there is between the death of Christ and the salvation of men. But, on the Socinian scheme, Christ did, in no sense, die for men, no, not in their general mode of interpreting such passages, “for the benefit of men:” for what benefit, independent of propitiation, which Socinians deny, do men derive from the voluntary death of Christ, considered as a mere human instructer? If it be said his death was an example, it was not specially and peculiarly so; for both prophets and apostles have died with resignation and fortitude. If it be alleged, that it was to confirm his doctrine, the answer is, that, in this view, it was nugatory, because it had been confirmed by undoubted miracles. If that he might confirm his mission by his resurrection, this might as well have followed from a natural as from a violent death; and beside the benefit which men derive from him, is, by this notion, placed in his resurrection, and not in his death, which is always exhibited in the New Testament with marked and striking emphasis. The motive to generous sacrifices of ease
and life, in behalf of men, drawn from the death of Christ, have, therefore, no existence whenever his Godhead and sacrifice are denied.

4. The general and habitual exercises of the affections of trust, hope, joy, &c, toward Christ, are all interfered with by the Socinian doctrine. This has, in part, been stated; but “if the Redeemer were not omnipresent and omniscient, could we be certain that he always hears our prayers, and knows the source and remedy of all our miseries? If he were not all-merciful, could we be certain he must always be willing to pardon and relieve us? If he were not all-powerful, could we be sure that he must always be able to support and strengthen, to enlighten and direct us? Of any being less than God, we might suspect that his purposes might waver, his promises fail, his existence itself, perhaps, terminate; for of every created being, the existence must be dependent and terminable.” (Dr. Graves’s Scriptural Proofs of the Trinity.)

The language too, I say not of the Church of Christ in all ages, for that has been formed upon her faith, but of the Scriptures themselves, must be altered and brought down to these inferior views. No dying saint can say, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” if he be a man like ourselves; and the redeemed neither in heaven nor in earth, can dare to associate a creature so with God in Divine honours and solemn worship, as to unite in the chorus, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever!”

The same essential changes must be made in the doctrine of Divine agency, in the heart of man, and in the Church, and the same confusion introduced into the language of Scripture. “Our salvation by Christ does not consist only in the expiation of our sins, &c, but in communication of Divine grace and power, to renew and sanctify us: and this is every where in Scripture attributed to the Holy Spirit, as his peculiar office in the economy of man’s salvation: it must therefore make a fundamental change in the doctrine of Divine grace and assistance, to deny the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. For can a creature be the universal spring and fountain of Divine grace and life? Can a finite creature be a kind of universal soul to the whole Christian Church, and to every sincere member of it? Can a creature make such close application to our minds, know our thoughts, set bounds to our passions, inspire us with new affections and desires, and be more intimate to us than we are to ourselves? If a creature be the only instrument and principle of grace, we shall soon be tempted either to deny the grace of God, or to
make it only an external thing, and entertain very mean conceits of it. All those miraculous gifts which were bestowed upon the apostles and primitive Christians, for the edification of the Church; all the graces of the Christian life, are the fruits of the Spirit. The Divine Spirit is the principle of immortality in us, which first gave life to our souls, and will, at the last day, raise our dead bodies out of the dust; works which sufficiently proclaim him to be God, and which we cannot heartily believe, in the Gospel notion, if he be not.” (Sherlock’s Vindication.) All this has been felt so forcibly by the deniers of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, that they have escaped only by taking another leap down the gulf of error; and, at present, the Socinians deny that there is any Holy Ghost, and resolve the whole into a figure of speech.

But the importance of the doctrine of the holy trinity may be finally argued from the manner in which the denial of it would affect the credit of the Holy Scriptures themselves: for if this doctrine be not contained in them, their tendency to mislead is obvious. Their constant language is so adapted to deceive, and even to compel the belief of falsehood, even in fundamental points, and to lead to the practice of idolatry itself, that they would lose all claim to be regarded as a revelation from the God of truth, and ought rather to be shunned than to be studied. A great part of the Scriptures is directed against idolatry, which is declared to be “that abominable thing which the Lord hateth;” and in pursuance of this design, the doctrine that there is but one God is laid down in the most explicit terms, and constantly confirmed by appeals to his works. The very first command in the decalogue is, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me;” and the sum of the law, as to our duty to God, is that we love Him “with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.” If the doctrine of a trinity of Divine persons in the unity of the Godhead be consistent with all this, then the style and manner of the Scriptures are in perfect accordance with the moral ends they propose, and the truths in which they would instruct mankind; but if the Son and the Holy Spirit are creatures, then is the language of the sacred books most deceptive and dangerous. For how is it to be accounted for, in that case, that, in the Old Testament, God should be spoken of in plural terms, and that this plurality should be restricted to three? How is it that the very name Jehovah should be given to each of them, and that repeatedly and on the most solemn occasions? How is it that the promised, incarnate Messiah should be invested, in the prophecies of his advent, with the loftiest attributes of God, and that works infinitely superhuman, and
Divine honours should be predicted of him? and that acts and characters of unequivocal Divinity, according to the common apprehension of mankind, should be ascribed to the Spirit also? How is it, that, in the New Testament, the name of God should be given to both, and that without any intimation that it is to be taken in an inferior sense? That the creation and conservation of all things should be ascribed to Christ; that he should be worshipped by angels and by men; that he should be represented as seated on the throne of the universe, to receive the adorations of all creatures; and that in the very form of initiation by baptism into his Church, itself a public and solemn profession of faith, the baptism is enjoined to be performed in the one name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? One God and two creatures! As though the very door of entrance into the Christian Church should have been purposely made the gate of the worst and most corrupting error ever introduced among mankind, — trust and worship in creatures as God; the error which has spread darkness and moral desolation over the whole pagan world!

And here it cannot be said that the question is begged, that more is taken for granted than the Socinians will allow; for this argument does not rest at all upon what the deniers of our Lord’s Divinity understand by all these terms, and what interpretations may be put upon them. This is the popular view of the subject which has just been drawn from the Scriptures; and they themselves acknowledge it by resorting to the arts and labours of far-fetched criticism, in order to attach to these passages of Scripture a sense different to the obvious and popular one. But it is not merely the popular sense of Scripture. It is so taken, and has been taken in all ages, by the wisest men and most competent critics, to be the only consistent sense of the sacred volume; a circumstance which still more strongly proves, that if the Scriptures were written on Socinian principles, they are more unfortunately expressed than any book in the world; and they can: on no account, be considered a Divine revelation not because of their obscurity, for they are not obscure, but because terms are used in them which convey a sense different from what the writers intended, if indeed they were Socinians. But their evidences prove them to be a revelation of truth from the God of truth, and they cannot therefore be so written as to lead men, who use only ordinary care, into fundamental error; and the conclusion therefore must inevitably be, that if we must admit either on the one hand what is so derogatory to the Scriptures, and so subversive of all confidence in them, or, on the other, that the doctrine of the Divinity of the Son and
Holy Spirit is there explicitly taught, there is no medium between absolute infidelity and the acknowledgment of our Lord’s Divinity; and indeed, to adopt the representation of a great divine, it is rather to rave than to reason, to suppose, that he whom the Scriptures teach us to regard as the Saviour of our souls, and as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; he who hears our prayers, and is always present with his Church throughout the world, who sits at the right hand of God, in the glory of his Father, and who shall come at the last day in glory and majesty, accompanied with ministering angels, to judge all mankind and to bring to light the very secrets of their hearts, should be a mere man or a created being of any kind.

I close this view of the importance of the doctrine of the trinity by the observations of Dr. Waterland: —

“While we consider the doctrine of the trinity as interwoven with the very frame and texture of the Christian religion, it appears to me natural to conceive that the whole scheme and economy of man’s redemption was laid with a principal view to it, in order to bring mankind gradually into an acquaintance with the three Divine persons, one God blessed for ever. I would speak with all due modesty, caution, and reverence, as becomes us always in what concerns the unsearchable councils of Heaven: but I say, there appears to me none so natural, or so probable an account of the Divine dispensations, from first to last, as what I have just mentioned, namely, that such a redemption was provided, such an expiation for sins required, such a method of sanctification appointed, and then revealed, that so men might know that there are three Divine persons, might be apprized how infinitely the world is indebted to them, and might accordingly be both instructed and inclined to love, honour, and adore them here, because that must be a considerable part of their employment and happiness hereafter.” (Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity.)

In order to bring this great controversy in such an order before the reader, as may assist him to enter with advantage into it, I shall first carefully collect the leading testimonies of Scripture on the doctrine of the trinity and the Divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, — adduce the opinions of the Jewish and Christian Churches, — answer objections, — explain the chief modern heresies on this subject, and give their Scriptural confutation. An
observation or two on the *difficulties* in which the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of one undivided Godhead is said to involve us, may properly close this chapter.

Mere difficulty in conceiving of what is wholly proper and peculiar to God, forms no objection to a doctrine. It is more rationally to be considered as a presumption of its truth, since in the nature of God there must be mysteries far above the reach of the human mind. All his natural attributes, though of some of them we have images in ourselves, are utterly incomprehensible; and the manner of his existence cannot be less so. All attempts, however, to show that this great doctrine implies a contradiction, have failed. A contradiction is only where two contraries are predicated of the *same thing*, *and in the same respect*. Let this be kept in view, and the sophisms resorted to on this point by the adversaries of the faith, will be easily detected. They urge, that the same thing cannot be *three* and *one*, that is, if the proposition has any meaning at all, not in the *same respect*; the three *persons* are not one *person*, and the *one* God is not *three* Gods. But it is no contradiction to say, that in *different respects* the three may be one; that is, that in respect of *persons*, they shall be *three*, and in respect of *Godhead*, *essence*, or *nature*, they shall be *one*. The manner of the thing is a perfectly distinct question, and its incomprehensibility proves nothing but that we are finite creatures, and not God. As for *difficulties*, we shall certainly not be relieved by running either to the Arian or the Socinian hypothesis. The one ascribes the first formation and the perpetual government of the universe, not to the Deity, but to the wisdom and power of a *creature*; for, however exalted the Arian inferior Deity may be, he is a creature still. The other makes a mere man the creator of all things. For whatever is meant by “*the Word* in St. John’s Gospel, it is the same *Word* of which the evangelist says, that all things were made by it, and that itself was made flesh. If this *Word* be the Divine *attribute* wisdom, then that attribute in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, in this view of the Scripture doctrine, was conveyed entire into the mind of a mere man, the son of a Jewish carpenter! A much greater difficulty, in my apprehension, than any that is to be found in the catholic faith.” (*Horsley’s Letters.*)
CHAPTER 9. — TRINITY. — SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY.

IN adducing the doctrine of a trinity of Divine persons in the unity of the Godhead from the sacred volume, by exhibiting some of its numerous and decisive testimonies as to this being the mode in which the Divine nature subsists; the explicit manner in which it is there laid down, that there is but ONE God, must again be noticed.

This is the foundation and the key stone of the whole fabric of Scriptural theology; and every argument in favour of the trinity flows from this principle of the absolute UNITY of God, a principle which the heresies at which we have glanced fancy to be inconsistent with the orthodox doctrine.

The solemn and unequivocal manner in which the unity of God is stated as a doctrine, and is placed as the foundation of all true religion, whether devotional or practical, need not again be repeated; and it is here sufficient to refer to the chapter on the unity of God.

Of this one God, the high and peculiar, and, as it has been truly called, the appropriate name, is JEHOVAH; which, like all the Hebrew names of God, is not an insignificant and accidental term, but a name of revelation, a name adopted by God himself for the purpose of making known the mystery of his nature. To what has been already said on this appellation, I may add that the most eminent critics derive it from hwh, fuit existit; which in Kal signifies to be, and in Hiphel to cause to be. Buxtorf, in his definition, includes both these ideas, and makes it signify a being existing from himself from everlasting to everlasting, and communicating existence to others, and adds, that it signifies the Being who is, and was, and is to come. Its derivation has been variously stated by critics, and some fanciful notions have been formed of the import of its several letters; but in this idea of absolute existence all agree. “It is acknowledged by all,” says Bishop Pearson, “that hwh y is from hwh or hyh, and God’s own interpretation proves no less, Exodus 3:14. Some contend that futurition is essential to the name, yet all agree the root signifieth nothing but essence or existence, that is, το εἶναι or υπαρχεῖν.” (Exposition of the Creed.) No appellation of the Divine Being could therefore be more distinctive, than that which imports independent and eternal being; and for
this reason probably it was, that the Jews, up to a very high antiquity, had a singular reverence for it; carried, it is true, to a superstitious scrupulosity; but thereby showing that it was the name which unveiled, to the thoughts of those to whom it was first given, the awful and overwhelming glories of a self-existent Being, — the very unfathomable depths of his eternal Godhead.

In examining what the Scriptures teach of this self-existent and eternal Being, our attention is first arrested by the important fact, that this ONE Jehovah is spoken of under plural apppellations, and that not once or twice, but in a countless number of instances. So that the Hebrew names of God, acknowledged by all to be expressive and declaratory of some peculiarity or excellence of his nature, are found in several cases in the plural as well as in the singular form, and one of them, ALEIM, generally so; and notwithstanding it was so fundamental and distinguishing an article of the Jewish faith, in opposition to the polytheism of almost all other nations, there was but one living and true God. I give a few instances. Jehovah, if it has not a plural form, has more than one personal application. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.” We have here the visible Jehovah who had talked with Abraham, raining the storm of vengeance from another Jehovah, out of heaven, and who was therefore invisible. Thus we have two Jehovahs expressly mentioned, “the LORD rained from the LORD,” and yet we have it most solemnly asserted in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.”

The very first name in the Scriptures under which the Divine Being is introduced to us as the Creator of heaven and earth, is a plural one, µyh|a, ALEIM; and to connect in the same singular manner as in the foregoing instance, plurality with unity, it is the nominative case to a verb singular. “In the beginning, GODS created the heavens and the earth.” Of this form innumerable instances occur in the Old Testament. That the word is plural, is made certain by its being often joined with adjectives, pronouns, and verbs plural; and yet when it can mean nothing else than the true God, it is generally joined in its plural form with verbs singular. To render this still more striking, the Aleim are said to be Jehovah, and Jehovah the Aleim: thus in Psalm 100:3, “Know ye, that Jehovah, he, the Aleim, he hath made us, and not we ourselves.” And in the passage before given, “Jehovah our ALEIM, (Gods,) is one Jehovah.”
mighty one, another name of God, has its plural \( \mu \ yl \ a \), ALIM, the mighty ones. The former is rendered by Trommius \( \Theta \varepsilon o\varsigma \), the latter \( \Theta \varepsilon o\iota \). ABIR, the potent one, has the plural \( \mu \ yr \ yb \ a \), ABIRIM, the potent ones. Man did eat the bread of the Abirim, “angels’ food,” conveys no idea; the manna was the bread provided miraculously, and was therefore called the food of the powerful ones, of them who have power over all nature, the one God.

\( \mu \ ynw\ d \ a \), ADONIM, is the plural form of \( ^{\wedge} w\ d \ a \), Adon, a governor. “If I be Adonim, masters, where is my fear?” Malachi 1:6. Many other instances might be given, as, “Remember thy Creators in the days of thy youth.” “The knowledge of the Holy Ones is understanding.” “There be higher than they.” Hebrews High Ones; and in Daniel, “the Watchers and the Holy Ones.”

Other plural forms of speech also occur when the one true God only is spoken of. “And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.” “And the LORD God said, Behold the man is become like one of us.” “And the LORD said, Let us go down.” — “Because there, GOD appeared to him.” Hebrews God they appeared, the verb being plural. These instances need not be multiplied: they are the common forms of speech in the sacred Scriptures, which no criticism has been able to resolve into mere idioms, and which only the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead can satisfactorily explain. If they were mere idioms, they could not have been misunderstood by those to whom the Hebrew tongue was native, to imply plurality; but of this we have sufficient evidence, which shall be adduced when we speak of the faith of the Jewish Church. They have been acknowledged to form a striking singularity in the Hebrew language, even by those who have objected to the conclusion drawn from them; and the question, therefore, has been to find an hypothesis, which should account for a peculiarity, which is found in no other language, with the same circumstances. 

Some have supposed angels to be associated with God when these plural forms occur. For this there is no foundation in the texts themselves, and it is beside a manifest absurdity. Others, that the style of royalty was adopted, which is refuted by two considerations — that almighty God in other instances speaks in the singular and not in the plural number; and that this was not the style of the sovereigns of the earth when Moses or any of the sacred penmen composed their writings; no instance of it being found in
any of the inspired books. A third opinion is, that the plural form of speaking of God was adopted by the Hebrews from their ancestors, who were polytheists, and that the ancient theological term was retained after the unity of God was acknowledged. This assumes what is totally without proof, that the ancestors of the Hebrews were polytheists; and could that be made out, it would leave it still to be accounted for, why other names of the Deity equally ancient, for any thing that appears to the contrary, are not also plural, and especially the high name of Jehovah; and why, more particularly the very appellation in question, Aleim, should have a singular form also, hla in the same language. The grammatical reasons which have been offered are equally unsatisfactory. If then no hypothesis explains this peculiarity, but that which concludes it to indicate that mode of the Divine existence which was expressed in later theology by the phrase, a trinity of persons, the inference is too powerful to be easily resisted, that these plural forms must be considered as intended to intimate the plurality of persons in essential connection with one supreme and adorable Deity.

This argument, however, taken alone, powerful as it has often been justly deemed, does not contain the strength of the case. For natural as it is to expect, presuming this to be the mode of the Divine existence, that some of his names which, according to the expressive and simple character of the Hebrew language, are descriptions of realities, and that some of the modes of expression adopted even in the earliest revelations, should carry some intimation of a fact, which, as essentially connected with redemption, the future complete revelation of the redeeming scheme was intended fully to unfold; yet, were these plural titles and forms of construction blotted out, the evidence of a plurality of Divine persons in the Godhead would still remain in its strongest form. For that evidence is not merely, that God has revealed himself under plural appellations, nor that these are constructed with sometimes singular and sometimes plural forms of speech; but that three persons, and three persons only are spoken of in the Scriptures under Divine titles, each having the peculiar attributes of Divinity ascribed to him; and yet that the first and leading principle of the same book, which speaks thus of the character and works of these persons, should be, that there is but ONE God. This point being once established, it may be asked which of the hypotheses, the orthodox, the Arian, or the Socinian, agrees best with this plain and explicit doctrine of Holy Writ. Plain and explicit, I say, not as to the mode of the Divine existence, not as to the comprehension of it,
but as to this particular, that the doctrine itself is plainly stated in the Scriptures.

Let this point then be examined, and it will be seen even that the very number *three* has this pre-eminence; that the application of these names and powers is restrained to it, and never strays beyond it; and that those who confide in the testimony of God, rather than in the opinions of men, have sufficient Scriptural reason to distinguish their faith from the unbelief of others by avowing themselves *Trinitarians.*

The solemn form of benediction, in which the Jewish high priests were commanded to bless the children of Israel, has in it this peculiar indication, and singularly answers to the form of benediction so general in the close of the apostolic epistles, and which so appropriately closes the solemn services of Christian worship. It is given in Numbers 6:24-27.

Jehovah bless thee and keep thee:
Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
Jehovah lift his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

If the three members of this form of benediction be attentively considered, they will be found to agree respectively to the three persons taken in the usual order of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is the author of blessing and preservation, illumination and grace are from the Son, illumination and peace from the Spirit, the teacher of truth and the Comforter. (*Vide Jones’s Catholic Doctrine.*)

“The first member of the formula expresses the benevolent ‘love of God;’ the father of mercies and fountain of all good: the second well comports with the redeeming and reconciling ‘grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;’ and the last is appropriate to the purity, consolation, and joy, which are received from the ‘communion of the Holy Spirit.’” (*Smith’s Person of Christ.*)

The connection of certain specific blessings in this form of benediction with the Jehovah mentioned three times distinctly, and those which are represented as flowing from the Father, Son, and Spirit in the apostolic form, would be a singular coincidence if it even stood alone; but the light of the same eminent truth, though not yet fully revealed, breaks forth from other partings of the clouds of the early morning of revelation.
The inner part of the Jewish sanctuary was called the *holy of holies*, that is, the holy place of the *Holy Ones*; and the number of these is indicated, and limited to *three*, in the celebrated vision of Isaiah, and that with great explicitness. The scene of that vision is the holy place of the temple, and lies therefore in the very abode and residence of the *Holy Ones*, here celebrated by the seraphs who veiled their faces before them. And one cried unto another, and said, “*Holy, holy, holy* is the Lord of hosts.” This passage, if it stood alone, might be eluded by saying that this act of *Divine* adoration here mentioned, is merely *emphatic*, or in the Hebrew mode of expressing a *superlative*; though that is assumed, and by no means proved. It is however worthy of serious notice, that this distinct *trine* act of adoration, which has been so often supposed to mark a plurality of persons as the objects of it, is answered by a voice from that excellent glory which overwhelmed the mind of the prophet when he was favoured with the vision, responding in the same language of plurality in which the doxology of the seraphs is expressed. “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” But this is not the only evidence that in this passage the *Holy Ones*, who were addressed each by his appropriate and equal designation of *holy*, were the *three* Divine subsistences in the Godhead. The being addressed is the “Lord of hosts.” This all acknowledge to include the *Father*; but the Evangelist John, 12:41, in manifest reference to this transaction, observes, “These things said Esaias, when he saw his (Christ’s) glory and spake of him.” In this vision, therefore, we have the *Son* also, whose glory on this occasion the prophet is said to have beheld. Acts 28:25, determines that there was also the presence of the Holy Ghost. “Well spake the *Holy Ghost* by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive,” &c. These words, quoted from Isaiah, the Apostle Paul declares to have been spoken by the Holy Ghost, and Isaiah declares them to have been spoken on this very occasion by the “Lord of hosts.” “And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed and understand not, and see ye indeed but perceive not,” &c.

Now let all these circumstances be placed together — THE PLACE, the holy place of the Holy Ones; the repetition of the homage, THREE times, Holy, holy, holy — the ONE Jehovah of hosts, to whom it was addressed, — the plural pronoun used by this ONE Jehovah, US; the declaration of an evangelist, that on this occasion Isaiah saw the glory of CHRIST; the
declaration of St. Paul, that the Lord of hosts who spoke on that occasion was the HOLY GHOST; and the conclusion will not appear to be without most powerful authority, both circumstantial and declaratory, that the adoration, Holy, holy, holy, referred to the Divine three, in the one essence of the Lord of hosts. Accordingly, in the book of Revelations, where “the Lamb” is so constantly represented as sitting upon the Divine throne, and where he by name is associated with the Father, as the object of the equal homage and praise of saints and angels; this scene from Isaiah is transferred into the fourth chapter, and the “living creatures,” the seraphim of the prophet, are heard in the same strain, and with the same trine repetition, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Isaiah, 48:16, also makes this threefold distinction and limitation. “And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.” The words are manifestly spoken by Messiah, who declares himself sent by the Lord God, and by his Spirit. Some render it, hath sent me and his Spirit, the latter term being also in the accusative case. This strengthens the application, by bringing the phrase nearer to that so often used by our Lord in his discourses. who speaks of himself and the Spirit, being sent by the Father. “The Father which sent me — the Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father, who proceedeth from the Father.” Isaiah 34:16, “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read, for MY mouth it hath commanded, and HIS SPIRIT it hath gathered them.” “Here is one person speaking of the Spirit, another person,” (Jones on the Trinity.) Haggai 2:5, 7, “I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come.” Here also we have three persons distinctly mentioned; the Lord of hosts, his Spirit, and the Desire of all nations.

Many other passages might be given, in which there is this change of persons, sometimes enumerating two, sometimes three, but never more than three, arrayed in these eminent and Divine characters. The passages in the New Testament are familiar to every one: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,” with others in which the sacred three, and three only, are thus collocated as objects of equal trust and honour, and equally the fountain and the source of grace and benediction.
On the celebrated passage in 1 John 5:7, “There are three that bear record in heaven,” I say nothing, because authorities against its genuineness are found in the ranks of the orthodox, and among those who do not captiously make objections; and because it would scarcely be fair to adduce it as a proof, unless the arguments on each side were exhibited, which would lead to discussions which lie beside the design of this work, and more properly have their place in separate and distinct treatises. The recent revival of the inquiry into the genuineness of this text, however, shows that the point is far from being critically settled against the passage, as a true portion of Holy Writ, and the argument from the context is altogether in favour of those who advocate it, the hiatus in the sense never having been satisfactorily supplied by those who reject it. This is of more weight in arguments of this kind than is often allowed. As to the doctrine of the text, it has elsewhere abundant proof.

It has now been shown, that while the unity of God is to be considered a fundamental doctrine of the Scriptures, laid down with the utmost solemnity, and guarded with the utmost care, by precepts, by threatenings, by promises, by tremendous punishments of polytheism and idolatry among the Jews, the very names of God, as given in the revelation made of himself, have plural forms and are connected with plural modes of speech; that other indications of plurality are given in various parts of Holy Writ; and that this plurality is restricted to three. On those texts, however, which in their terms denote a plurality and a trinity, the proof does not wholly or chiefly rest, and they have been only adduced as introductory to instances too numerous to be all examined, in which two distinct persons are spoken of, sometimes connectedly and sometimes separately, as associated with God in his perfections and incommunicable glories, and as performing works of unequivocal Divine majesty and infinite power, and thus together manifesting that tri-unity of the Godhead which the true Church has in all ages adored and magnified. This is the great proof upon which the doctrine rests. The first of these two persons is the Son, the second the Spirit. Of the former, it will be observed that the titles of Jehovah, Lord, God, King, King of Israel, Redeemer, Saviour, and other names of God, are ascribed to him, — that he is invested with the attributes of eternity, omnipotence, ubiquity, infinite wisdom, holiness, goodness, &c, — that he was the Leader, the visible King, and the object of the worship of the Jews, — that he forms the great subject of prophecy, and is spoken of in the predictions of the prophets in language, which if applied to men or to angels would by
the Jews have been considered not as sacred but idolatrous, and which, therefore, except that it agreed with their ancient faith, would totally have destroyed the credit of those writings, — that he is eminently known both in the Old Testament and in the New, as the Son of God, an appellative which is sufficiently proved to have been considered as implying an assumption of Divinity by the circumstance that, for asserting it, our Lord was condemned to die as a blasphemer by the Jewish sanhedrim, — that he became incarnate in our nature, — wrought miracles by his own original power, and not, as his servants, in the name of another, — that he authoritatively forgave sin, — that for the sake of his sacrifice, sin is forgiven to the end of the world, and for the sake of that alone, — that he rose from the dead to seal all these pretensions to Divinity, — that he is seated upon the throne of the universe, all power being given to him in heaven and in earth, — that his inspired apostles exhibit him as the Creator of all things visible and invisible; as the true God and the eternal life; as the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God and our Saviour, — that they offer to him the highest worship, — that they trust in him, and command all others to trust in him for eternal life, — that he is the head over all things, — that angels worship him and render him service, — that he will raise the dead at the last day, — judge the secrets of men’s hearts, and finally determine the everlasting state of the righteous and the wicked.

This is the outline of Scriptural testimony as to the Son. As to the Divine character of the Spirit, it is equally explicit. He too is called Jehovah; Jehovah of hosts; God. Eternity, omnipotence, ubiquity, infinite wisdom, and other attributes of Deity, are ascribed to him. He is introduced as an agent in the work of the creation, and to him is ascribed the conservation of all living beings. He is the source of the inspiration of prophets and apostles; the object of worship; the efficient agent in illuminating, comforting, and sanctifying the souls of men. He makes intercession for the saints; quickens the dead, and, finally, he is associated with the Father and the Son, in the form of baptism into the one name of God, and in the apostolic form of benediction, as equally with them the source and fountain of grace and blessedness. These decisive points I shall proceed to establish by the express declarations of various passages, both of the Old and New Testament. When that is done, the argument will then be, that as on the one hand the doctrine of Scripture is, that there is but one God; and, on the other, that throughout both Testaments, three persons are, in unequivocal language, and by unequivocal circumstances, declared to be
Divine; the only conclusion which can harmonize these otherwise opposite, contradictory, and most misleading propositions, and declarations, is, that the THREE PERSONS ARE ONE GOD.,

In the prevalent faith of the Christian Church, neither of these views is for a moment lost sight of. Thus it exactly harmonizes with the Scriptures, nor can it be charged with greater mystery than is assignable to them. The trinity is asserted, but the unity is not obscured; the unity is confessed, but without denial of the trinity. No figures of speech, no unnatural modes of interpretation are resorted to, to reconcile these views with human conceptions, which they must infinitely transcend. This is the character of the heresies which have arisen on this subject. They all spring from the attempt to make this mystery of God conceivable by the human mind, and less a stone of stumbling to the pride of reason. On the contrary, “the faith of God’s elect,” as embodied in the creeds and confessions of all truly evangelical Churches follow the example of the Scriptures in entirely overlooking these low considerations, and “declaring the thing as it is,” with all its mystery and incomprehensibleness, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. It declares “that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance; for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.” (Athanasian Creed.) Or, as it is well expressed by an eminent modern, as great a master of reason and science as he was of theology:

“There is one Divine nature or essence, common unto three persons, incomprehensibly united, and ineffably distinguished; united in essential attributes, distinguished by peculiar idioms and relations; all equally infinite in every Divine perfection, each different from the other in order and manner of subsistence; that there is a mutual existence of one in all, and all in one, a communication without any deprivation or diminution in the communicant; an eternal generation, and an eternal procession without precedence or succession, without proper causality or dependence; a Father imparting his own, and a Son receiving his Father’s life, and a Spirit issuing from both, without any division or multiplication of essence. These are notions which may well puzzle
our reason in conceiving how they agree; but ought not to stagger our faith in asserting that they are true; for if the Holy Scripture teacheth us plainly, and frequently doth inculcate upon us, that there is but one true God; if it as manifestly doth ascribe to the three persons of the blessed trinity, the same august names, the same peculiar characters, the same Divine attributes, the same superlatively admirable operations of creation and providence; if it also doth prescribe to them the same supreme honours, services, praises, and acknowledgments to be paid to them all; this may be abundantly enough to satisfy our minds, to stop our mouths, to smother all doubt and dispute about this high and holy mystery.”

(Dr. Barrow’s Defence of the Trinity.)

One observation more, before we proceed to the Scriptural evidence of the positions above laid down, shall close this chapter. The proof of the doctrine of the trinity, I have said, grounds itself on the firm foundation of the Divine unity, and it closes with it; and this may set the true believer at rest, when he is assailed by the sophistical enemies of his faith with the charge of dividing his regards, as he directs his prayers to one or other of the three persons of the Godhead. For the time at least, he is said to honour one to the exclusion of the others. The true Scriptural doctrine of the unity of God, will remove this objection. It is not the Socinian notion of unity. Theirs is the unity of one, ours the unity of three. We do not, however, as they seem to suppose, think the Divine essence divisible, and participated by, and shared among, three persons; but wholly and undividedly possessed and enjoyed. Whether, therefore we address our prayers and adorations to the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, we address the same adorable Being, the one living and true God. “Jehovah, our Aleim, is one Jehovah.” With reference to the relations which each person bears to us in the redeeming economy, our approaches to the Father are to be made through the mediation of the Son, and by, or with dependence upon, the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Yet, as the authority of the New Testament shows, this does not preclude direct prayer to Christ and to the Holy Spirit, and direct ascriptions of glory and honour to each. In all this we glorify the one “God over all, blessed for evermore.”
CHAPTER 10. — TRINITY —  
PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

By establishing, on Scriptural authority, the pre-existence of our Lord, we take the first step in the demonstration of his absolute Divinity. His pre-existence, indeed, simply considered, does not evince his Godhead and is not, therefore, a proof against the Arian hypothesis; but it destroys the Socinian notion, that he was a man only. For since no one contends for the pre-existence of human souls, and if they did, the doctrine would be refuted by their own consciousness, it is clear, that if Christ existed before his incarnation, he is not a mere man, whatever his nature, by other arguments, may be proved to be.

This point has been felt to press so heavily upon the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, that both ancient and modern Socinians have bent against it all those arts of interpretation which, more than any thing else, show both the hopelessness of their cause, and the pertinacitity with which they cling to oft and easily refuted error. I shall dwell a little on this point, because it will introduce some instances in illustration of the peculiar character of the Socinian mode of perverting the Scriptures.

The existence of our Lord prior to his incarnation might be forcibly argued from the declarations that he was “sent into the world;” that “he came in the flesh;” that “he took part of flesh and blood;” that he was “found in fashion as a man;” and other similar phrases. These are modes of speech which are used of no other person; which are never adopted to express the natural birth, and the commencement of the existence of ordinary men; and which Socinianism, therefore, leaves without a reason, and without an explanation, when used of Christ. But arguments drawn from these phrases are rendered wholly unnecessary, by the frequent occurrence of passages which explicitly declare his pre-existence, and by which the ingenuity of unsubmitive criticism has been always foiled; the interpretations given being too forced, and too unsupported, either by the common rules of criticism, or by the idioms of language, to produce the least impression upon any, not previously disposed to torture the word of God in order to make it subservient to an error.
The first of these proofs of the pre-existence of Christ is from the
testimony of the Baptist, John 1:15, “He that cometh after me is
preferred before me, for he was before me;” or as it is in verse 30, “After
me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me.”

The Socinian exposition is, “The Christ, who is to begin his ministry after
me has, by the Divine appointment, been preferred before me, because he is
my chief or principal.” Thus they interpret the last clause “for he was
before me,” in the sense of dignity, and not of time, though St. John uses
the same word to denote priority of time, in several places of his Gospel,
“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me, before it hated you;”
and John 1:41; 8:7; 20:4-8. If they take the phrase in the second clause 
emprosθεν μου γέγονεν in the sense of “preferred,” then, by their mode
of rendering the last clause, as Bishop Pearson has observed, “a thing is
made the reason of itself, which is a great absurdity and a vain tautology.”
— “He is preferred before me, because he is my chief;” whereas by taking
ωρωτός μου in the sense of time, a reason for this preference is given.
There is, however, another rendering of the second clause which makes the
passage still more impracticable in the sense of the Socinians. Εμπροσθεν
is never in the Septuagint or in the New Testament used for dignity or
rank; but refers either to place or time, and if taken in the sense of time,
the rendering will be, “He that cometh after me was before me;” and οτι,
in the next clause, signifying “certainly,” “truly,” (Schleusner sub voce.)
the last clause will be made emphatical, “certainly, he was before me,” and
is to be considered, not as giving a reason for the sentiment in the
preceding clause, or as tautological, but as explanatory and impressive; a
mode of speaking exceedingly natural when so great a doctrine, and so
high a mystery was to be declared, that he who was born after John, was
yet, in point of existence, before him; — “certainly, he was before me.”
This rendering of the second clause is adopted by several eminent critics;
but whether this or the common version be preferred, the verb in the last
clause, he WAS before me, sufficiently fixes ωρωτος in the sense of priority
of time. Had it referred to the rank and dignity of Christ, it would not have
been, “he WAS,” but “he IS before me,” έστι not ην.

The passages which express that Christ came down from heaven, are next
to be considered. He styles himself “the bread of God which cometh down
from heaven. — The living bread which came down from heaven. — He
that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and
speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all;” and in his
discourse with Nicodemus, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” In what manner are declarations so plain and unequivocal to be eluded, and by what arts are they to be interpreted, into nothing? This shall be considered. Socinus and his early disciples in order to account for these phrases, supposed that Christ, between the time of his birth and entrance upon his office, was translated into heaven, and there remained some time, that he might see and hear those things which he was to publish in the world. This hypothesis, however, only proves the difficulty, or rather the impossibility of interpreting these passages so as to turn away their hostile aspect from the errors of man. It is supported by no passage of Scripture, by no tradition, by no reason in the nature of the thing, or in the discourse. The modern Socinians, therefore, finding the position of their elder brethren untenable, resolve the whole into figure, the most convenient method of evading the difficulty, and tell us, that as we should naturally say, that a person who would become acquainted with the secret purposes of God, must ascend to heaven to converse with him, and return to make them known, so our Lord’s words do not necessarily imply a literal ascent and descent, but merely this, “that he alone was admitted to an intimate knowledge of the Divine will, and was commissioned to reveal it to men.” (Belsham’s Calm Inquiry.)

In the passages quoted above, as declarations of the pre-existence of Christ, it will be seen that there are two phrases to be accounted for, — ascending into heaven, — and, coming down from heaven. The former is said to mean the being admitted to an intimate knowledge of the Divine counsels. But if this were the sense, it could not be true that “no man” had thus ascended but “the Son of man;” since Moses and all the prophets in succession had been admitted to “an intimate knowledge of the Divine counsels,” and had been “commissioned” to reveal them. It is nothing to say that our Lord’s acquaintance with the Divine counsels was more deep and comprehensive. The case is not stated comparatively, but exclusively, — “No man hath ascended into heaven but the Son of man;” no man, but himself, had been in heaven. 

Allowing therefore the principle of the Socinian gloss, it is totally inapplicable to the text in question, and is in fact directly refuted by it.

But the principle is false, and it may be denied, that “to ascend into heaven” is a Hebrew phrase to express the knowledge of high and mysterious things. So utterly does this pretence fail, that not one of the
passages they adduce in proof can be taken in any other than its literal meaning; and they are therefore, as are others, directly against them. Deuteronomy 30:11, is first adduced. “Who shall go up for us into heaven and bring it unto us?” This we are told we must take figuratively; but then, unhappily for them, it is also immediately subjoined, “neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us?” If the ascent into heaven in the first clause is to be taken figuratively, then the going beyond the sea cannot be taken literally, and we shall still want a figurative interpretation for this part of the declaration of Moses respecting the law, which will not so easily be furnished. The same observation is applicable to Romans 10:6, in which there is an adaptation of the passage in Deuteronomy to the Gospel. “Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above,” &c, words which have no meaning unless place be literally understood, and which show that the apostle, a sufficient judge of Hebrew modes of expression, understood, in its literal sense, the passage in Deuteronomy. A second passage to which they trust, is Proverbs 30:4, “Who hath ascended and descended,” but if what immediately follows be added, “who hath gathered the winds in his fists, who hath bound the watch in a garment,” &c, it will be seen that the passage has no reference to the acquisition of knowledge by a servant of God, but expresses the various operations in nature carried on by God himself. “Who hath done this? What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?”

In Baruch 3:29, it is asked of wisdom, “Who hath gone up into heaven, and taken her, and brought her down from the clouds?” but it is here also added, “Or who hath gone over the sea for her?” Wisdom is, in this passage, clearly personified; a place of habitation is assigned her, which is to be sought out by those who would attain her. This apocryphal text, therefore, gives no countenance to the mystical notion of ascending into heaven, advanced by Socinian expositors.

If they then utterly fail to establish their forced and unnatural sense of ascending into heaven; let us examine whether they are more successful in establishing their opinion as to the meaning of “coming down from heaven.” This, they say, means “to be commissioned to reveal the will of God to men;” (Belsham’s Calm Inquiry;) but if so, the phrases, “to ascend up into heaven,” and “to come down from thence,” which are manifestly opposed to each other, lose all their opposition in the interpretation, which is sufficient to show, that it is, as to both, entirely gratuitous, arbitrary and
contradictory. For, as Dr. Magee has acutely remarked, “it is observed by
the editors of the Unitarian Version, and enforced with much emphasis by
Mr. Belsham and Dr. Carpenter, that to ‘ascend into heaven’ signifies ‘to
become acquainted with the truths of God,’ and that consequently the
‘correlative’ to this, (the opposite they should have said,) to ‘descend from
heaven,’ must mean ‘to bring and to discover those truths to the world.’
(Imp. Vers. p. 208; Calm Inq. p. 48.) Now allowing those gentlemen all
they wish to establish as to the first clause, — that to go up into heaven
means to learn and become acquainted with the counsels of God, — what
must follow then if they reasoned justly upon their own principles? Plainly
this, that to come down from heaven, being precisely the opposite of the
former, must mean to unlearn, or to lose the knowledge of those counsels:
so that, so far from bringing and discovering those counsels to mankind,
our Lord must have disqualified himself from bringing any. Had indeed
‘ASCENDING into heaven’ meant ‘BRINGING the truth (any where) FROM
men,’ then ‘DESCENDING from heaven’ might justly be said to mean
‘BRINGING it back to men.’ Whatever, in short, ASCENDING may be
supposed to signify in any figure, DESCENDING must signify the opposite of
the figure be abided by: and therefore, if to ASCEND be to learn, to
DESCEND must be to unlearn.” (Discourses on the Atonement.)

It is farther fatal to this opinion that “if to come from heaven; to descend
from heaven,” &c, signify receiving a Divine commission to teach; or, more
simply to communicate truth after it has been learned, it is never used with
reference to Moses, or to any of the prophets, or Divinely appointed
instruments who, from time to time, were raised up among the Jews. We
may therefore conclude, that the meaning attached to these phrases by
Socinian writers of the present day, who, in this respect, as in many others,
have ventured to step beyond their predecessors who never denied their
literal acceptation, was unknown among the Jews, and is a mere subterfuge
to escape from the plain testimony of Holy Writ on a point so fatal to their
scheme.

The next passage which may be quoted as expressing, in unequivocal
terms, the pre-existence of Christ, occurs John 6:62, and is, if possible,
still more out of the reach of that kind of criticism which has just been
exhibited. The occasion, too, fixes the sense beyond all perversion. Our
Lord had told the Jews that he was the bread of life, which came down
from heaven. This the Jews understood literally, and therefore asked, “Is
not this the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know, how is it
then that he saith, *I came down from heaven?*” His disciples too so understood his words, for they also “murmured.” But our Lord, so far from removing that impression, so far from giving them the most distant hint of a mode of meeting the difficulty like that resorted to by Socinian writers, strengthens the assertion, and makes his profession a stumbling block still more formidable, “Doth this offend you?” referring to what he had just said, that he had descended from heaven, “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up *WHERE HE WAS BEFORE.*” Language cannot be more explicit; though Mr. Belsham has ventured to tell us that this means, “What if I go farther out of your reach, and become more perplexing and mysterious!” And indeed perplexing and mysterious enough would be the words both of Christ and his apostles, if they required such criticisms for their elucidation.

The phrase to be “*sent from God,*” they think they sufficiently avert, by urging that it is said of the Baptist, “There was a man *sent from God,* whose name was John.” This, they urge, clearly evinces, “that to come from God is to be *commissioned* by him. If Jesus was sent from God, so was John the Baptist; if the former came down from heaven, so did the latter.” This reasoning must be allowed to be fallacious, if it can be shown that it contradicts other scriptures. Now our Lord says, 

> John 6:46, “No one hath seen the Father, save he who is from God, he *outov,* hath seen the Father;” namely, this one person, for it is singular, and no one else hath seen the Father. Therefore, if Christ was that person, as will not be disputed. John could not be “*sent from God,*” in the same *manner* that Christ was. What does the Baptist say of himself? Does he confirm the Socinian gloss? Speaking of Christ and of himself he says, “He that *cometh from above* is above all; he that is *of the earth* is earthly, he that *cometh from heaven* is above all,” 

> John 3:31. Here John contrasts his earthly origin with Christ's heavenly origin. Christ is “from above;” John from “the earth,” *ek thv ghv.* Christ is “above all,” which he could not be, if every other prophet came in like manner from heaven, and from above; and therefore if John was “sent from God,” it cannot be in the same sense that Christ was sent from him, which is enough to silence the objection. *(Holden's Scripture Testimonies.)* Thus, says Dr. Nares, “we have nothing but the positive contradictions of the Unitarian party, to prove to us that Christ did not come from heaven, though he says of himself, he did come from heaven; that though he declares he had seen the Father, he had not seen the Father; that though he assures us that he, in a most peculiar and
singular manner came forth from God, (ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξηλθεν), a strong and singular expression,) he came from him no otherwise than like the prophets of old, and his own immediate forerunner.” (Remarks on the Imp. Version.)

Several other equally striking passages might claim our attention; but it will be sufficient for the argument, to close it with two.

“Before Abraham was, I am,” Ἰησοῦς John 8:58. Whether the verb εἰμι “I am,” may be understood to be equivalent to the incommunicable name Jehovah, shall be considered in another place. The obvious sense of the passage at least is, “Before Abraham was, or was born, I was in existence.” Abraham, the patriarch, was the person spoken of; for the Jews having said, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” our Lord declares, with his peculiarly solemn mode of introduction, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.” I had priority of existence, “together with a continuation of it to the present time.” (Pearson on the Creed.) Nor did the Jews mistake his meaning, but being filled with indignation at so manifest a claim of Divinity, “they took up stones to stone him.”

How then do the Socinians dispose of this passage? The two hypotheses on which they have rested, for one would not suffice, are, first, “That Christ existed before the patriarch Abraham had become, according to the import of his name, the father of many nations, that is, before the Gentiles were called;” which was as true of the Jews who were discoursing with him, as of himself. The second is, “before Abraham was born I am he, i.e. the Christ, in the destination and appointment of God;” which also was saying nothing peculiar of Christ; since the existence and the part which every one of his hearers was to act, were as much in the destination and appointment of God as his own. Both these absurdities are well exposed by Bishop Pearson: —

“The first interpretation makes our Saviour thus to speak: — Do ye so much wonder how I should have seen Abraham, who am not yet fifty years old? Do ye imagine so great a contradiction in this? I tell you, and be ye most assured that what I speak unto you at this time is most certainly and infallibly true, and most worthy of your observation which moves me not to deliver it without this solemn asseveration (Verily, verily, I say unto you,) before Abraham shall perfectly become that which was signified in his name, the father of
many nations, before the Gentiles shall come in, I am. Nor be ye troubled at this answer, or think in this I magnify myself; for what I speak is as true of you yourselves as it is of me: before Abram be thus made Abraham, ye are. Doubt ye not, therefore, as ye did, nor ever make that question again whether I have seen Abraham."

“The second explication makes a sense of another nature, but with the same impertinency: — Do ye continue still to question, and with so much admiration do ye look upon my age and ask, Hast thou seen Abraham? I confess it is more than eighteen hundred years since that patriarch died, and less than forty since I was born at Bethlehem: but look not on this computation, for before Abraham was born I was. But mistake me not, I mean that I was in the foreknowledge and decree of God. Nor do I magnify myself in this, for ye also were so. How either of these answers should give any reasonable satisfaction to the question, or the least occasion of the Jews’ exasperation, is not to be understood. And that our Saviour should speak of any such impertinencies as these interpretations bring forth, is not by a Christian to be conceived. Wherefore, as the plain and most obvious sense is a proper and full answer to the question, and most likely to exasperate the unbelieving JEWS; as those strained explications render the words of Christ not only impertinent to the occasion, but vain and useless to the hearers of them; as our Saviour gave this answer in words of another language, most probably incapable of any such interpretations; we must adhere unto that literal sense already delivered, by which it appeareth Christ had a being, as before John, so also before Abraham, and consequently by that he did exist two thousand years before he was born, or conceived by the virgin.”

(Exposition of the Creed.)

The observations of Whitaker on this decisive passage, are in his usual energetic manner: —

“‘Your Father Abraham,’ says our Saviour to the Jews, ‘rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.’ Our Saviour thus proposes himself to his countrymen, as their Messiah; that grand object of hope and desire to their fathers, and particularly to this first father of the faithful, Abraham. But his countrymen, not acknowledging his claim to the character of Messiah, and therefore
not allowing his supernatural priority of existence to Abraham, chose to consider his words in a signification merely human. ‘Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ But what does our Saviour reply to this low and gross comment upon his intimation? Does he retract it, by warping his language to their poor perverseness, and so waiving his pretensions to the assumed dignity? No! to have so acted, would have been derogatory to his dignity, and injurious to their interests. He actually repeats his claim to the character. He actually enforces his pretensions to a supernatural priority of existence. He even heightens both. He mounts up far beyond Abraham. He ascends beyond all the orders of creation. And he places himself with God at the head of the universe. He thus arrogates to himself all that high pitch of dignity, which the Jews expected their Messiah to assume. This he does too in the most energetic manner, that his simplicity of language, so natural to inherent greatness, would possibly admit. He also introduces what he says, with much solemnity in the form, and with more in the repetition. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ he cries, ‘BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS I AM.’ He says not of himself, as he says of Abraham, ‘Before he was, I was.’ This indeed would have been sufficient, to affirm his existence previous to Abraham. But it would not have been sufficient, to declare what he now meant to assert, his full claim to the majesty of the Messiah. He therefore drops all forms of language, that could be accommodated to the mere creatures of God. He arrests one, that was appropriate to the Godhead itself. ‘Before Abraham was, or still more properly, ‘Before Abraham was MADE,’ he says, ‘I AM.’ He thus gives himself the signature of uncreated and continual existence, in direct opposition to contingent and created. He says of himself,

That an eternal NOW for ever lasts, with him. He attaches to himself that very stamp of eternity, which God appropriates to his Godhead in the Old Testament; and from which an apostle afterward describes ‘Jesus Christ’ expressly, to be ‘the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.’ Nor did the Jews pretend to misunderstand him now. They could not. They heard him directly and decisively vindicating the noblest rights of their Messiah, and the highest honours of their God, to himself. They considered him as a mere pretender to those. They therefore looked upon him, as a
blasphemous arrogator of these. ‘Then took they up stones, to cast at him’ as a blasphemer; as what indeed he was in his pretensions to be God, if he had not been in reality their Messiah and their God in one. But he instantly proved himself to their very senses, to be both; by exerting the energetic powers of his Godhead, upon them. For he ‘hid himself; and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.’”

The last passage which I shall quote, may properly, both from its dignity and explicitness, close the whole. John 17:5, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Whatever this glory was, it was possessed by Christ before the world was; or, as he afterward expresses it, “before the foundation of the world.” That question is therefore not to be confounded with the main point which determines the pre-existence of our Lord; for if he was with the Father, and had a glory with him before the world was, and of which “he emptied himself” when he became man, then he had an existence, not only before his incarnation, but before the very “foundation of the world.” The Socinian gloss is, “the glory which I had with thee, in thy immutable decree, before the world was; or which thou didst decree, before the world was, to give me.” But ἡ εἰχόν ὡρα ὁσι, “which I had with thee,” cannot bear any such sense. The occasion was too peculiar to admit of any mystical, forced, or parabolic modes of speech. It was in the hearing of his disciples, just before he went out into the garden, that these words were spoken; and, as it has been well observed, it is remarkable, that he introduces the mention of this glory, when it was not necessary to complete the sense of any proposition. And yet, as if on purpose to prevent the apostles, who heard his prayer, from supposing that he was asking that which he had not possessed in any former period, he adds, “with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” So decisive is this passage, that as Dr. Harwood says,

“Were there no intimation in the whole New Testament of the pre-existence of Christ, this single passage would irrefragably demonstrate and establish it. Our Saviour, here in a solemn act of devotion, declares to the Almighty, that he had glory with him before the world was, and fervently supplicates that he would be graciously pleased to re-instate him in his former felicity. The language is plain and clear. Every word has great moment and emphasis: — ‘Glorify thou me with that glory which I enjoyed in thy presence, before the world was.’ Upon this single text I lay my
finger. Here I posit my system. And if plain words be designedly employed to convey any determinate meaning; if the modes of human speech have any precision. I am convinced, that this plain declaration of our Lord, in an act of devotion, exhibits a great and important truth, which can never be subverted or invalidated by any accurate and satisfactory criticism.” *Socinian Scheme.*

Whatever, therefore, the true nature of our Lord Jesus Christ may be, we have at least discovered from the plainest possible testimonies; testimonies which no criticism, and no unlicensed and paraphrastic comments have been able to shake or to obscure, that he had an existence previous to his incarnation, and previous to the very “foundation of the world.” If then we find that the same titles and works which are ascribed to him in the New Testament, are ascribed to a Divine person in the Old, who is yet represented as distinct from God the Father, and especially to one who was to come into the world to fulfil the very offices which our Lord has actually fulfilled, we shall have obtained another step in this inquiry, and shall have exhibited lofty proof, not only of the pre-existence of Christ, but also of his Divinity. This will be the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 11. — TRINITY. — JESUS CHRIST THE JEHOVAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

In reading the Scriptures of the Old Testament, it is impossible not to mark with serious attention the frequent visible appearances of God to the patriarchs and prophets; and, what is still more singular, his visible residence in a cloud of glory, both among the Jews in the wilderness and in their sacred tabernacle and temple.

The fact of such appearances cannot be disputed; they are allowed by all, and in order to point out the bearing of this fact upon the point at issue, the Divinity of Christ, it is necessary,

1. To show that the person who made these appearances, was truly a Divine person.

The proofs of this are, that he bears the names of Jehovah, God, and other Divine appellations; and that he dwelt among the Israelites as the object of their supreme worship; the worship of a people, the first precept of whose law was, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.” The proofs are copious, but quotations shall not be needlessly multiplied.

When the Angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness, “she called the name of JEHOVAH that spake to her, Thou God seest me.” — JEHOVAH appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre. Abraham lifted up his eyes, and three men, three persons in human form, “stood by him.” One of the three is called Jehovah. And JEHOVAH said, “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” Two of the three depart, but he to whom this high appellation is given remains, “but Abraham stood yet before JEHOVAH.” This Jehovah is called by Abraham in the conversation which followed, “the Judge of all the earth;” and the account of the solemn interview is thus closed by the historian, “the Lord (Jehovah) went his way as soon as he had left off communing with Abraham.” Appearances of the same personage occur to Isaac and to Jacob, under the name of “the God of Abraham, and of Isaac.” After one of these manifestations, Jacob says, “I have seen God face to face;” and at another, “Surely the Lord (JEHOVAH) is in this place.” The same Jehovah was made visible to Moses, and gave him his commission, and God said, “I AM THAT I AM; thou shalt say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” The same JEHOVAH went
before the Israelites by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire; and by him the law was given amidst terrible displays of power and majesty from Mount Sinai. “I am the Lord (JEHOVAH) thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, thou shalt have no other Gods before me, &c. Did ever people hear the voice of God, speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard and live?”

This same personage commanded the Israelites to build him a sanctuary, that he might reside among them; and when it was erected he took possession of it in a visible form, which was called “the glory of the Lord.” There the SHECHINAH, the visible token of the presence of Jehovah, rested above the ark; there he was consulted on all occasions, and there he received their worship from age to age. Sacrifices were offered; sin was confessed and pardoned by him; and the book of Psalms is a collection of the hymns which were sung to his honour in the tabernacle and temple services, where he is constantly celebrated as JEHOVAH the God of Israel; the “Jehovah, God of their fathers;” and the object of their own exclusive hope and trust: all the works of creation are in those sublime compositions ascribed to him; and he is honoured and adored as the governor of all nations, and the sole ruler among the children of men. In a word, to mark his Divinity in the strongest possible manner, all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, “light and defence, grace and glory,” are sought at his hands.

Thus the same glorious being, bearing the appellation of JEHOVAH, is seen as the object of the worship and trust of ages, and that under a visible manifestation; displaying attributes, engaged in operations, and assuming dignities and honours, Which unequivocally array him with the majesty of absolute Divinity.

To this the objections which have been made, admit of a most satisfactory answer.

The first is, that this personage is also called “the Angel of the Lord.” This is true; but if that Angel of the Lord is the same person as he who is called Jehovah; the same as he who gave the law in his own name, then it is clear that the term “Angel” does not indicate a created being, and is a designation not of nature, but of office, which will be just now accounted for, and is not at all inconsistent with his true and proper Divinity.

The collation of a few passages, or of the different parts of the same passages of Scripture, will show that Jehovah and “the Angel of the Lord,”
when used in this eminent sense, are the same person. Jacob says of Bethel, where he had exclaimed, “Surely Jehovah is in this place:” The Angel of God appeared to me in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel. Upon his death bed he gives the names of God and Angel to this same person. “The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.’ So in Hosea 12:2, 5, it is said, “By his strength he had power with God, yea he had power over the Angel and prevailed.” “We found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial.” Here the same person has the names God, Angel, and Lord God of hosts. “The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, by myself have I sworn saith the Lord, (Jehovah,) that since thou hast done this thing, in blessing I will bless thee.” The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire; but this same Angel of the Lord “called to him out of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” To omit many other passages, St. Stephen, in alluding to this part of the history of Moses, in his speech before the council, says, “There appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, An angel of the Lord in a flame of fire,” showing that that phraseology was in use among the Jews in his day, and that this Angel and Jehovah were regarded as the same being, for he adds, “Moses was in the Church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke unto him in Mount Sinai.” There is one part of the history of the Jews in the wilderness, which so fully shows that they distinguished this Angel of Jehovah from all created angels, as to deserve particular attention. In Exodus 23:20, God makes this promise to Moses and the Israelites, “Behold I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared; beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him.” Of this Angel let it be observed, that he is here represented as the guide and protector of the Israelites; to him they were to owe their conquests and their settlement in the promised land, which are in other places often attributed to the immediate agency of God — that they are cautioned to “beware of him,” to reverence and stand in dread of him — that the pardoning of transgressions belongs to him — finally, “that the name of God was in him.” This name must be understood of God’s own peculiar name, JEHOVAH, I AM, which he assumed as his distinctive appellation at his first appearing to Moses; and as the names of God are indicative of his nature, he who had a right to bear the peculiar
name of God, must also have his essence. This view is put beyond all doubt by the fact, that Moses and the Jews so understood the promise; for afterward when their sins had provoked God to threaten not to go up with them himself, but to commit them to “an Angel who should drive out the Canaanite, &c,” the people mourned over this as a great calamity, and Moses betook himself to special intercession, and rested not until he obtained the repeal of the threat, and the renewed promise, “my presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.” Nothing, therefore, can be more clear than that Moses and the Israelites considered the promise of the Angel, in whom was “the name of God,” as a promise that God himself would go with them. With this uncreated Angel, this presence of the Lord, they were satisfied, but not with “an angel” indefinitely, with an angel, not so by office only, as was the appearing Angel of the Old Testament, but who was by nature of that order of beings usually so called, and therefore a created being. At the news of God’s determination not to go up with them, Moses hastens to the tabernacle to make his intercessions, and refuses an inferior conductor. “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

That the Angel of Jehovah is constantly represented as Jehovah himself, and therefore as a Divine person, is so manifest, that the means resorted to, to evade the force of the argument which so immediately flashes from it, acknowledge the fact. Those who deny the Divinity of our Lord, however, endeavour to elude the consequence according to their respective creeds. The Arians, who think the appearing angel to have been Christ, but who yet deny him to be Jehovah himself, assume that this glorious but created being personated the Deity, and as his ambassador and representative spoke by his authority, and took his name. Thus a modern Arian observes, “The Angel takes the name of Jehovah because it is a common maxim, loquitur legatus sermone mittentis eum, as an ambassador in the name of his king, or the fecialis when he denounced war in the name of the Roman people; and what is done by the Angel is said to be done by God, according to another maxim, qui facit per alium, facit per se.” (Taylor, Ben Mordecai.) The answer to this is, that though ambassadors speak in the name of their masters, they do not apply the names and titles of their masters to themselves, — that the unquestionably created angels, mentioned in Scripture as appearing to men, declare that they were sent by God, and never personate him, — that the prophets uniformly declare their commission to be from God, — that God himself declares, “Jehovah is my
name, and my glory will I not give to another;” — and yet that the appearing Angel calls himself, as we have seen, by this incommunicable name in almost innumerable instances, and that though the object of the Mosaic dispensation was to preserve men from idolatry, yet this Angel claims and receives the exclusive worship both of the patriarchs to whom he occasionally appeared, and the Jews among whom he visibly resided for ages. It is therefore a proposition too monstrous to be for a moment sustained, that a created being of any kind should thus allure men into idolatry, by acting the Deity, assuming his name, and attributing to himself God’s peculiar and incommunicable perfections and honour. The Arian hypothesis on this subject is well answered by even a Socinian writer. “The whole transaction on Mount Sinai shows that Jehovah was present, and acted, and not another for him. It is the God that had delivered them out of Egypt, with whom they were to enter into covenant as their God, and who thereupon accepted them as his people, who was the author of their religion and laws, and who himself delivered to them those ten commands, the most sacred part. There is nothing to lead us to imagine that the person, who was their God, did not speak in his own name; not the least intimation that here was another representing him.” (Lindsey’s Apology.)

The author of “the Essay on Spirit” attempts to meet this by alleging that “the Hebrews were far from being explicit and accurate in their style, and that it was customary for prophets and angels to speak in the name and character of God.” The reply of Dr. Randolph is able and decisive, and as this is a point of great importance, its introduction will not appear unnecessary.

“Some, to evade these strong proofs of our Lord’s Divinity, have asserted that this was only a created angel appearing in the name or person of the Father; it being customary in Scripture for one person to sustain the character, and act and speak in the name of another. But these assertions want proof. I find no instances of one person acting and speaking in the name of another, without first declaring in whose name he acts and speaks. The instances usually alleged are nothing to the purpose. If we sometimes find an angel in the book of Revelation speaking in the name of God, yet from the context it will be easy to show that this angel was the great Angel, the Angel of the Covenant. But if there should be some instances, in the poetical or prophetical parts of Scripture, of an abrupt change of persons, where the person speaking is not particularly specified,
this will by no means come up to the case before us. Here is a person sustaining the name and character of the most high God, from one end of the Bible to the other; bearing his glorious and fearful name, the incommunicable name Jehovah, expressive of his necessary existence; sitting in the throne of God; dwelling and presiding in his temple; delivering laws in his name; giving out oracles; hearing prayers; forgiving sins. And yet these writers would persuade us that this was only a tutelary angel; that a creature was the God of Israel, and that to this creature all their service and worship was directed; that the great God, ‘whose name is Jealous,’ was pleased to give his glory, his worship, his throne to a creature. What is this but to make the law of God himself introductory of the same idolatry that was practised by all the nations of the heathen? But we are told that bold figures of speech are common in the Hebrew language, which is not to be tied down in its interpretation to the severer rules of modern criticism. We may be assured that these opinions are indefensible, which cannot be supported without charging the word of God with want of propriety or perspicuity. Such pretences might be borne with, if the question were about a phrase or two in the poetical or prophetical parts of Scripture. But this, if it be a figure, is a figure which runs through the whole Scripture. And a bold interpreter must he be, who supposes that such figures are perpetually and uniformly made use of in a point of such importance, without any meaning at all. This is to confound the use of language, to make the Holy Scripture a mysterious unintelligible book, sufficient to prove nothing, or rather to prove any thing, which a wild imagination shall suggest.”

(Randolph’s Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity.)

If the Arian account of the Angel of Jehovah be untenable, the Socinian notion will be found equally unsupported, and indeed ridiculous. Dr. Priestley assumes the marvellous doctrine of “occasional personality,” and thinks that “in some cases angels were nothing more than temporary appearances, and no permanent beings; the mere organs of the Deity, assumed for the purpose of making himself known.” He speaks therefore of “a power occasionally emitted, and then taken back again into its source;” of this power being vested with a temporary personality, and thinks this possible! Little cause had the doctor and his adherents to talk of the mystery and absurdity of the doctrine of three persons in one Godhead,
who can make a *person* out of a *power*, emitted and then drawn back again to its source; a *temporary person*, without individual subsistence! The wildness of this fiction is its own refutation; but that the Angel of Jehovah was not this temporary occasional person, produced or “emitted” for the occasion of these appearances, is made certain by Abraham’s “walking before this Angel of the Lord,” that is, ordering his life and conversation in his sight all the days of his life; by Jacob calling him the Angel of the Lord who had “fed him all his life long;” and by this also, that the same *person* who was called by himself and by the Jews “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,” was the God of the chosen people in *all* their generations. Mr. Lindsey says “that the *outward token* of the presence of God is what is generally meant by the *Angel of God*, when not particularly specified and appropriated otherwise; that which manifested his appearance, whatever it was;” and this opinion commonly obtains among the Socinians. “The *Angel of the Lord* was the visible symbol of the Divine presence.” (*Belsham.*) This notion, however, involves a whole train of absurdities. The term, the “Angel of Jehovah” is not at all accounted for by a visible symbol of clouds, light, fire, &c, unless that symbol be considered as distinct from Jehovah. We have then the name Jehovah given to a cloud, a light, a fire, &c; the fire is the *Angel of the Lord*, and yet the Angel of the Lord calls to Moses *out of the fire*. This visible symbol says to Abraham, “By *MYSELF* I have sworn,” for these are said to be the words of the Angel of Jehovah; and this Angel, the visible symbol, spake to Moses on Mount Sinai: such are the absurdities which flow from error! Most clearly therefore is it determined on the testimony of several scriptures, and by necessary induction from the circumstances attending the numerous appearances of the Angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament, that the person thus manifesting himself, and thus receiving supreme worship, was not a created angel as the Arians would have it, nor a *meteor*, an *atmospheric appearance*, the worthy theory of modern Socinians, but that he was a *DIVINE PERSON*.

2. It will be necessary to show that this Divine person was not God the Father.

The following argument has been adopted in proof of this: “No man hath seen God at any time. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape. Not that any man hath seen the Father. It is however said in the Old Testament, that God frequently appeared under the patriarchal and
Levitical dispensations, and therefore we must conclude that the God who appeared was God the Son."

Plausible as this argument is, it cannot be depended upon; for that the Father never manifested himself to men, as distinct from the Son, is contradicted by two express testimonies. We have seen that the Angel, in whom was the name of God, promised as the conductor of the Israelites through the wilderness, was a Divine person. But he who promised to "send him," must be a different person to the angel sent, and that person could be no other than the Father. "Behold, I send an angel before thee," &c. On this occasion, therefore, Moses heard the voice of the Father. Again, at the baptism of Jesus the voice of the Father was heard, declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The above passages must be therefore interpreted to accord with these facts. They express the pure spirituality and invisibility of God, and can no more be argued against a sensible manifestation of God by audible sounds, and appearances, than the declaration to Moses, "No man can see my face and live." There was an important sense in which Moses neither did nor could see God; and yet it is equally true, that he both saw him and heard him. He saw the "backward parts," but not the "face of God."  

The manifestation of the Father was however very rare; as appears from by far the greater part of these Divine appearances being expressly called appearances of the Angel of the Lord. The Jehovah who appeared to Abram in the case of Sodom was an angel. The Jehovah who appeared to Hagar, is said also to be "the Angel of the Lord." It was "the Angel of Jehovah from heaven" who sware by himself to Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee." Jacob calls the "God of Bethel," that is, the God who appeared to him there, and to whom he vowed his vows, "the Angel of God." In blessing Joseph, he calls the God "in whose presence my fathers, Abraham and Isaac have walked," the Angel who had redeemed him from all evil. "I AM THAT I AM," when he spoke to Moses out of the bush, is termed the Angel of Jehovah. The God who spake these words and said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is called the Angel who spake to Moses in the Mount Sinai. The Being who dwelt in a fiery cloud, the visible token of the presence of God, and took up his residence over the ark, in the holiest place, and there received the constant worship of the Jews, is called the Angel of the Lord; and so in many other instances.
Nor is there any reason for stretching the point to exclude in all cases, the visible or audible agency of the Father, from the Old Testament; no advantage in the least is gained by it, and it cannot be maintained without sanctioning by example the conduct of the opposers of truth, in giving forced and unnatural expositions to several passages of Scripture. This ought to be avoided, and a consistency of fair honest interpretation be maintained throughout. It is is ample sufficient for the important argument with which we are now concerned, to prove, not that the Father was never manifested in his own person; but that the Angel of the Lord, whose appearances are so often recorded, is not the Father. This is clear from his appellation angel, with respect to which there can be but two interpretations. It is either a name descriptive of nature or of office. In the first view it is generally employed in the sacred Scriptures to designate one of an order of intelligences superior to man, and often employed in the service of man as the ministers of God, but still beings finite and created. We have however already proved that the Angel of the Lord is not a creature, and he is not therefore called an angel with reference to his nature. The term must then be considered as a term of office. He is called the Angel of the Lord, because he was the messenger of the Lord; because he was sent to execute his will, and to be his visible image and representative. His office therefore under this appellation was ministerial; but ministration is never attributed to the Father. He who was sent must be a distinct person from him by whom he was sent; the messenger from him whose message he brought, and whose will he performed. The Angel of Jehovah is therefore a different person from the Jehovah whose messenger he was, and yet the Angel himself is Jehovah, and, as we have proved, truly Divine. Thus does the Old Testament most clearly reveal to us, in the case of Jehovah and the Angel of Jehovah, two Divine persons, while it still maintains its great fundamental principle, that there is but one God.

3. The third step in this argument is, that the Divine person, called so often the Angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament, was the promised and future Christ, and consequently Jesus, the Lord and Saviour of the Christian Church.

We have seen, that it was the Angel of Jehovah who gave the law to the Israelites, and that in his own name, though still an angel, a messenger in the transaction; being at once servant and Lord, angel and Jehovah, circumstances which can only be explained on the hypothesis of his Divinity, and for which neither Arianism nor Socinianism can give any
solution. He therefore was the person who made the covenant, usually called the Mosaic, with the children of Israel. The Prophet Jeremiah however expressly says, that the new covenant with Israel was to be made by the same person who had made the old. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” The Angel of Jehovah, who led the Israelites out of Egypt and gave them their law, is here plainly introduced as the author of the new covenant. If then, as we learn from the Apostle Paul, this new covenant predicted by Jeremiah is the Christian dispensation, and Christ be its author; the Christ of the New Testament, and the Angel of Jehovah of the Old, are the same person.

Equally striking is the celebrated prediction in Malachi, the last of the prophets. “Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The characters under which the person who is the subject of this prophecy is described, are, the Lord, a sovereign Ruler, the owner of the temple, and therefore a Divine prince or governor, he “shall come to his temple.” “The temple,” says Bishop Horsley, “in the writings of a Jewish prophet, cannot be otherwise understood, according to the literal meaning, than of the temple at Jerusalem. Of this temple, therefore, the person to come is here expressly called the Lord. The lord of any temple, in the language of all writers, and in the natural meaning of the phrase, is the divinity to whose worship it is consecrated. To no other divinity the temple of Jerusalem was consecrated than the true and everlasting God, the Lord Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth. Here, then, we have the express testimony of Malachi, that the Christ, the Deliverer, whose coming he announces, was no other than the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Jehovah had delivered the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage; and the same Jehovah was to come in person to his temple, to effect the greater and more general deliverance of which the former was but an imperfect type.”

He bears also the same title, angel or messenger, as he whose appearances in the Old Testament have been enumerated.
“The Messenger of the Covenant, therefore, is Jehovah’s messenger; — if his messenger, his servant; for a message is a service: it implies a person sending, and a person sent. In the person who sendeth there must be authority to send, — submission to that authority in the person sent. The Messenger, therefore, of the Covenant, is the servant of the Lord Jehovah: but the same person who is the Messenger, is the Lord Jehovah himself, not the same person with the sender, but bearing the same name; because united in that mysterious nature and undivided substance which the name imports. The same person, therefore, is servant and Lord; and, by uniting these characters in the same person, what does the prophet but describe that great mystery of the Gospel, the union of the nature which governs, and the nature which serves, — the union of the Divine and human nature in the person of the Christ?”

(Horsley’s Sermons.)

Now this prophecy is expressly applied to Christ by St. Mark. — “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” It follows from this, that Jesus is the Lord, the Lord of the temple, the Messenger of the Covenant mentioned in the prophecy; and bearing these exact characters of the appearing Angel Jehovah of the Old Testament, who was the King of the Jews; whose temple was HIS, because he resided in it, and so was called “the house of the Lord;” and who was “the Messenger” of their Covenant; the identity of the persons cannot be mistaken. One coincidence is singularly striking. It has been proved that the Angel Jehovah had his residence in the Jewish tabernacle and temple, and that he took possession, or came suddenly to both, at their dedication, and filled them with his glory. On one occasion Jesus himself, though in his state of humiliation, comes in public procession to the temple at Jerusalem, and calls it “his own,” thus at once declaring that he was the ancient and rightful Lord of the temple, and appropriating to himself this eminent prophecy. Bishop Horsley has introduced this circumstance in his usual striking and convincing manner: —

“A third time Jesus came still more remarkably as the Lord to his temple, when he came up from Galilee to celebrate the last passover, and made that public entry at Jerusalem which is described by all the evangelists. It will be necessary to enlarge upon the particulars of this interesting story: for the right understanding of our Saviour’s conduct upon this occasion depends
so much upon seeing certain leading circumstances in a proper light, —
upon a recollection of ancient prophecies, and an attention to the customs
of the Jewish people, — that I am apt to suspect, few now-a-days discern
in this extraordinary transaction what was clearly seen in it at the time by
our Lord’s disciples, and in some measure understood by his enemies. I
shall present you with an orderly detail of the story, and comment upon the
particulars as they arise: and I doubt not but that by God’s assistance, I
shall teach you to perceive in this public entry of Jesus of Nazareth, (if you
have not perceived it before,) a conspicuous advent of the great Jehovah to
his temple. — Jesus, on his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, stops at
the foot of Mount Olivet, and sends two of his disciples to a neighbouring
village, to provide an ass’s colt to convey him from that place to the city,
distant not more than half a mile. The colt is brought, and Jesus is seated
upon it. This first circumstance must be well considered; it is the key to the
whole mystery of the story. What could be his meaning in choosing this
singular conveyance? It could not be that the fatigue of the short journey
which remained was likely to be too much for him afoot; and that no better
animal was to be procured. Nor was the ass in these days (though it had
been in earlier ages an animal in high esteem in the east) used for travelling
or for state by persons of the first condition, — that this conveyance
should be chosen for the grandeur or propriety of the appearance. Strange
as it may seem, the coming to Jerusalem upon an ass’s colt was one of the
prophetical characters of the Messiah; and the great singularity of it had
perhaps been the reason that this character had been more generally
attended to than any other: so that there was no Jew who was not apprized
that the Messiah was to come to the holy city in that manner. ‘Rejoice
greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!’ saith
Zechariah; ‘Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! He is just, and having
salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even a colt, the foal of an ass!’
And this prophecy the Jews never understood of any other person than the
Messiah Jesus, therefore, by seating himself upon the ass’s colt in order to
go to Jerusalem, without any possible inducement either of grandeur or
convenience, openly declared himself to be that King who was to come,
and at whose coming in that manner Zion was to rejoice. And so the
disciples, if we may judge from what immediately followed, understood
this proceeding; for no sooner did they see their master seated on the colt,
than they broke out into transports of the highest joy, as if in this great
sight they had the full contentment of their utmost wishes; conceiving, as it
should seem, the sanguine hope that the kingdom was this instant to be
restored to Israel. They strewed the way which Jesus was to pass with the green branches of the trees which grew beside it; a mark of honour in the east, never paid but to the greatest emperors on occasions of the highest pomp. They proclaimed him the long-expected heir of David’s throne, — the Blessed One coming in the name of the Lord; that is, in the language of Malachi, the Messenger of the Covenant: and they rent the skies with the exulting exclamation of ‘Hosanna in the highest!’ On their way to Jerusalem, they are met by a great multitude from the city, whom the tidings had no sooner reached than they ran out in eager joy to join his triumph. When they reached Jerusalem, ‘the whole city,’ says the blessed evangelist, ‘was moved.’ Here recollect, that it was now the season of the passover. The passover was the highest festival of the Jewish nation, the anniversary of that memorable night when Jehovah led his armies out of Egypt with a high hand and an extended arm, — ‘a night much to be remembered to the Lord of the children of Israel in their generations;’ and much indeed it was remembered. The devout Jews flocked at this season to Jerusalem, not only from every corner of Judea, but from the remotest countries whither God had scattered them; and the numbers of the strangers that were annually collected in Jerusalem during this festival are beyond imagination. These strangers, who living at a distance knew little of what had been passing in Judea since their last visit, were they who were moved (as well they might be) with wonder and astonishment, when Jesus, so humble in his equipage, so honoured in his numerous attendants, appeared within the city gates; and every one asks his neighbour, ‘Who is this?’ It was replied by some of the natives of Judea, but as I conceive, by none of the disciples; for any of them at this time would have given another answer, — it was replied,

‘This is the Nazarene, the great prophet from Galilee.’ Through the throng of these astonished spectators the procession passed by the public streets of Jerusalem to the temple, where immediately the sacred porticoes resound with the continued hosannas of the multitudes. The chief priests and scribes are astonished and alarmed: they request Jesus himself to silence his followers. Jesus, in the early part of his ministry, had always been cautious of any public display of personal consequence; lest the malice of his enemies should be too soon provoked, or the unadvised zeal of his friends should raise civil commotions. But now that his work on earth was finished in all but the last painful part of it, — now that
he had firmly laid the foundations of God’s kingdom in the hearts of his disciples, — now that the apostles were prepared and instructed for their office, — now that the days of vengeance on the Jewish nation were at hand, and it mattered not how soon they should incur the displeasure of the Romans their masters, — Jesus lays aside a reserve which could be no longer useful; and, instead of checking the zeal of his followers, he gives a new alarm to the chief priests and scribes, by a direct and firm assertion of his right to the honours that were so largely shown to him. ‘If these,’ says he, ‘were silent, the stones of this building would be endued with a voice to proclaim my titles:’ and then, as on a former occasion, he drove out the traders; but with a higher tone of authority, calling it his own house, and saying, ‘My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.’ You have now the story, in all its circumstances, faithfully collected from the four evangelists; nothing exaggerated, but set in order, and perhaps somewhat illustrated by an application of old prophecies, and a recollection of Jewish customs. Judge for yourselves whether this was not an advent of the Lord Jehovah taking personal possession of his temple.” (Horsley.)

But it is not only in these passages that the name Jehovah, the appellation of the appearing Angel of the Old Testament, and other titles of Divinity, are given to Messiah; and if Jesus be Messiah, then are they his titles and as truly mark his Divinity.

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, (JEHOVAH,) make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord (JEHOVAH) shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” This being spoken of him of whom John the Baptist was to be the forerunner; and the application having been afterward expressly made by the Baptist to our Lord, it is evident that HE is the person “to whom the prophet attributes the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH, and styles him ‘our’ God,”” — (Wogan.)

“Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall
bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name E\textsc{manuel}, which being interpreted is God with us.” Here another prediction of Isaiah is expressly applied to Jesus. “Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus, and he shall be great, and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” These are the words of the angel to Mary, and obviously apply to our Lord the words of Isaiah, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and power there shall be no end, upon the throne of David to order and establish it for ever.” It is unnecessary at present to quote more of those numerous passages which speak of the future Messiah under Divine titles, and which are applied to Jesus as that Messiah actually manifested. They do not in so many words connect the Angel of Jehovah with Jesus as the same person; but, taken with the passages above adduced, they present evidence of a very weighty character in favour of that position. A plurality of persons in the one Godhead is mentioned in the Jewish Scriptures; this plurality is restricted to \textit{three}; one of them appears as the “acting God” of the patriarchal and Mosaic age; the prophets speak of a Divine person to come as the Messiah, bearing precisely the same titles; no one supposes this to be the Holy Ghost; it cannot be the Father, seeing that Messiah is God’s servant and God’s messenger; and the only conclusion is, that the Messiah predicted is he who is known under the titles, Angel, Son of God, Word of God, in the Old Testament; and if Jesus be that Messiah, he is that \textsc{son}, that \textsc{word}, that \textsc{servant}, that \textsc{messenger}; and bearing the same Divine characters as the Angel of Jehovah, is that Angel himself, and is entitled in the Christian Church to all the homage and worship which was paid to him in the Jewish.

There are, however, a few passages which in a still more distinct manner than any which have been introduced, except that from the prophecy of Jeremiah, identify Jesus Christ with the Angel of Jehovah in the patriarchal and Levitical dispensations; and a brief consideration of them will leave this important point completely established.

Let it then be recollected, that he who dwelt in the Jewish tabernacle, between the cherubim, was the \textit{Angel Jehovah}. In Psalm lxviii, which was written on the removal of the ark to Mount Zion, he is expressly addressed. “This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in;” and again, “They have
seen thy goings, O God, my King, in thy sanctuary.” But the Apostle Paul, Ephesians 4:8, applies this psalm to Christ, and considers this very ascent of the Angel Jehovah to Mount Zion as a prophetic type of the ascent of Jesus to the celestial Zion. — “Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive,” &c. The conclusion, therefore, is, that the Angel Jehovah who is addressed in the psalm, and Christ, are the same person. This is marked with equal strength in verse 29. The psalm, let it be observed, is determined by apostolical authority to be a prophecy of Christ, as indeed its terms intimate; and with reference to the future conquests of Messiah, the prophet exclaims, “Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.” The future Christ is spoken of as one having then a temple at Jerusalem.

It was the glory of the Angel Jehovah, the resident God of the temple, which Isaiah saw in the vision recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy before adduced; but the Evangelist John expressly declares that on that occasion the prophet saw the glory of Christ and spake of him. Christ therefore was the Lord of hosts whose glory filled the temple.

St. Peter calls the Spirit of Jehovah, by which the prophets “prophesied of the grace that should come, the Spirit of Christ.” He also informs us that “Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing.” — Now whatever may be the full meaning of this difficult passage, Christ is clearly represented as preaching by his Spirit in the days of Noah, that is, inspiring Noah to preach. Let this be collated with the declaration of Jehovah before the flood, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is flesh, yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years,” during which period of delay and long suffering, Noah was made by him, from whom alone inspiration can come, a preacher of righteousness; and it is clear that Christ, and the appearing Jehovah of the antediluvian world, are supposed by St. Peter to have been the same person. In the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, Moses is said to have esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; a passage of easy interpretation, when it is admitted that the Jehovah of the Israelites, whose name and worship Moses professed, and Christ, were the same person. For this worship he was reproached by the Egyptians, who preferred their own idolatry, and treated, as all apostates do, the true religion, the pure worship of former ages from which they had
departed, with contempt. To be reproached for the sake of Jehovah, and to be reproached for Christ, were convertible phrases with the apostle, because he considered Jehovah and Christ to be the same person.

“In St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, we read, ‘Neither let us tempt CHRIST, as some of them (that is, the Jews in the wilderness) also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents,’ 10:9. The pronoun him αὐτὸν, must be understood after ‘tempted,’ and it is found in some MSS., though not sufficiently numerous to warrant its insertion in the text. It is, however, necessarily implied, and refers to Christ just before mentioned. The Jews in the wilderness here are said to have tempted some person; and to understand by that person any other than Christ, who is just before named, is against all grammar, which never allows without absolute necessity any other accusative to be understood by the verb than that of some person or thing before mentioned in the same sentence. The conjunction καί, also establishes this interpretation beyond doubt: ‘Neither let us tempt CHRIST as some of them ALSO tempted’ — tempted whom? The answer clearly is, as they also tempted Christ. If Christ then was the person whom the Israelites tempted in the wilderness, he unavoidably becomes the Jehovah of the Old Testament.”

This is rendered the more striking, when the passage to which the apostle refers is given at length. “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.” Now what could lead the apostle to substitute Christ, in the place of the Lord your God? “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted” Christ, for that is the accusative which must be supplied. Nothing certainly but that the idea was familiar to him, that Christ, and the Angel Jehovah, who conducted and governed the Israelites, were the same person.

Hebrews 12:25, 26: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised,” &c.

This passage also is decisive as a proof that the Angel of Jehovah, and our Lord, are the same person. “Him that speaketh from heaven,” the context determines to be Christ; “him that spake on earth,” is probably Moses. The “voice” that then “shook the earth,” was the voice of him that gave the law, at the sound of which the mountain trembled and shook. He who gave the law we have already proved, from the authority of Scripture, to have
been the Angel of Jehovah. and the apostle declares that the same person now speaks to us “from heaven,” in the Gospel, and is therefore the Lord Christ. Dr. MacKnight says, that it was not the Son’s voice which shook the earth, because it was not the Son who gave the law. In this he is clearly contradicted by St. Stephen, and the whole Jewish history. The proto-martyr in his defence, expressly says, that it was “the Angel” who spake with Moses in the mount; and here the Apostle Paul declares, that it was the voice of Christ which then shook the earth. Nothing can more certainly prove than this collation of Scriptures, that the Son gave the law, and that “the Angel” who spake to Moses, and Christ, are the same person.

The above passage, in its necessary grammatical construction, so certainly marks out Christ as the person whose voice shook the earth at the giving of the law, that the Socinians, in their New Version of the Testament, have chosen to get rid of a testimony which no criticism could evade, by daringly and wilfully corrupting the text itself, and without any authority whatever, they read, instead of “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” “See that ye refuse not God that speaketh;” thus introducing a new antecedent. This instance of a wilful perversion of the very text of the word of God, has received its merited reprobation from those eminent critics who have exposed the dishonesties, the ignorance, and the licentious criticisms, of what is called an “Improved Version” of the New Testament.

These views are confirmed by the testimonies of the early fathers, to whom the opinions of the apostles, on this subject, (one not at all affected by the controversies of the day,) would naturally descend. The opinions of the ancient Jews, which are also decidedly confirmatory, will be given in their proper place.

Justin Martyr has delivered his sentiments very freely upon the Divine appearances. “Our Christ,” he says, “conversed with Moses out of the bush, in the appearance of fire. And Moses received great strength from Christ, who spake to him in the appearance of fire.” Again: — “The Jews are justly reproved, for imagining that the Father of all things spake to Moses, when indeed it was the Son of God, who is called the Angel and the Messenger of the Father. He formerly appeared in the form of fire, and without a human shape, to Moses and the other prophets: but now — being made a man of the virgin,” &c.

Irenæus says, “The Scripture is full of the Son of God’s appearing: sometimes to talk and eat with Abraham, at other times to instruct Noah
about the measures of the ark; at another time to seek Adam; at another
time to bring down judgment upon Sodom; then again, to direct Jacob in
the way; and again, to converse with Moses out of the bush.”

Tertullian says, “It was the Son who judged men from the beginning,
destroying that lofty tower, and confounding their languages, punishing the
whole world with a flood of waters, and raining fire and brimstone upon
Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord pouring it down from the Lord: for he
always descended to hold converse with men, from Adam even to the
patriarchs and prophets, in visions, in dreams, in mirrors, in dark sentences,
always preparing his way from the beginning, neither was it possible, that
the God who conversed with men upon earth: could be any other than that
Word which was to be made flesh.”

Clemens Alexandrinus says, “The Pedagogus appeared to Abraham, to
Jacob, wrestled with him, and lastly, manifested himself to Moses.” Again:
“Christ gave the world the law of nature, and the written law of Moses.
Wherefore, the Lord deriving from one fountain both the first and second
precepts which he gave, neither overlooked those who were before the
law, so as to leave them without law, nor suffered those who minded not
the philosophy of the barbarians to do as they pleased. He gave to the one
precepts, to the other philosophy, and concluded them in unbelief till his
coming, when, whosoever believes not is without excuse.”

Origen says, “My Lord Jesus Christ descended to the earth more than
once. He came down to Esaias, to Moses, and to every one of the
prophets.” Again: — “That our blessed Saviour did sometimes become as
an angel, we may be induced to believe, if we consider the appearances and
speeches of angels, who in some texts have said, ‘I am the God of
Abraham, and the God of Isaac,’” &c.

Theophilus of Antioch also declares, “that it was the Son of God who
appeared to Adam immediately after the fall, who, assuming the person of
the Father and the Lord of all, came in paradise under the person of God,
and conversed with Adam.”

The synod of Antioch: — “The Son,” say they, “is sometimes called an
Angel, and sometimes the Lord; sometimes God. For it is impious to
imagine, that the God of the universe is any where called an angel. But the
Messenger of the Father is the Son, who himself is Lord and God: for it is
written, The Angel of the great council.”
Cyprian observes, that “the Angel who appeared to the patriarch is Christ and God.” And this he confirms by producing a number of those passages from the Old Testament, where it is said, that an Angel of the Lord appeared and spake in the name of God.

Hilary speaks to the same purpose: — “He who is called the Angel of God, the same is Lord and God. For the Son of God, according to the prophet, is the Angel of the great council. That the distinction of persons might be entire, he is called the Angel of God; for he who is God of God, the same also is the Angel (or Messenger) of God; and yet, at the same time, that due honour might be paid, he is also called Lord and God.”

St. Basil says, “Who then is it that is called both an angel and God? Is it not He, whose name, we are told, is called the Angel of the great Covenant? For though it was in aftertimes that he became the Angel of the great Covenant, yet even before that, he did not disdain the title of an Angel, or Messenger.” Again: — “It is manifest to every one, that where the same person is styled both an Angel and God, it must be meant of the only begotten, who manifests himself to mankind in different generations, and declares the will of the Father to his saints. Wherefore, he who, at his appearing to Moses, called himself I AM, cannot be conceived to be any other person than God, the Word who was in the beginning with God.”

Other authorities may be seen in Waterland’s Defence of Queries, that decidedly refutes Dr. Samuel Clarke, who pretends, in order to cover his Arianism, that the fathers represent the angel as speaking in the person of the Father.

Two objections to this doctrine, taken from the Scriptures, are answered without difficulty. “God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” To those only who deny the manifestation and agency of the Father in every case in the Old Testament, this passage presents a difficulty. God the Father is certainly meant by the apostle, and he is said to have spoken by the prophets. But this is no difficulty to those who, though they contend that the ordinary appearances of the Deity were those of the Son, yet allow the occasional manifestation of the Father. He is the fountain of inspiration. The Son is sent by the Father, but the Spirit is sent by the Father and by the Son. This is the order in the New Testament, and also, as many passages show in the Old. The Spirit sent by the Father, qualified the prophets to speak unto “our fathers.” The apostle, however,
says nothing more than that there was an agency of the Father in sending the prophets, which does not exclude that of the Son also; for the opposition lies in the *outward visible* and *standing* means of conveying the knowledge of the will of God to men, which under the law was by mere men, though prophets; under the Gospel, by the incarnate Son. Communication by prophets under the law, did not exclude other communications by the Son in his Divine character; and communication by the Son under the Gospel, does not exclude other communications by apostles, evangelists, and Christian *prophets*. The text is not therefore an exclusive proposition either way. It is not clear, indeed, that any direct *opposition* at all is intended in the text, but a simple declaration of the *equal* authority of both dispensations, and the peculiar glory of the latter, whose *human* minister and revealer was the Son of God in our nature.

The second objection rests upon a passage in the same epistle. “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord?” To understand this passage, it is to be noted, that the apostle refers to the *judicial* law of Moses, which had its prescribed penalty for every “transgression and disobedience.” Now this law was not, like the decalogue, spoken by God himself, but by angels. For after the voice of God had spoken the ten commandments, the people entreated that God would not speak to them any more. Accordingly, Moses says, Deuteronomy 5:22, “These words,” the decalogue, “the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, with a great voice, and he added no more, and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.” The rest, “both the judicial and the ceremonial law, was delivered, and the covenant was made, by the mediation of Moses: and therefore the apostle says, Galatians 3:19, ‘The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator:’ hence it is called the law of Moses. And the character given of it in the Pentateuch is this, — these are the statutes, and judgments, and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses.” (Randolph Prael. Theolog.)

Nor does the apostle’s argument respect the *author* of the law, for no one can suppose that angels were its authors, nor the *giver* of the law, for angels have no such authority; but the *medium* through which it was communicated, or “spoken.” In the case of the decalogue, that medium
was the Lord, the Angel Jehovah himself in majesty; but in the body of judicial and ceremonial laws, to which he clearly refers, angels and Moses. The *visible medium* by which the Gospel was communicated, was the Son of God made flesh. That word was “spoken by the Lord,” not only in his personal, but in his mediatorial character; and, by that wonderful condescension, its importance, and the danger of neglecting it, were marked in the most eminent and impressive manner.

It has now therefore been established that the Angel Jehovah, and Jesus Christ our Lord, are the same person; and this is the first great argument by which his Divinity is established. He not only existed before his incarnation, but is seen at the head of the religious institutions of his own Church, up to the earliest ages. We trace the manifestations of the same person from Adam to Abraham; from Abraham to Moses; from Moses to the prophets; from the prophets to Jesus. Under every manifestation he has appeared in the form of God, never thinking it robbery to be equal with God. “Dressed in the appropriate robes of God’s state, wearing God’s crown, and wielding God’s sceptre,” he has ever received Divine homage and honour. No name is given to the Angel Jehovah, which is not given to Jehovah Jesus; no attribute is ascribed to the one, which is not ascribed to the other; the worship which was paid to the one by patriarchs and prophets, was paid to the other by evangelists and apostles; and the Scriptures declare them to be the same august person, — the image of the Invisible, whom no man can see and live; — *the Redeeming Angel, the Redeeming Kinsman, and the Redeeming God.*

That the titles with which our Lord is invested are unequivocal declarations of absolute Divinity, will be the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 12. — THE TITLES OF CHRIST.

VARIOUS proofs were adduced, in the last chapter, that the visible Jehovah of the Old Testament is to be regarded as a Being distinct from the FATHER, yet having Divine titles ascribed to him, being arrayed with Divine attributes, and performing Divine works equal to his. That this august Being was the same who afterward appeared as “THE CHRIST,” in the person of JESUS of Nazareth, was also proved; and the conclusion of that branch of the argument was, that Jesus Christ is, in an absolute sense, a Divine person, and as such, is to be received and adored.

It is difficult to conceive any point more satisfactorily established in the Scriptures than the personal appearance of our Lord, during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, under a Divine character; but this argument, so far from having exhausted the proof of his Godhead, is only another in that series of rising steps by which we are, at length, conducted to the most unequivocal and ample demonstration of this great and fundamental doctrine.

The next argument is stated at the head of this chapter. If the titles given to Christ are such as can designate a Divine Being, and a Divine Being only, then is he, to whom they are by inspired authority ascribed, Divine; or, otherwise, the Word of TRUTH must stand charged with practising a direct deception upon mankind, and that in a fundamental article of religion. This is our argument, and we proceed to the illustration.

The first of these titles which calls for our attention is that of JEHOVAH. Whether “the Angel Jehovah” were the future Christ or not, does not affect this case. Even Socinians acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah; and if this is one of the titles of the promised Messiah, it is, consequently a title of our Lord, and must be ascribed to him by all who believe Jesus to be the Messiah.

So many instances of this were given in the preceding chapter, that it is unnecessary to repeat them; and indeed the fact, that the name Jehovah is applied to the Messiah in many passages of the Old Testament, is admitted by the manner in which the argument, deduced from this fact, is objected to by our opponents. “The Jewish Cabbalists,” says Dr. Priestley, “might easily admit that the Messiah might be called Jehovah, without supposing
that he was any thing more than a man, who had no existence before his birth.” “Several things in the Scriptures are called by the name of Jehovah; as, Jerusalem is called Jehovah our Righteousness.” (History of Early Opinions.) They are not, however, the Jewish interpreters only who give the name Jehovah to Messiah; but the inspired prophets themselves, in passages which, by the equally inspired evangelists and apostles, are applied to Jesus. No instance can be given in which any being, acknowledged by all to be a created being, is called Jehovah in the Scriptures, or was so called among the Jews. The peculiar sacredness attached to this name among them was a sufficient guard against such an application of it in their common language; and as for the Scriptures, they explicitly represent it as peculiar to Divinity itself. “I am JEHOVAH, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.” “I am JEHOVAH, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.” “Thou, whose NAME ALONE is JEHOVAH, art the most high, above all the earth.” The peculiarity of the name is often strongly stated by Jewish commentators, which sufficiently refutes Dr. Priestley, who affirms that they could not, on that account, conclude the Messiah to be more than a man. Kimschi paraphrases ע[ימד] Isaiah 43:8, “JEHOVAH, that is my name” — “that name is proper to me.” On ע[ימד] Hosea 12:5, “JEHOVAH his memorial,” he says, “In the name El and Elohim, he communicates with others; but, in this name, he communicates with none.” Aben Ezra, on ע[ימד] Exodus 3:14, proves, at length, that this name is proper to God. (Hoornbeck, Socin. Confut.)

It is, surely, a miserable pretence to allege, that this name is sometimes given to places. It is so; but only in composition with some other word, and not surely as indicative of any quality in the places themselves, but as MEMORIALS of the acts and goodness of JEHOVAH himself, as manifested in those localities. So “Jehovah-Jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen,” or, “the Lord will see or provide,” referred to HIS interposition to save Isaac, and, probably, to the provision of the future sacrifice of Christ. The same observation may be made as to Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Shallum, &c: they are names, not descriptive of places, but of events connected with them, which marked the interposition and character of God himself. It is an unsettled point among critics whether Jah, which is sometimes found in composition as a proper name of a man, as Abijah, Jehovah is my father, Adonijah, Jehovah is my lord, be an abbreviation of Jehovah or not, so that the case will afford no ground of argument. But if it were, it would avail nothing, for it is found only in a combined form, and evidently relates not
to the persons who bore these names, as a *descriptive appellation*, but to some connection which existed, or was supposed to exist, between them and the JEHOWAH they acknowledged as their God. The cases would have been parallel, had our Lord been called Abijah, “Jehovah is my father,” or Jedediah, “the beloved of Jehovah.” Nothing, in that case, would have been furnished, so far as mere *name* was concerned, to distinguish him from his countrymen bearing the same appellatives; but he is called Jehovah himself, a name which the Scriptures give to no person whatever, except to each of the sacred THREE, who stand forth, in the pages of the Old and New Testaments, crowned with this supreme and exclusive honour and eminence.

Nor is it true, that in *Jeremiah 33:16*, Jerusalem is called “Jehovah our Righteousness.” The parallel passage in the same book; *Jeremiah 23:5, 6*, sufficiently shows that this is not the name of Jerusalem, but the name of “THE BRANCH.” Much criticism has been bestowed upon these passages to establish the point, whether the clause ought to be rendered, “And this is the name by which the Lord shall call him, our Righteousness;” or “this is the name by which he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness;” which last has, I think, been decisively established; but he would be a very exceptionable critic who should conclude either of them to be an appellative, not of Messiah, but of Jerusalem, contrary both to the scope of the passage and to the literal rendering of the words, words capable of somewhat different constructions, but in no case capable of being applied either to the people of Judah, or to the city of Jerusalem.

The force of the argument from the application of the name Jehovah to Messiah may be thus stated: —

Whatever belongs to Messiah, that may and must be attributed to Jesus, as being the true and only Christ; and accordingly we have seen, that the evangelists and apostles apply those passages to our Lord, in which the Messiah is unequivocally called Jehovah. But this is the peculiar and appropriate name of God; that name by which he is distinguished from all other beings, and which imports perfections so high and appropriate to the only living and true God, such as self existence and eternity, that it can, in truth, be a descriptive appellation of no other being. It is, however, *solemnly and repeatedly given to the Messiah*; and, unless we can suppose Scripture to contradict itself, by making that a peculiar name which is not peculiar to him, and to establish an inducement to that idolatry which it so
sternly condemns, and an excuse for it, then this adorable name itself declares the absolute Divinity of him who is invested with it, and is to him, as well as to the Father, a name of revelation, a name descriptive of the attributes which can pertain only to essential Godhead.

This conclusion is corroborated by the constant use of the title “LORD” as an appellation of Jesus, the Messiah, when manifest in the flesh. His disciples not only applied to him those passages of the Old Testament, in which the Messias is called Jehovah, but salute and worship him by a title which is of precisely the same original import, and which is, therefore, to be considered in many places of the Septuagint and the New Testament, an exact translation of the august name Jehovah, and fully equivalent to it in its import. It is allowed, that it is also used as the translation of other names of God, which import simply dominion, and that it is applied also to merely human masters and rulers. It is not, therefore, like the Jehovah of the Old Testament, an incommunicable name, but, in its highest sense, it is universally allowed to belong to God; and if, in this highest sense, it is applied to Christ, then is the argument valid, that in the sacred writers, whether used to express the self and independent existence of him who bears it, or that dominion which, from its nature and circumstances, must be Divine, it contains a notation of true and absolute Divinity.

The first proof of this is, that, both in the Septuagint and by the writers of the New Testament, it is the term by which the name Jehovah is translated. The Socinians have a fiction that Κυρίος properly answers to Adonai, because the Jews were wont, in reading, to substitute that name in place of Jehovah. But this is sufficiently answered by Bishop Pearson, who observes, that “it is not probable that the LXX should think Κυρίος to be the proper interpretation of ynd a , and yet give it to Jehovah, only in the place of Adonai; for if they had, it would have followed, that when Adonai and Jehovah had met in one sentence, they would not have put another word for Adonai, and placed Κυρίος for Jehovah, to which, of itself, according to their observation, it did not belong.” “The reason also of the assertion is most uncertain; for, though it be confessed that the Masoreths did read Adonai, when they found Jehovah, and Josephus before them expresses the sense of the Jews of his age, that the τετραγαμματον was not to be pronounced, and before him Philo speaks as much, yet it followeth not from thence that the Jews were so superstitious above three hundred years before, which must be proved before we can be assured that the LXX read Adonai for Jehovah, and for that reason translated it
The supposition is, however, wholly overturned by several passages, in which such an interchange of the names could not be made in the original, without manifestly depriving them of all meaning, and which absurdity could not, therefore, take place in a translation, and be thus made permanent. It is sufficient to instance Exodus 6:2, 3, “I am the Lord, (Jehovah:) I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them.” This, it is true, is rather an obscure passage; but, whatever may be its interpretation, this is clear, that a substitution of Adonai for Jehovah would deprive it of all meaning whatever, and yet here the LXX translate Jehovah by Κυριος.

Κυριος, Lord, is, then, the word into which the Greek of the Septuagint renders the name Jehovah; and, in all passages in which Messias is called by that peculiar title of Divinity, we have the authority of this version to apply it, in its full and highest signification, to Jesus Christ, who is himself that Messias. For this reason, and also because, as men inspired, they were directed to fit and proper terms, the writers of the New Testament apply this appellation to their Master, when they quote these prophetic passages as fulfilled in him. They found it used in the Greek version of the Old Testament, in its highest possible import, as a rendering of Jehovah. Had they thought Jesus less than God, they ought to have avoided, and must have avoided, giving to him a title which would mislead their readers; or else have intimated, that they did not use it in its highest sense as a title of Divinity, but in its very lowest, as a term of merely human courtesy, or, at best, of human dominion. But we have no such intimation; and, if they wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, it follows, that they used it as being understood to be fully equivalent to the title Jehovah itself. This their quotations will show. The Evangelist Matthew (Matthew 3:3) quotes and applies to Christ the celebrated prophecy of Isaiah 40:3: “For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” The other evangelists make the same application of it, representing John as the herald of Jesus, the “JEHOVAH” of the prophet, and their “Κυριος.” It was, therefore, in the highest possible sense that they used the term, because they used it as fully equivalent to Jehovah. So again, in Luke 1:16, 17: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to THE LORD THEIR GOD, and he shall go before HIM in the spirit and power of Elias.” “HIM,” unquestionably refers to “the Lord their God;”
and we have here a proof that Christ bears that eminent title of Divinity, so frequent in the Old Testament, “the LORD GOD,” Jehovah Aleim; and also that Κυρίος answered, in the view of an inspired writer, to the name Jehovah. On this point the Apostle Paul also adds his testimony, Romans 10:13, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved;” which is quoted from Joel 2:32, “Whosoever shall call on the name of JEHOVAH shall be delivered.” Other passages might be added, but the argument does not rest upon their number; these are so explicit, that they are amply sufficient to establish the important conclusion, that, in whatever senses the term “Lord” may be used, and though the writers of the New Testament, like ourselves, use it occasionally in a lower sense, yet they use it also in its highest possible sense, and in its loftiest signification when they intended it to be understood as equivalent to Jehovah, and, in that sense they apply it to Christ.

But, even when the title “LORD” is not employed to render the name Jehovah, in passages quoted from the Old Testament, but is used as the common appellation of Christ, after his resurrection, the disciples so connect it with other terms, and with circumstances which so clearly imply Divinity, that it cannot reasonably be made a question but that they themselves considered it as a Divine title, and intended that it should be so understood by their readers. In that sense they applied it to the Father, and it is clear, that they did not use it in a lower sense when they gave it to the Son. It is put absolutely, and by way of eminence, “THE LORD.” It is joined with “GOD;” so in the passage above quoted from St. Luke, where Christ is called the LORD GOD; and when Thomas, in an act of adoration, calls him “My LORD and my GOD.” When it is used to express dominion, that dominion is represented as absolute and universal, and, therefore, Divine. “He is LORD of all.” “KING of kings and LORD of lords.” “Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

Thus, then, the titles of “Jehovah” and “Lord” both prove the Divinity of our Saviour; “for,” as it is remarked by Dr. Waterland, “if Jehovah signify the eternal, immutable God, it is manifest that the name is incommunicable, since there is but one God; and, if the name be incommunicable, then Jehovah can signify nothing but that one God, to whom, and to whom
only, it is applied. And if both these parts be true, and if it be true, likewise, that this name is applied to Christ, the consequence is irresistible, that Christ is the same one God, not the same person, with the Father, to whom also the name Jehovah is attributed, but the same substance, the same being, in a word, the same Jehovah, thus revealed to be more persons than one.”

GOD. That this title is attributed to Christ is too obvious to be wholly denied, though some of the passages which have been alleged as instances of this application of the term have been controverted. Even in this a great point is gained. Jesus Christ is called God: this the adversaries of his Divinity are obliged to confess, and this confession admits, that the letter of Scripture is, therefore, in favour of orthodox opinions. It is, indeed, said, that the term God, like the term LORD, is used in an inferior sense; but nothing is gained by this; nothing is, on that account, proved against the Deity of Christ; for it must still be allowed, that it is a term used in Scripture to express the Divine nature, and that it is so used generally. The question, therefore, is only limited to this, whether our Lord is called God, in the highest sense of that appellation. This might, indeed, be argued from those passages in the Old Testament in which the title is given to the acting, manifested Jehovah, “the Lord God” of the Old Testament; but this having been anticipated, I confine myself chiefly to the evangelists and apostles.

Before that proof is adduced, which will most unequivocally show that Jesus Christ is called God, in the highest sense of that term, it will, however, be necessary to show that, in its highest sense, it involves the notion of absolute Divinity. This has been denied: Sir Isaac Newton, who, on theological subjects, as Bishop Horsley observes, “went out like a common man,” says that the word God “is a relative term, and has a regard to servants; it is true, it denotes a Being eternal, infinite, and absolutely perfect; but a Being, however eternal, infinite, and absolutely perfect, without dominion, would not be God.” (Philos. Nat. Mathæ. in calce.) This relative notion of the term, as itself importing strictly nothing more than dominion, was adopted by Dr. S. Clarke, and made use of to support his semi-Arianism; and it seems to have been thought, that, by confining the term to express mere sovereignty, the force of all those passages of Scripture in which Christ is called God, and from which his absolute Divinity is argued, might be avoided. His words are, “The word Ὁεος, God, has, in Scripture and in all books of morality and religion, a
relative signification, and not, as in metaphysical books, an absolute one: as is evident from the relative terms which, in moral writings, may always be joined with it. For instance: in the same manner as we say MY father, MY king, and the like; so it is proper also to say MY God, the God of Israel, the God of the universe, and the like. Which words are expressive of dominion and government. But, in the metaphysical way, it cannot be said MY Infinite Substance, the Infinite Substance of Israel, or the like.”

To this Dr. Waterland’s reply is an ample confutation. “I shall only observe here, by the way, that the word STAR is a relative word, for the same reason with that which the doctor gives for the other. For the star of your god Remphan (Acts 7:43) is a proper expression; but, in the metaphysical way, it cannot be said, the luminous substance of your god Remphan. So again, water is a relative word; for it is proper to say the water of Israel; but, in the metaphysical way, it cannot be said, the fluid substance of Israel. The expression is improper. By parity of reason, we may make relative words almost as many as we please. But to proceed: I maintain that dominion is not the full import of the word God in Scripture; that it is but a part of the idea, and a small part too; and that if any person be called God, merely on account of dominion, he is called so by way of figure and resemblance only; and is not properly God, according to the Scripture notion of it. We may call any one a KING, who lives free and independent, subject to no man’s will. He is a king so far, or in some respects; though, in many other respects, nothing like one; and, therefore, not properly a king. If, by the same figure of speech, by way of allusion and resemblance, any thing be called GOD, because resembling God in one or more particulars, we are not to conclude that it is properly and truly God.

“To enlarge something farther upon this head, and to illustrate the case by a few instances. Part of the idea which goes along with the word God is, that his habitation is sublime, and his dwelling not with flesh, Dan. 2:11. This part of the idea is applicable to angels or to saints, and therefore they may thus far be reputed gods; and are sometimes so styled in Scripture or ecclesiastical writings. Another part of the complex idea of God is giving orders from above, and publishing commands from heaven. This was, in some sense, applicable to Moses, who is, therefore, called a god unto Pharaoh; not as being properly a god; but instead of God, in that instance, or that resembling circumstance. In the same respect, every prophet or apostle, or even a minister of a parish, might be figuratively called God.
Dominion goes along with the idea of God, or is a proof of it; and, therefore, kings, princes, and magistrates, resembling God in that respect, may, by the like figure of speech, be styled gods: not properly; for then we might as properly say God David, God Solomon, or God Jeroboam, as King David, &c; but by way of allusion, and in regard to some imperfect resemblance which they bear to God in some particular respects; and that is all. It belongs to God to receive worship, and sacrifice, and homage. Now, because the heathen idols so far resembled God as to be made the objects of worship, &c, therefore they also, by the same figure of speech, are by the Scripture denominated gods, though, at the same time, they are declared, in a proper sense, to be no gods. The belly is called the god of the luxurious, Philippians 3:19, because some are as much devoted to the service of their bellies as others are to the service of God, and because their lusts have got the dominion over them. This way of speaking is, in like manner, grounded on some imperfect resemblance, and is easily understood. The prince of the devils is supposed by most interpreters, to be called the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. If so, the reason may be, either because the men of this world are entirely devoted to his service; or that he has got the power and dominion over them.

"Thus we see how the word God, according to the popular way of speaking, has been applied to angels, or to men, or to things inanimate and insensible; because some part of the idea belonging to God has been conceived to belong to them also. To argue from hence that any of them is properly God, is making the whole of a part, and reasoning rapaciously, a dicto secundum quid, as the schools speak, ad dictum simpliciter. If we inquire carefully into the Scripture notion of the word, we shall find that neither dominion singly, nor all the other instances of resemblance, make up the idea; or are sufficient to denominate any thing properly God. When the prince of Tyre pretended to be God, Ezekiel 28:2, he thought of something more than mere dominion to make him so. He thought of strength invincible and power irresistible, and God was pleased to convince him of his folly and vanity, not by telling him how scanty his dominion was, or how low his office; but how weak, frail, and perishing his nature was; that he was man only, and not God, Ezekiel 28:2-9, and should surely find so by the event. When the Lycaonians, upon the sight of a miracle wrought by St. Paul, Acts 14:11, took him and Barnabas for gods, they did not think so much of dominion as of power and ability, beyond human; and when the apostles answered them, they did not tell them that
their *dominion* was only *human*, or that their *office* was not *Divine*; but that they had not a *Divine nature*. They were weak, frail, and feeble men; of like infirmities with the rest of their species, and, therefore, no *gods*.

“If we trace the Scripture notion of what is *truly* and *properly* God, we shall find it made up of these several ideas: infinite wisdom, power invincible, all-sufficiency, and the like. These are the ground and foundation of *dominion*, which is but a secondary notion, a consequence of the former; and it must be *dominion supreme*, and none else, which will suit with the Scripture notion of *God*. It is not that of a *governor*, a *ruler*, a *protector*, a *lord*, or the like, but a *sovereign* Ruler, an *almighty* Protector, an *omniscient* and *omnipresent* Governor, an eternal, immutable, all-sufficient *Creator*, *Preserver*, and *Protector*. Whatever falls short of this is not *properly*, in the Scripture notion, *God*, but is only called so by way of figure, as has before been explained. Now, if you ask me why the relative terms may properly be applied to the word *God*, the reason is plain, because there is something *relative* in the *whole* idea of God, namely, the notion of *governor*, *protector*, &c. If you ask why they cannot so properly be applied to the word *God* in the *metaphysical sense*, beside the reason before given, there is another as plain, because *metaphysics*, taking in only one *part* of the idea, consider the *nature* abstracted from the *relation*, leaving the *relative* part out.”

To these observations may be added the argument of Dr. Randolph. (*Vindication of Christ’s Divinity.*) “If *God* be a relative term, which has reference to *subjects*, it follows that when there were no subjects there was no God; and, consequently, either the creatures must have been some of them eternal, or there must have been a time when there was no God.” The matter, however, is put beyond all doubt, by the express testimony that it is not *dominion* only, but excellence of nature and attributes exclusively Divine which enter into the notion of God. Thus, in Psalm 90, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even *from everlasting to ever lasting*, thou art *God*.” Here the idea of eternity is attached to the term, and he is declared to be *God* “*from everlasting*,” and, consequently, before any creature’s existence, and so before he could have any “*subjects*,” or exercise any “*dominion*.”

The import of the title *God*, in its highest sense, being thus established to include all the excellencies and glories of the Divine nature, on which alone such a *dominion* as is ascribed to God could be maintained, if that title be
found ascribed to Christ, at any period, in this its highest sense, it will prove, not, as the Arians would have it, his *dominion* only, but his Divinity; and it is no answer to this at all to say that men are sometimes called gods in the Scripture. In the New Testament the term God, in the singular, is never applied to any man; and it is even a debated matter, whether it is ever a *human* appellation, either in the singular or the plural, in the Old Testament, the passages quoted being probably elliptical, or capable of another explanation. But this is not important: if, in its highest sense, it is found used of Christ, it matters not to how many persons it is applied in its lower, or as a merely figurative appellation.

Matthew 1:23: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **EMMANUEL**, which being interpreted is, **GOD with us**.” This is a portion of Scripture which the Socinians, in their “Improved Version,” have printed in italics, as of “doubtful authority,” though, with the same breath, they allow that it is found “in *all* the manuscripts and versions which are now extant.” The ground, therefore, on which they have rested their objection is confessedly narrow and doubtful, and frail as it is, it has been entirely taken from them, and the authority of this scripture fully established. (*Vide Nare’s Remarks on the New Version.*) The reason of an attempt, at once so bold and futile, to expunge this passage, and the following part of St. Matthew’s history which is connected with it, may be found in the explicitness of the testimony which it bears to our Lord’s Divinity, and which no criticism could evade. The prophecy which is quoted by the evangelist has its difficulties; but they do not in the least affect the argument. Whether we can explain Isaiah or not, that is, whether we can show in what manner the prophecy had a primary accomplishment in the prophet’s day or not, St. Matthew is sufficiently intelligible. He tells us, that the words spoken by the prophet were spoken of Christ; and that his miraculous conception took place, “that,” *in order that,* “they might be fulfilled;” a mode of expression so strong, that even those who allow the prophets to be quoted sometimes by way of accommodation by the writers of the New Testament, except this instance, as having manifestly, from the terms used, the form of an argument, and not of a mere allusion. Farther, says the sacred historian, “and they shall call his name **Emmanuel;**” that is, according to the idiom of Scripture, where any thing is said to be called
what it in reality is, he shall be “Emmanuel,” and the interpretation is
added, “God with us.”

It is indeed objected, that the Divinity of Christ can no more be argued
from this title of Emmanuel than the divinity of El, whose name signifies
my God, or of Elihu, which imports my God himself; but it is to be
remarked, that by these names such individuals were commonly and
constantly known among those with whom they lived. But Immanuel was
not the personal name of our Lord, he was not so called by his friends and
countrymen familiarly: the personal name which he received was Jesus, by
Divine direction, and by this he was known to the world. It follows,
therefore, that Immanuel was a descriptive title, a name of revelation,
expressive of his Divine character. It is clear, also, that in this passage he is
called God; and two circumstances, in addition to that just mentioned,
prove that the term is used in its full and highest sense. In Isaiah, from
which the passage is quoted by the evangelist, the land of Judea is called
the land of this Immanuel more than seven centuries before he was born.
“And he (the Assyrian) shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go
over, he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings
shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel,” chap. 8:8. Thus is Christ,
according to the argument in a former chapter, represented as existing
before his birth in Judea, and, as the God of the Jews, the proprietor of the
land of Israel. This also gives the true explanation of St. John’s words, “He
came unto his own, [nation] and his own [people] received him not.” The
second circumstance which proves the term God, in the title Immanuel, to
be used in its highest sense is, that the same person, in the following
chapter of Isaiah, is called “God,” with the epithet of “mighty,” —
“Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God.” Thus, as Bishop Pearson
observes, “First he is ‘Immanu,’ that is, with us, for he hath dwelt among
us; and when he parted from the earth, he said to his disciples, ‘I am with
you alway, even to the end of the world.’ Secondly, he is El, and that
name was given him, as the same prophet testified, ‘his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God.’ He then who is both properly
called El, that is God, and is also really Immanu, that is, with us, must
infallibly be that ‘Immanuel,’ who is ‘God with us.’ No inferior Deity, but
invested with the full and complete attributes of absolute Divinity — ‘the
Mighty God.’”

In Luke 1:16, 17, it is said of John Baptist, “And many of the children
of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God, and he shall go before HIM
in the spirit and power of Elias.” This passage has been already adduced to prove that the title “LORD” is used of Christ in the import of JEHovah. But he is called THE LORD their GOD, and, as the term LORD is used in its highest sense, so must also the term GOD, which proves that this title is given to our Saviour in its fullest and most extended meaning — “to Jehovah their God,” or “to their God Jehovah,” for the meaning is the same.

John 1:1: “In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the Word was GOD.” When we come to consider the title “THE WORD,” Λόγος, this passage will be examined more at large. Here it is adduced to prove that the Logos, by whom all understand Christ, is called GOD in the highest sense.

1. Because when it is used of the Father, in the preceding clause, it must be used in its full import.

2. Because immediately to call our Lord by the same name as the Father, without any hint of its being used in a lower sense, would have been to mislead the reader on a most important question, if St. John had not regarded him as equal to the Father.

3. Because the creation is ascribed to the “Word,” who is called God. “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” By this the absolute Divinity of Christ is infallibly determined, unless we should run into the absurdity of supposing it possible for a creature to create, and not only to create all other created things, but himself also. For, if Christ be not God, he is a creature; and if “not any thing that was made,” was made “without him,” then he made himself.

This decided passage, as may be supposed, has been subjected to much critical scrutiny by the enemies of the faith, and many attempts have been made to resist its force. It is objected, that the Father is called Ο Θεος, and the “Word” simply Θεος, without the article. To which Dr. Middleton replies: (Doctrine of the Greek Article.)

“Certain critics, as is well known, have inferred from the absence of the article in this place, that Θεος is here used in a subordinate sense; it has, however, been so satisfactorily answered that in whatever acceptation Θεος is to be taken, it properly rejects the article, being here the predicate of the
proposition; and Bengel instances the LXX, 1 Kings 18:24, οὐτος Ὁ ἙΩΣ, as similar to the present passage. It may be added, that if we had read ο ΘΕΟΣ, the proposition would have assumed the convertible form, and the meaning would have been, that whatever may be affirmed or denied of God the Father, may also be affirmed or denied of the Logos, a position which would accord as little with the trinitarian as with the Socinian hypotheses. It is, therefore, unreasonable to infer, that the word ΘΕΟΣ is here used in a lower sense; for the writer could not have written Ο ΘΕΟΣ without manifest absurdity.”

In many passages too, in which, without dispute, ΘΕΟΣ is meant of the Supreme Being, the article is not used. Matthew 19:26, “With men this is impossible, but with God (ΘΕΟΣ) all things are possible.” Luke 16:13, “Ye cannot serve (ΘΕΟΣ) and mammon.” John 1:18, “No man hath seen God (ΘΕΟΥ) at any time.” John 9:33, “If this man were not of God (ΘΕΟΥ) he could do nothing.” John 16:30, “By this we believe that thou camest from God,” (ΘΕΟΥ.) Many other instances might be given, but these amply reply to the objection.

To evade the force of the argument drawn from the creation being ascribed to the Word, a circumstance which fixes his title “G O D” in its highest possible sense, it is alleged, that the word γίνομαι never signifies to create, and the Socinian version, therefore, renders the text, “All things were done by him,” and the translators inform us, in a note, this means, that “all things in the Christian dispensation were done by Christ, that is, by his authority.” But what shall we say to this bold assertion, that γίνομαι is never used with reference to creative acts in the New Testament, when the following passages may be adduced in refutation? Hebrews 4:3, “Although the works were FINISHED from the foundation of the world.” Hebrews 11:3, “So that things which are seen were not MADE of things that do appear.” James 3:9, “Men which are made after the similitude of God.” In all these passages, and in some places of the Septuagint also, that very word is used which they tell us, never expresses, in Scripture, the notion of creation. Even the same chapter, verse 10, gives an instance of the same use of the word. “He was in the world, and the world was made (ἐγένετο) by him.” For this, of course, they have a criticism; but the manner in which this passage, so directly in refutation of their assertion, is disposed of in their “Improved Version,” is a striking confirmation of the entire impossibility of accommodating Scripture to their system. “The world was made by him,” says the evangelist. “The world was enlightened
by him,” say the Socinian translators, without the slightest authority, and in entire contradiction to the scope of the passage. Why did they not render the word as in the preceding verse, “The world was done by him?” which, in point of fact, makes no difference in the sense, when rightly considered. The doing, ascribed to the Eternal Word, is of a specific character, — doing in the sense of framing, making, or creating (παντα) “all things.”

The Socinians have not, however, fully satisfied themselves with this notable criticism in their “Improved Version;” and some of them, therefore, render “all things were made by him,” “all things were made for him.” But these criticisms cannot stand together. If the verb γινομαι is to be deprived of the import of creation, then it is impossible to retain the rendering of “all things were made for him,” since his own acts of ordering the Christian dispensation and “enlightening” the world could not be “for him,” but must have been done “by him.” If, on the contrary, they will have it that all things were done for him, then γινομαι must be allowed to import creation, or their production by the omnipotence of God. Both criticisms they cannot hold, and thus they confess that one destroys the other. Their rendering of δι αυτου cannot, however, be supported; for δια, with a genitive, denotes not the final, but the efficient cause. The introduction to St. John’s Gospel may, therefore, be considered as an inexpugnable proof that Deity, in its highest, and in no secondary or subordinate sense is ascribed to our Saviour, under his title God — “and the Word was GOD.” Nor in any other than the highest sense of the term God can the confession of Thomas, John 20:28, be understood. “And Thomas answered and said unto him, my LORD and my GOD.” The Socinian version, in its note on this passage, intimates that it may be considered not as a confession, but as an exclamation, “My Lord! and my God!” thereby choosing to put profane, or, at least, vulgar language into the mouth of this apostle, of which degradation we have certainly no example in the narration of the evangelists. Michaelis has justly observed, that if Thomas had spoken German, (he might have added English, French, or Italian,) it might have been contended with some plausibility, that “My Lord and my God” was only an irreverent ejaculation; but that Jewish astonishment was thus expressed is wholly without proof or support. Add to this, that the words are introduced with ειπεν αυτω, said to him, that is, to Christ; a mere ejaculation, such as that here supposed, is rather an appeal to Heaven. Our Saviour’s reply makes it absolutely certain, that the words of Thomas, though they are in the form of an exclamation, amount
to a confession of faith, and were equivalent to a direct assertion of our Saviour’s Divinity. Christ commends Thomas’s acknowledgment, while he condemns the tardiness with which it is made; but to what did this acknowledgment amount? That Christ was LORD and GOD. (Middleton.)

In Titus 2:13, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” our Lord is not only called God, but the GREAT GOD, which marks the sense in which the term is used by the apostle, and gives unequivocal evidence of his opinions on the subject of Christ’s Divinity. Socinian and Arian interpreters tell us, that “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” are two persons, and therefore refer the title “great God” to the Father. The Socinian version accordingly renders the text, “the glorious appearance of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” To this interpretation there are satisfactory answers. Dr. Whitby observes: —

“Here it deserveth to be noted, that it is highly probable, that Jesus Christ is styled the great God,

1. Because, in the original, the article is prefixed only before the great God, and therefore, seems to require this construction, the appearance of Jesus Christ, the great God and our Saviour.

2. Because, as God the Father is not said properly to appear, so the word ἐπιφάνεια never occurs in the New Testament, but when it is applied to Jesus Christ and to some coming of his; the places in which it is to be found being only these, 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10, and 4:1, 8.

3. Because Christ is emphatically styled ‘our hope,’ ‘the hope of glory:’ Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 1:1. And lastly, because not only all the ancient commentators on the place do so interpret this text, but the anti-Nicene fathers also; Hyppolitus, speaking of the appearance of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and Clemens of Alexandria, proving Christ to be both God and man, our Creator, and the Author of all our good things, from these very words of St. Paul.” (Exposition.)

Independent of the criticism which rests upon the absence of the article, it is sufficient to establish the claim of our Saviour to the title of “the great God” in this passage, that ἐπιφάνεια, “the appearing,” is never, in the
New Testament, spoken of the Father, but of the Son only; but, since the
time of this critic, the doctrine of the Greek article has undergone ample
and acute investigation, and has placed new guards around this and some
other passages of similar construction against the perversions of heresy. It
has, by these investigations, been established, that the Greek idiom forbids
Θεοῦ and σωτήρος to be understood except of the same person; and Mr.
Granville Sharp, therefore, translates the text, “expecting the blessed hope
and appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ:” ἐπιφανείαν
tης δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωστήρος ἦμαν Ἰησοῦν χριστοῦ.

“This interpretation depends upon the rule or canon brought
forward into notice not many years ago by Mr. Granville Sharp. It
excited a controversy, and Unitarians either treated it with ridicule,
or denied its applicability to the New Testament. But after it had
been shown by Mr. Wordsworth, that most of the texts to which
the rule applies were understood in the way Mr. Sharp explained
them by the ancient fathers, who must surely have known the idiom
of their native tongue; and after the doctrine of the Greek article
had been investigated with so much penetration and learning by Dr.
Middleton, all who have paid attention to the subject have
acquiesced in the canon.” (Holden’s Testimonies.)

This important canon of criticism is thus stated by Dr. Middleton: —
“When two or more attributes, joined by a copulative or copulatives, are
assumed of the same person or thing, before the first attributive the article
is inserted, before the remaining ones it is omitted.” The limitations of this
rule may be seen in the learned author’s work itself, with the reasons on
which they rest. They are found in “names of substances, considered as
substances, proper names, or names of abstract ideas;” and with such
exceptions, and that of plurals occasionally, the rule uniformly holds. f48

Another passage in which the appellation God is given to Christ, in a
connection which necessarily obliges us to understand it in its highest
sense, is Hebrews 1:8: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God,
is for ever and ever.” The argument of the apostle here determines the
sense in which he calls Jesus, the Son, “God,” and the views he entertains
of his nature. Angels and men are the only rational created beings in the
universe which are mentioned by the sacred writers. The apostle argues
that Christ is superior even to angels; that they are but ministers, he a
sovereign, seated on a throne; that they worship him, and that he receives
their worship; that they are creatures, but he creator. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands;” and full of these ideas of supreme Divinity, he applies a passage to him out of the 45th Psalm, which is there addressed to the Messiah, “Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever.”

The Socinian version renders the passage, “But to the Son he saith, God is thy throne for ever and ever,” and in this it follows Wakefield and some others.

The first reason given to support this rendering is; that ο θεος is the nominative case. But the nominative, both in common and in Attic Greek, is often used for the vocative. It is so used frequently by the LXX, and by the writers of the New Testament. The vocative form, indeed, very rarely occurs in either, the nominative almost exclusively supplying its place; and in this passage it was so taken by the Greek fathers. The criticism is, therefore, groundless.

The second is, that as the words are addressed to Solomon in the psalm from which they are quoted, they must be understood to declare, that God was the support of his throne. But the opinion that the psalm was composed concerning Solomon’s marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter, has no foundation, either in Scripture or in antiquity, and is, indeed, contradicted by both. On this subject Bishop Horsley remarks: —

“The circumstances which are characteristic of the king, who is the hero of this poem, are every one of them utterly inapplicable to Solomon; insomuch, that not one of them can be ascribed to him, without contradicting the history of his reign. The hero of this poem is a warrior, who girds his sword upon his thigh; rides in pursuit of flying foes; makes havoc among them with his sharp arrows; and reigns, at last, by conquest, over his vanquished enemies. Now, Solomon was no warrior; he enjoyed a long reign of forty years of uninterrupted peace.

“Another circumstance of distinction in the great personage celebrated by this psalm is his love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness. The original expresses, that he had set his heart upon righteousness, and bore an antipathy to wickedness. His love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness had been so much the ruling principles of his whole conduct, that, for this, he was
advanced to a condition of the highest bliss, and endless perpetuity was promised to his kingdom. The word we render ‘righteousness,’ in its strict and proper meaning, signifies ‘justice,’ or the constant and perpetual observance of the natural distinctions of right and wrong in civil society; and principally with respect to property in private persons, and, in a magistrate or sovereign, in the impartial exercise of judicial authority. But the word we render ‘wickedness,’ denotes not only ‘injustice,’ but whatever is contrary to moral purity in the indulgence of the appetites of the individual, and whatever is contrary to a principle of true piety toward God. Now, the word ‘righteousness’ being here opposed to this wickedness, must, certainly be taken as generally as the word to which it is opposed in a contrary signification. It must signify, therefore, not merely ‘justice,’ in the sense we have explained, but purity of private manners, and piety toward God. Now, Solomon was certainly, upon the whole, a good king, nor was he without piety; but his love of righteousness, in the large sense in which we have shown the word is to be taken, and his antipathy to the contrary, fell very far short of what the psalmist ascribes to his great king, and procured for him no such stability of his monarchy.

“Another circumstance wholly inapplicable to Solomon, is the numerous progeny of sons, the issue of the marriage, all of whom were to be made princes over all the earth. Solomon had but one son, that we read of, that ever came to be a king — his son and successor, Rehoboam, and so far was he from being a prince over all the earth, that he was no sooner seated on the throne than he lost the greater part of his father’s kingdom.

“For, would it be said of him that his kingdom, which lasted only forty years, is eternal? It was not even eternal in his posterity. And, with respect to his loving righteousness and hating wickedness, it but ill applies to one who in his old age became an encourager of idolatry, through the influence of women. This psalm, therefore, is applicable only to the Christ. Farther, Solomon’s marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter being expressly condemned as contrary to the law, 1 Kings 11:2, to suppose that this psalm was composed in honour of that event, is, certainly, an ill-founded imagination. Estius informs us, that the rabbins, in their commentaries, affirm, that Psalm xlv was written wholly concerning the Messiah.
Accordingly, they translate the title of the psalm as we do, *a Song of Loves*; the LXX, ὁ δὲ ὑπὲρ τοῦ αΓΑΠΗΤΟΥ, a song concerning the beloved; Vulgate, *pro dilecto*: a title justly given to Messiah, whom God, by voices from heaven, declared *his beloved Son*. Beside, as the word *Meschil*, which signifies *for instruction*, (LXX, εἰς συνεσίν, Vulgate, *ad intellectum*) is inserted in the title, and as no mention is made in the psalm of Solomon, from an account of whose *loves*, as Pierce observes, the Jewish Church was not likely to gain much *instruction*, we are led to understand the psalm, not of Solomon, but of Messiah only.”

The interpretation “God is thy throne,” is, moreover, monstrous, and derives no support from any parallel figurative, or elliptical mode of expression in the sacred writings — God, the throne of a creature! And, finally, as stated by Middleton, had that been the sense of the passage, the language requires that it should have been written, θρόνος σου ὁ Θεος, not ο θρόνος (*Doctrine of the Greek Article*) which, on the Socinian interpretation, is the predicate of the proposition. So futile are all these attempts to shake the evidence which this text gives to the absolute Godhead of our Saviour.

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE,” 1 John 5:20. Here our Saviour is called the true God and eternal life. The means by which this testimony is evaded, is to interpret the clause, “him that is true,” of the Father, and to refer the pronoun *this*, not to the nearest antecedent, “his Son Jesus Christ,” but to the most remote, “him that is true.” All, however, that is pretended by the Socinian critics on this passage is, not that this construction *must*, but that it *may* take place. Yet even this feeble opposition to the received rendering cannot be maintained: for, 1. To interpret the clause, “him that is true,” of the Father, is entirely arbitrary; and the scope of the epistle, which was to prove that Jesus the Christ was the true Son of God, and, therefore, Divine, against those who denied his Divinity, and that “he had come in the flesh,” in opposition to the heretics who denied his humanity, obliges us to refer that phrase to the Son, and not to the Father. 2. If it could be established that the Father was intended by “him that is true.” it would be contrary to grammatical usage to refer the pronoun *this*, is the “true God and eternal life,” to the remote antecedent, without obvious and indisputable necessity.
“Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever,” Romans 9:5.

With respect to this text, it is to be noted, —

1. That it continues an enumeration of the particular privileges of the Jewish nation which are mentioned in the preceding verses, and the apostle adds, “whose are the fathers,” the patriarchs, and prophets, and of whom “the Christ came.”

2. That he throws in a clause of limitation with respect to the coming of Christ, “according to the flesh,” which clearly states that it was only according to the flesh, the humanity of Christ, that he descended from the Jewish nation, and, at the same time, intimates, that he was more than flesh, or mere human nature.

3. The sentence does not end here: the apostle adds, “who is, over all, God blessed for ever;” a relative expression which evidently refers to the antecedent Christ; and thus we have an antithesis, which shows the reason why the apostle introduced the limiting clause, “according to the flesh;” and explains why Christ, in one respect, did descend from the Jews; and in another, that this could not be affirmed of him: he was “God over all,” and, therefore, only “according to the flesh” could he be of human descent.

4. That this completes the apostle’s purpose to magnify the privileges of his nation: after enumerating many others, he crowns the whole by declaring, that “God over all,” when he became incarnate for the sake of human salvation, took a body of the seed of Abraham.

Criticism has, of course, endeavoured, if possible, to weaken the argument drawn from this lofty and impregnable passage; but it is of such a kind as greatly to confirm the truth. For, in the first place, various readings of manuscripts cannot here be resorted to for rendering the sense dubious, and all the ancient versions support the present reading. It has, indeed, been alleged, on the authority of Grasinus, that though the word “God” is found in all our present copies, it was wanting in those of Cyprian, Hilary, and Chrysostom. But this has been abundantly proved to be an error, that word being found in the manuscripts and best editions of Cyprian and Hilary, and even St. Chrysostom affords decisive testimony to the common reading; in short, “the word God, in this text is found in every known manuscript of this epistle, in every ancient version extant, and in every father who has had occasion to quote the passage; so that, in truth, there
can scarcely be instanced a text in the New Testament in which all the ancient authorities more satisfactorily agree."

(Magee on Atonement. See also Nares on the New Version.) The only method of dealing with this passage left to Arians and Socinians was, therefore, to attempt to obtain a different sense from it by shifting the punctuation. By this device some read, “and of whom is the Christ, according to the flesh. God, who is over all, be blessed for ever.” Others, “and of whom is the Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all. Blessed be God for ever.” A critic of their own, Mr. Wakefield, whose authority they acknowledge to be very great, may, however, here be turned against them. Both these constructions, he acknowledges, appear so awkward, so abrupt, so incoherent, that he never could be brought to relish them in the least degree; (Inquiry into Opinions, &c;) and Dr. S. Clarke who was well disposed to evade this decisive passage, acknowledges that the common reading is the most obvious. But independent of the authority of critics, there are several direct and fatal objections to this altered punctuation. It leaves the limiting clause, “according to the flesh,” wholly unaccounted for; for no possible reason can be given for that limitation on the Socinian scheme. If the apostle had regarded Christ simply as a man, he could have come in no other way than “according to the flesh;” nor is this relieved at all by rendering the phrase, as in their “Improved Version,” by “natural descent,” for a mere man could only appear among men by “natural descent.” Either, therefore, the clause is a totally unmeaning and an impertinent parenthesis, or it has respect to the natural antithesis which follows — his supreme Divinity, as “God over all.” Thus the scope of the passage prohibits this license of punctuation. To the latter clause being considered as a doxology to God the Father, there is an insuperable, critical difficulty. Dr. Middleton observes: —

“It has been deemed a safer expedient to attempt a construction different from the received one, by making the whole or part of the clause to be merely a doxology in praise of the Father, so that the rendering will be either ‘God, who is over all, be blessed for ever,’ or, beginning at θεος, ‘God be blessed for ever.’ These interpretations also have their difficulties; for thus ευλογητος will properly want the article. On the first, however, of these constructions, it is to be observed, that in all the doxologies both of the LXX and of the New Testament, in which ευλογητος is used, it is placed at the beginning of the sentence: in the New Testament there are five instances, all conspiring to prove this usage, and in
the LXX about forty. The same arrangement is observed in the formula of cursing, in which \( \text{ἐπικαταρατός} \) always precedes the mention of the person cursed. The reading then would, on this construction, rather have been, \( \text{εὐλογητὸς} \; \text{o} \; \text{ων} \; \text{ἐπὶ} \; \text{παντῶν} \; \text{θεῶς} \; \text{εἰς} \; \text{τοὺς} \; \text{αἰωναῖς} \). Against the other supposed doxology, the objection is still stronger, since that would require us not only to transpose \( \text{εὐλογητὸς} \), but to read \( \text{Ὁ} \; \text{θεὸς} \). Accordingly, in all instances, where a doxology is meant, we find \( \text{εὐλογητὸς} \; \text{o} \; \text{θεῶς} \).”

(Doctrine of Greek Article.)

Whitby also remarks: —

“The words will not admit of that interpunction and interpretation of Erasmus, which will do any service to the Arians or Socinians, namely, that a colon must be put after the words \( \text{κατασαρκα} \), after the flesh; and the words following must be an ecphonema, and grateful exclamation for the blessings conferred upon the Jews: thus, \( \text{God, who is over all, be blessed for ever} \). For this exposition is so harsh, and without any like example in the whole New Testament, that as none of the orthodox ever thought upon it, so I find not that it ever came into the head of any Arian. Socinus himself rejects it for this very good reason, that \( \text{θεὸς} \; \text{εὐλογητὸς} \), God be blessed, is an unusual and unnatural construction; for, wherever else these words signify \( \text{blessed be God} \), \( \text{εὐλογητὸς} \) is put before God, as \( \text{Luke 1:68} \); \( \text{2 Corinthians 1:3} \); \( \text{Ephesians 1:3} \); \( \text{1 Peter 1:3} \); and \( \text{θεὸς} \) hath an article prefixed to it; nor are they ever immediately joined together otherwise. The phrase occurs twenty times in the Old Testament, but in every place \( \text{εὐλογητὸς} \) goes before, and the article is annexed to the word \( \text{God} \), which is a demonstration that this is a perversion of the sense of the apostle’s words.”

The critical discussion of this text is farther pursued by the writers just quoted; by Dr. Nares, in his Remarks; Mr. Wardlaw, in his Discourses; Archbishop Magee, and others; and we may confidently say of it, with Doddridge, that it is “a memorable text, and contains a proof of Christ’s proper Deity, which the opposers of that doctrine have never been able, nor will ever be able to answer.” So it was considered and quoted “by the fathers,” says Whitby, “from the beginning; and,” continues the same commentator, “if these words are spoken by the Spirit of God concerning
Christ, the arguments hence to prove him truly and properly God are invincible; for, first, ο θεος επι παντων, God over all, is the periphrasis by which all the heathen philosophers did usually represent the supreme God; and so is God the Father described both in the Old and New Testament, as ο επι παντων, he that is over all, Ephesians 4:6. Secondly, This is the constant epithet and periphrasis of the great God in the Old Testament, that he is ευλογητος εις τον αιωνα, God blessed for evermore, 1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 41:13, and 89:52; and also in the New, where he is styled the God ος εστιν ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας, who is blessed for evermore.”

Numerous other passages might be cited, where Christ is called “GOD:” these only have been selected, not merely because the proof does not rest upon the number of Scriptural testimonies, but upon their explicitness; but also because they all associate the term God, as applied to our Saviour, with other titles, or with circumstances, which demonstrate most fully, that that term was used by the inspired penmen in its highest sense of true and proper Deity when they applied it to Christ. Thus we have seen it associated with Jehovah; with Lord, the New Testament rendering of that ineffable name; with acts of creative energy, as in the introduction to the Gospel of St. John; with the supreme dominion and perpetual stability of the throne of the Son, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Epistle to Titus, he is called “the GREAT God;” in 1 John, “the TRUE GOD,” and the giver of “ETERNAL LIFE;” and in the last text examined, his twofold nature is distinguished — man, “according to the flesh,” and in his higher nature. GOD, “God over all, blessed for evermore.” These passages stand in full refutation of both the Arian and Socinian heresies. In opposition to the latter, they prove our Saviour to be more than man, for they assert him to be God; and in opposition to the latter, they prove that he is God, not in an inferior sense, but “the great God,” “the true God,” and “God over all, blessed for evermore.”

I pass over, for the sake of greater brevity, other titles more rarely ascribed to our Saviour, such as, the “LORD OF GLORY,” 1 Corinthians 2:8; “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS,” on which it would be easy to argue, that their import falls nothing short of absolute Divinity. A few remarks on three other titles of our Lord, of more frequent occurrence, may close this branch of the argument. These are, “KING OF ISRAEL;” “SON OF GOD;” and “THE WORD.” The first bears evident allusion to the pre-existence of Christ, and to his sovereignty over Israel under the law. Now,
it has been already established, that the Jehovah, “the King of the Jews,” “the Holy One of Israel our King,” “the King, the Lord of Hosts,” of the Old Testament, is not the Father; but another Divine Person, who, in the New Testament, is affirmed to have been Jesus Christ. This being the view of the sacred writers of the evangelical dispensation, it is clear that they could not use the appellation “THE KING OF ISRAEL” in a lower sense than that in which it stands in the Old Testament; and there, indisputably, even by the confession of opponents, it is collocated with titles, and attributes, and works which unequivocally mark a Divine character. It is with clear reference to this his peculiar property in the Jewish people that St. John says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not; a declaration which is scarcely sense, if Judea was in no higher a meaning his own country than it was the country of any other person who happened to be born there; for it is, surely, a strange method of expressing the simple fact that he was born a Jew, (were nothing more intended,) to say that he came into his own country, for this every person does at his birth, wherever he is born. Nor is it any aggravation of the guilt of the Jews, that they rejected merely a countryman, since that circumstance gave him no greater claim than that of any other Jew to be received as the Messiah. The force of the remark lies in this, that whereas the prophets had declared that “the King of Israel,” “the Lord of hosts,” “Jehovah,” should become incarnate, and visit his own people; and that Jesus had given sufficient evidence that he was that predicted and expected personage; yet the Jews, “his own people” and inheritance, rejected him. The same notion is conveyed in our Lord’s parable, when the Jews are made to say “this is the HEIR,” he in whom the right is vested: “let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.”

It is sufficient, however, here to show, that the title “KING OF ISRAEL” was understood, by the Jews, to imply Divinity. Nathanael exclaims, “Rabbi, thou art the SON OF GOD, thou art the KING OF ISRAEL.” This was said upon such a proof of his Messiahship as, from his acquaintance with some matter private to Nathanael alone when he was “under the fig tree,” was a full demonstration of omniscience: a circumstance which also determines the Divine import of “SON OF GOD,” the title which is here connected with it. Both were certainly understood by Nathanael to imply an assumption of Godhead.

“‘As our Saviour hung upon the cross,’ says St. Matthew, ‘they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself;
if thou be the SON OF GOD, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the KING OF ISRAEL, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am THE SON OF GOD. The thieves also which were crucified with him, cast THE SAME in his teeth. [One of them saying, If thou be CHRIST, save thyself and us; but the other said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.] [And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying If thou be THE KING OF THE JEWS, save thyself.] Now when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earth quake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, [Certainly this was a righteous man,] truly this was THE SON OF GOD.’ Here we see the Jews, and the Gentiles residents among them, uniting to speak in a language that stamps Divinity Upon the title used by them both. The Jewish passengers upon the road over the top of Calvary, stood still near the cross of our Saviour, insultingly to nod at him, to reproach him with his assumed appellative of the Son of God, and to challenge him to an exertion of that Divinity which both he and they affixed to it, by coming down from the cross, and saving himself from death. The elders, the scribes, and the chief priests, equally insulted him with the same assumption, and equally challenged him to the same exertion, calling upon him now to show he was truly THE KING OF ISRAEL, or the Lord and Sovereign of their nation in all ages, by putting forth the power of his Divine royalty, and coming down from the cross.” (Whitaker’s Origin of Arianism.)

Such is the testimony of the Jews to the sense in which our Saviour applied these titles to himself. The title “SON OF GOD” demands, however, a larger consideration, various attempts having been made to restrain its significance, in direct opposition to this testimony, to the mere humanity of our Saviour, and to rest its application upon his miraculous conception.

It is true, that this notion is held by some who hesitate not to acknowledge, that Jesus Christ is a Divine person; but, by denying his Deity as “THE SON OF GOD,” they both depart from the faith of the Church of Christ in the earliest times, and give up to the Socinians the whole argument for the Divinity of Christ which is founded upon that eminent appellation. On this
account, so frequent and indeed so general a title of our Lord deserves to be more particularly considered, that the foundation which it lays for the demonstration of the Divinity of Christ may not be unthinkingly relinquished; and that a door of error, which has been unconsciously opened by the vague reasonings of men, in other respects orthodox, may be closed by the authority of Holy Writ.

That the title, “Son of God,” was applied to Christ is a fact. His disciples, occasionally before and frequently after his resurrection, give him this appellation; he assumes it himself; and it was indignantly denied to him by the Jews, who, by that very denial, acknowledge that it was claimed in its highest sense by him, and by his disciples for him. The question therefore is, what this title imported.

Those who think that it was assumed by Christ, and given to him by his disciples, because of his miraculous conception, are obviously in error. Our Lord, when he adopts the appellation, never urges his miraculous birth as a proof of his Sonship; on the contrary, this is a subject on which he preserves a total silence, and the Jews were left to consider him as “the son of Joseph;” and to argue from his being born at “Nazareth,” as they supposed, that he could not be the Messiah: so ignorant were they of the circumstances of his birth, and, therefore, of the manner of his conception.

Again, our Lord calls God his Father, and grounds the proof of it upon his miracles. The Jews, too, clearly conceived, that, in making this profession of Sonship with reference to God, he assumed a Divine character, and made himself “equal with God.” They therefore took up stones to stone him. In that important argument between our Lord and the Jews, in which his great object was to establish the point, that, in a peculiar sense, God was his Father, there is no reference at all to the miraculous conception. On the contrary, the title “Son of God,” is assumed by Christ on a ground totally different; and it is disputed by the Jews, not by their questioning or denying the fact, that he was miraculously conceived, but on the assumed impossibility, that he, being a man, should be equal to God, which they affirmed that title to import.

Nor did the disciples themselves give him this title with reference to his conception by the Holy Ghost. Certain it is, that Nathanael did not know the circumstances of his birth; for he was announced to him by Philip as Jesus of Nazareth, “the son of Joseph;” and he asks, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” He did not know, therefore, but that Jesus was the
son of Joseph; he knew nothing of his being born at Bethlehem, and yet he confesses him to be “THE SON OF GOD, and the KING OF ISRAEL.”

It may also be observed, that, in the celebrated confession of Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the SON of the LIVING GOD,” there is no reference at all to the miraculous conception; a fact at that time, probably, not known even to the apostles, and one of the things which Mary kept and pondered in her heart, till the Spirit was given, and the full revelation of Christ was made to the apostles. But, even if the miraculous conception were known to St. Peter, it is clear, from the answer of our Lord to him, that it formed no part of the ground on which he confessed “the SON of MAN” to be the “SON OF GOD;” for our Lord replies, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my FATHER which is in heaven.” He had been especially taught this doctrine of the Sonship of Christ by God, an unnecessary thing, certainly, if the miraculous conception had been the only ground of that Sonship; for the evidence of that fact might have been collected from Christ and the Virgin Mother, and there was no apparent necessity of a revelation from the Father so particular, a teaching so special, as that mentioned in our Lord’s reply, and which is given as an instance of the peculiar “blessedness” of Simon Barjona.

This ground, therefore, not being tenable, it has been urged, that “SON OF GOD” was simply an appellation of Messiah. and was so used among the Jews; in other words, that it is an official designation, and not a personal one. Against this, however, the evangelic history affords decisive proof. That the Messiah was to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament, is plain from the texts adduced in a former chapter, and this, therefore, is to be considered the faith of the ancient Jewish Church. It is however certain, that, at the period of our Lord’s advent, and for many years previously, the learned among the Jews had mingled much of the philosophy which they had learned from the heathen schools with their theological speculation; and that their writings present often a singular compound of crude metaphysical notions, allegories, cabalistic mysteries, and, occasionally, great and sublime truths. The age of our Lord was an age of great religious corruption and error. The Sadducees were materialism and skeptics; and the Pharisees had long cultivated the opinion, that the Messiah was to be a temporal monarch, a notion which served to vitiate their conceptions of his character and office, and to darken all the prophecies. Two things,
however, amidst all this confusion of opinions, and this prevalence of great errors, appear exceedingly clear from the evangelists: —

1. That the Jews recognized the existence of such a being as the “Son of God;” and that, for any person to profess to be the Son of God, in this peculiar sense, was to commit blasphemy.

2. That for a person to profess to be the Messiah simply was not considered blasphemy, and did not exasperate the Jews to take up stones to stone the offender. Our Lord certainly professed to be the Messiah; many of the Jews also, at different times, believed on him as such; and yet, as appears from St. John’s Gospel, these same Jews, who “believed” on him as Messiah, were not only “offended,” but took up stones to stone him as a blasphemer when he declared himself to be the “Son of God,” and that God was his “proper Father.” It follows from these facts, that the Jews of our Lord’s times, generally, having been perverted from the faith of their ancestors, did not expect the second person of the trinity, “the Son of God,” the Divine Memra, or Logos, to be the Messiah. Others, indeed, had a dim and uninfluential apprehension of this truth; there were who indulged various other speculations on the subject, but the true doctrine was only retained among the faithful few, as Simeon, who explicitly ascribes Divinity to the Messiah, whom he held in his arms; Nathanael, who connects “SON OF GOD and KING OF ISRAEL” together, one the designation of the Divine nature, the other of the office of Messiah; and the apostles of our Lord, whose minds were gradually opened to this mystery of faith, and brought off from the vulgar notion of the civil character and mere human nature and human work of Messiah, by the inspiration and teaching of God — “flesh and blood did not reveal it to them, but the Father.”

We cannot, therefore, account for the use of the title “SON OF GOD,” among the Jews of our Lord’s time, whether by his disciples or his enemies, by considering it as synonymous with “Messiah.” The Jews regarded the former as necessarily involving a claim to Divinity, but not the latter; and the disciples did not conceive that they fully confessed their Master, by calling him the Messiah, without adding to it his higher personal designation. “Thou art the CHRIST,” says St. Peter; but he adds, “THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD;” just as Nathanael, under the influence of a recent proof of his omniscience, and, consequently, of his Divinity, salutes him, first, as “SON OF GOD,” and, then, as Messiah, “KING OF ISRAEL.”
We are to seek for the origin of the title, “THE SON OF GOD,” in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, where a DIVINE SON is spoken of, in passages, some of which have reference to him as Messiah also, and in others which have no such reference. In both, however, we shall find that it was a personal designation; a name of revelation, not of office: that it was essential in him to be a SON, and accidental only that he was the MESSIAH; that he was the first by nature, the second by appointment; and that, in constant association with the name of “SON,” as given to him alone, and in a sense which shuts out all creatures, however exalted, are found ideas and circumstances of full and absolute Divinity.

Under the designation “SON,” Son of God, he is introduced in the second Psalm: “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” From apostolic authority we know, that the “SON,” here introduced as speaking, is Christ; this application to him being explicitly made at least twice in the New Testament. Now, if we should allow, with some, that “the day” here spoken of is the day of Christ’s resurrection, and should interpret his being “begotten” of the Father of the act itself of raising him from the dead, it is clear, that the miraculous conception of Christ is not, in this passage, laid down as the ground of his Sonship. The reference is clearly made to another transaction, namely, his resurrection. So far this passage, thus interpreted, furnishes an instance in which the Messiah is called “THE SON OF GOD,” on some ground entirely independent of the mode of his incarnation. But he is so frequently called the Son, where there is no reference even to his resurrection, that this cannot be considered as the ground of that relation; and, indeed, the point is sufficiently settled by St. Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Romans, tells us, that the resurrection of Christ was the declaration of his Sonship, not the ground of it — “DECLARED to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.” We perceive, too, from the Psalm, that the mind of the inspired writer is filled with ideas of his Divinity, of his claims, and of his works as God. This SON the nations of the earth are called to “kiss, lest he be angry, and they perish from the way;” and every one is pronounced blessed who “putteth his trust in him;” a declaration of unequivocal Divinity, because found in a book which pronounces every man cursed “who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.”

“It is obvious, at first view, that the high titles and honours ascribed in this Psalm to the extraordinary person who is the chief subject of it, far transcend any thing that is ascribed in Scripture to any mere
308

creature: but if the Psalm be inquired into more narrowly, and compared with parallel prophecies; if it be duly considered, that not only is the extraordinary person here spoken of called the Son of God, but that title is so ascribed to him as to imply, that it belongs to him in a manner that is absolutely singular, and peculiar to himself, seeing he is said to be begotten of God, (verse 12,) and is called by way of eminence, the Son; (verse 12;) that the danger of provoking him to anger is spoken of in so very different a manner from what the Scripture uses in speaking of the anger of any mere creature; ‘Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little;’ that when the kings and judges of the earth are commanded to serve God with fear, they are, at the same time, commanded to kiss the Son, which, in those times and places, was frequently an expression of adoration; and particularly that whereas other scriptures contain awful and just threatenings against those who trust in any mere man, the psalmist expressly calls them blessed who trust in the Son here spoken of: all these things, taken together and compared with the other prophecies, make up a character of Divinity; as, on the other hand, when it is said that God would set this his Son as his king on his holy hill of Zion, (verse 6,) these and various other expressions in this Psalm contain characters of the subordination which was to be appropriated to that Divine person who was to be incarnate.” (Maclaurin’s Essay on the Prophecies.)

Neither the miraculous conception of Christ, nor yet his resurrection from the dead, is, therefore, the foundation of his being called the Son of God in this Psalm. Not the first, for there is no allusion to it; not the second, for he was declared from heaven to be the “beloved Son” of the Father at his very entrance upon his ministry, and, consequently, before the resurrection; and also, because the very apostle who applies the prediction to the resurrection of Christ, explicitly states, that even that was a declaration of an antecedent Sonship. It is also to be noted, that, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul institutes an argument upon this very passage in the second Psalm, to prove the superiority of Christ to the angels. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” “The force of this argument lies in the expression ‘begotten,’ importing that the person addressed is the Son of God, not by creation, but by generation. Christ’s pre-eminence over the
angels is here stated to consist in this, that whereas they were created, he is begotten; and the apostle’s reasoning is fallacious, unless this expression intimates a proper and peculiar filiation.” 

“He hath obtained,” says Bishop Hall, “a more excellent name than the angels, namely, to be called and to be the Son of God, not by grace and adoption; but by nature and communication of essence.” This argument from Christ’s superiority to all creatures, even the most exalted, shows the sentiment of St. Paul as to Divinity being implied in the title SON, given to the Messiah in the second Psalm. In this several of the ancient Jewish commentators agree with him; and here we see one of the sources from which the Jews derived their notion of the existence of a Divine Son of God.

Though the above argument stands independent of the interpretations which have been given to the clause “THIS DAY have I begotten thee,” the following passage from Witsius, in some parts of its argument, has great weight: —

“But we cannot so easily concede to our adversaries, that, by the generation of Christ, mentioned in the second Psalm, his resurrection from the dead is intended, and that by this day, we are to understand the day on which God, having raised him from the dead, appointed him the King of his Church. For,

1. To beget signifies nowhere in the sacred volume to rescue from death; and we are not at liberty to coin new significations of words.

2. Though, possibly, it were used in that metaphorical acceptation, (which, however, is not yet proved,) it cannot be understood in this passage in any other than its proper sense. It is here adduced as a reason for which Christ is called the Son of God. — Now Christ is the Son of God, not figuratively, but properly; for the Father is called his proper Father, and he himself is denominated the proper Son of the Father, by which designation he is distinguished from those who are his sons in a metaphorical sense.

3. These words are spoken to Christ with a certain emphasis, with which they would not have been addressed to any of the angels, much less to any of mankind; but if they meant nothing more than the raising of him from the dead, they would attribute nothing to Christ which he doth not possess in common with many others,
who, in like manner, are raised up by the power of God, to glory
and an everlasting kingdom.

4. Christ raised himself from the dead, too, by his own power; from
which it would follow, according to this interpretation, that he
begat himself, and that he is his own son.

5. It is not true, in fine, that Christ was not begotten of the Father,
nor called his Son, till that very day on which he was raised from
the dead; for, as is abundantly manifest from the Gospel history, he
often, when yet alive, professed himself the Son of God, and was
often acknowledged as such.

6. *To-day* refers to time, when human concerns are in question; but
this expression, when applied to Divine things, must be understood
in a sense suitable to the majesty of the Godhead. And, if any word
may be transferred from time, to denote eternity, which is the
complete and perfect possession, at once, of an interminable life,
what can be better adapted to express its unsuccessive duration
than the term *to-day*?

Nor can our adversaries derive any support to their cause from the
words of Paul, Acts 13:32, 33, ‘And we declare unto you glad
tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,
God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he hath
raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art
my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ For,

1. Paul doth not here prove the resurrection of Jesus from the dead,
from this expression in the second Psalm (which, though it
describes him who is raised again, doth not prove his resurrection,)
but from Isaiah 4:3, and Psalm 16:10; while he adds, (verses
34 and 35,) ‘And as concerning that he raised him up from the
dead,’ &c.

2. The words ‘raised up Jesus,’ do not even relate to the
resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but to the exhibition of him as
a Saviour. This raising of him up is expressly distinguished from the
raising of him again from the dead, which is subsequently spoken
of, verse 34. The meaning is, that God fulfilled the promise made to
the fathers, when he exhibited Christ to mankind in the flesh. But
what was that promise? This appears from the second Psalm, where God promises to the Church, that, in due time, he would anoint, as King over her, his own Son, begotten of himself TO-DAY; that is, from eternity to eternity, for with God there is a perpetual to-day. Grotius, whose name is not offensive to our opposers, has remarked, that Luke makes use of the same word to signify exhibiting, in Acts 2:30; 3:26. To these we add another instance from Acts 7:37: ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.’

3. Were we to admit, that the words of the Psalm are applied to the resurrection of Christ, which seemed proper to Calvin, Cameron, and several other Protestant divines, the sense will only be this, that, by his being thus raised up again, it was declared and demonstrated, that Christ is the Son of the Father, begotten of him from everlasting. The Jewish council condemned him for blasphemy, because he had called himself the Son of God. But, by raising him again from the grave, after he had been put to death as a blasphemer, God acquitted him from that charge, and publicly recognized him as his only-begotten Son. Thus he was declared, exhibited, and distinguished as the Son of God with power, expressly and particularly, to the entire exclusion of all others. The original word here employed by the apostles is remarkably expressive; and, as Ludovicus de Dieu has learnedly observed, it signifies that Christ was placed between such bounds, and so separated and discriminated from others that he neither should nor can be judged to be any one else than the Son of God. The expression ‘with power,’ may be joined with ‘declared;’ and then the meaning will be that he was shown to be the Son of God by a powerful argument. Or it may be connected with the ‘Son of God;’ and then it will intimate that he is the Son of God in the most ample and exalted sense of which the term is susceptible; so that this name, when ascribed to him, is ‘a more excellent name’ than any that is given to the noblest of creatures.” (Witsius’s Dissertations on the Creed.)

Solomon, in Proverbs 8:22, introduces not the personified, but the personal wisdom of God, under the same relation of a Son, and in that relation ascribes to him Divine attributes. This was another source of the
notion which obtained among the ancient Jews, that there was a Divine Son of God.

“Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was anointed from everlasting,
From the beginning, before the world was,
When there were no depths, I was BORN,” &c. 55

Here, “from considering the excellence of wisdom, the transition is easy to the undefiled source of it. Abstract wisdom now disappears, and the inspired writer proceeds to the delineation of a Divine Being, who is portrayed in colours of such splendour and majesty, as can be attributed to no other than the eternal Son of God.” (Holden’s Translation of Proverbs.) “Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way.” “The Father possessed the Son, had, or, as it were, acquired him by an eternal generation. To say of the attribute wisdom, that God possessed it in the beginning of his work of creation, is trifling; certainly it is too futile an observation to fall from any sensible writer; how, then, can it be attributed to the wise monarch of Israel?” (Holden’s Translation of Proverbs.) “I was anointed from everlasting.” — “Can it, with propriety, be said of an attribute, that it was anointed, invested with power and authority from everlasting! In what way, literal or figurative, can the expression be predicated of a quality? But it is strictly applicable to the Divine Logos, who was anointed by the effusion of the Spirit; who was invested with power and dignity from everlasting; and who, from all eternity, derived his existence and essence from the Father; for in him ‘dwelleth all the fulness of the God. head bodily.’” (Holden’s Translation of Proverbs.)

It is a confirmation of the application of Solomon’s description of wisdom to the second person of the Trinity, that the ancient Jewish writers, (Philo among the number,) as Allix has shown, (Judgment of the Jewish Church,) speak of the generation of Wisdom, and by that, term mean “the Word,” a personal appellation so familiar to them. Nor is there any thing out of the common course of the thinking of the ancient Hebrews in these passages of Solomon, when applied to the personal wisdom; since he, as we have seen, must, like them, have been well enough acquainted with a distinction of persons in the Trinity, and knew Jehovah, their Lawgiver and King, under the title of “the Word of the Lord,” as the Maker of all things, and the Revealer of his will, in a word, as Divine, and yet distinct from the Father. The relation in the Godhead of Father and Son was not, therefore, to the
Jews an unrevealed mystery, and sufficiently accounts for the ideas of Divinity which they, in the days of Christ, connected with the appellation Son of God.

This relation is most unequivocally expressed in the prophecy of Micah 5:2, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;” or, as it is in the margin, “from the days of eternity.” Here the person spoken of is said to have had a twofold birth, or “going forth.” By a natural birth he came forth from Bethlehem to Judah; by another and a higher, he was from the days of eternity. One is opposed to the other; but the last is carried into eternity itself by words which most clearly intimate an existence prior to the birth in Bethlehem, and that an eternal one: while the term used and translated his “goings forth,” conveys precisely the same idea as the eternal generation of the Son of God. “The passage carefully distinguishes his human nature from his eternal generation. The prophet describes him who was to ‘come out of Bethlehem’ by another more eminent coming or going forth, even from all eternity. This is so signal a description of the Divine generation, before all time, or of that going forth from everlasting of Christ, the eternal Son of God; ‘God, of the substance of the Father, begotten, before the worlds;’ who was afterward in time made man, and born into the world in Bethlehem, that the prophecy evidently belongs to him, and could never be verified of any other.” (Dr. Pocock.)

This text, indeed, so decidedly indicates that peculiar notion of the Divinity of our Lord, which is marked by the term and the relation of Son, that it is not surprising that Socinians should resort to the utmost violence of criticism to escape its powerful evidence. Dr. Priestley, therefore, says, “that it may be understood concerning the promises of God, in which the coming of Christ was signified to mankind from the beginning of the world.” But nothing can be more forced or unsupported. The word here employed never signifies the work of God in predicting future events: but is often used to express natural birth and origin. So it is unquestionably used in the preceding clause, and cannot be supposed to be taken in a different sense, much less in a unique sense, in that which follows, and especially when a clear antithesis is marked and intended. He was to be born in time; but was not, on that account, merely a man: he was “from the days of eternity.” By his natural birth, or “going forth,” he was from
Bethlehem; but his “goings forth,” his production, his heavenly birth or
generation, was from everlasting; for so the Hebrew word means, though,
like our own word “ever,” it is sometimes accommodated to temporal
duration. Its proper sense is that of eternity, and it is used in passages
which speak of the infinite duration of God himself.

Others refer “his goings forth from everlasting,” to the purpose of God that
he should come into the world; but this is too absurd to need refutation: no
such strange form of speech as this would be, if taken in this sense, occurs
in the Scriptures: and it would be mere trifling so solemnly to affirm that of
Messiah, which is just as true of any other person born into the world. This
passage must, then, stand as an irrefutable proof of the faith of the ancient
Jewish Church, both in the Divinity and the Divine Sonship of Messiah;
and, as Dr. Hales well observes, (Hales’s Analysis,) “This prophecy of
Micah is, perhaps, the most important single prophecy in the Old
Testament, and the most comprehensive respecting the personal character
of the Messiah, and his successive manifestation to the world. It crowns
the whole chain of prophecies descriptive of the several limitations of the
blessed Seed of the woman, to the line of Shem, to the family of Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob, to the tribe of Judah, and to the royal house of David,
here terminating in his birth at Bethlehem, ‘the city of David.’ It carefully
distinguishes his human nativity from his eternal generation; foretells the
rejection of the Israelites and Jews for a season, their final restoration, and
the universal peace destined to prevail throughout the earth in ‘the
regeneration.’ It forms, therefore, the basis of the New Testament, which
begins with his human birth at Bethlehem, the miraculous circumstances of
which are recorded in the introductions of Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels;
his eternal generation, as the ORACLE, or WISDOM, in the sublime
introduction of John’s Gospel; his prophetic character and second coming
illustrated in the four Gospels and the Epistles; ending with a prediction of
the speedy approach of the latter, in the Apocalypse, Revelation 22:20.”

The same relation of SON, in the full view of supreme Divinity, and where
no reference appears to be had to the office and future work of Messiah, is
found in Proverbs 30:4, ‘Who hath ascended up into heaven, or
descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the
waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What
is his name, and what is his SON’s name, if thou canst tell?” Here the Deity
is contemplated, not in his redeeming acts, in any respect or degree; not as
providing for the recovery of a lost race, or that of the Jewish people, by
the gift of his Son: he is placed before the reverend gaze of the prophet in
his acts of creative and conserving power only, managing at will and ruling
the operations of nature; and yet, even in these peculiar offices of Divinity
alone, he is spoken of as having a SON, whose “name,” that is, according
to the Hebrew idiom, whose nature, is as deep, mysterious, and
unutterable as his own. “What is HIS name, and what is his SON’s name,
canst thou tell?”

The Scriptures of the Old Testament themselves in this manner furnished
the Jews with the idea of a personal Son in the Divine nature; and their
familiarity with it is abundantly evident, from the frequent application of
the terms “Son,” “Son of God,” “first and only-begotten Son,” “Offspring
of God,” to the Logos, by PHILEO; and that in passages where he must, in all
fair interpretation, be understood as speaking of a personal, and not of a
personified LOGOS. The same terms are also found in other Jewish writers
before the Christian era.

The phrase “Son of God” was, therefore, known to the ancient Jews, and
to them conveyed a very definite idea; and it is no answer to this to say,
that it was a common appellative of Messiah among their ancient writers.
The question is, how came “Son of God” to be an appellative of Messiah?
“MESSIAH” is an official title; “SON,” a personal one. It is granted that the
Messiah is the Son of God; but it is denied that, therefore, the term Son of
God ceases to be a personal description, and that it imports the same with
Messiah. David was the “son of Jesse,” and the “king of Israel;” he,
therefore, who was king of Israel was the son of Jesse; but the latter is the
personal, the former only the official description; and it cannot be argued
that “son of Jesse” conveys no idea distinct from “king of Israel.” On the
contrary, it marks his origin and his family; for, before he was king of
Israel, he was the son of Jesse. In like manner, “Son of God” marks the
natural relation of Messiah to God; and the term Messiah his official
relation to men. The personal title cannot otherwise be explained; and as
we have seen, that it was used by the Jews as one of the titles of Messiah,
yet still used personally, and not officially, and, also, without any reference
to the miraculous conception at all, as before proved, it follows, that it
expresses a natural relation to God, subsisting not in the human, but in the
higher nature of Messiah; and, this higher nature being proved to be
Divine, it follows, that the term Son of God, as applied to Jesus, is,
therefore, a title of absolute Divinity, importing his participation in the very
nature and essence of God. The same ideas of Divine Sonship are suggested by almost every passage in which the phrase occurs in the New Testament.

“When Jesus was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The circumstances of this testimony are of the most solemn and impressive kind, and there can be no rational doubt but they were designed authoritatively to invest our Lord with the title “Son of God” in the full sense which it bears in those prophecies in which the Messias had been introduced under that appellation, rendered still more strong and emphatic by adding the epithet “beloved,” and the declaration, that in him the “Father was well pleased.” That the name “Son of God” is not here given to Christ with reference to his resurrection, need not be stated; that it was not given to him, along with a declaration of the Father’s pleasure in him, because of the manner in which he had fulfilled the office of Messiah, is also obvious, for he was but just then entering upon his office and commencing his ministry; and if, therefore, it can be proved, that it was not given to him with reference to his miraculous conception, it must follow that it was given on grounds independent of his office, and independent of the circumstances of his birth: and that, therefore, he was in a higher nature than his human, and for a higher reason than an official one, the “Son of God.”

Now this is, I think, very easily and conclusively proved. As soon as the Baptist John had heard this testimony, and seen this descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, he tells us that he “bore record that this is the Son of God:” — the Messiah, we grant, but not the Son of God, because he was the Messiah, but Son of God and Messiah also. This is clear, from the opinion of the Jews of that day, as before shown. It was to the Jews that he “bore record” that Jesus was the Son of God. But he used this title in the sense commonly received by his hearers. Had he simply testified that he was the Messiah, this would not to them in general have expressed the idea which all attached to the name “Son of God,” and which they took to involve a Divine character and claim. But in this ordinary sense of the title among the Jews, John the Baptist gave his testimony to him, and by that shows in what sense he himself understood the testimony of God to the Sonship of Jesus. So, in his closing testimony to Christ, recorded in John iii, he makes an evident allusion to what took place at the baptism of our
Lord, and says, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” Here the love of the Father, as declared at his baptism, is represented as love to him as the Son, and all things being given into his hands, as the consequence of his being his beloved Son. “All things,” unquestionably, imply all offices, all power and authority; all that is included in the offices of King, Messias, Mediator; and it is affirmed, not that he is Son, and beloved as a Son because of his being invested with these offices, but that he is invested with them, because he was the well-beloved Son; a circumstance which fully demonstrates that “Son of God” is not an official title, and that it is not of the same import as Messiah. To the transaction at his baptism our Lord himself adverts in John 5:37: “And the FATHER HIMSELF, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.” For, as he had just mentioned the witness arising from his miraculous works, and, in addition to these, introduces the witness of the Father himself as distinct from the works, a personal testimony from the Father alone can be intended, and that personal testimony was given at his baptism. Now, the witness of the Father, on this occasion, is, that he was his beloved SON; and it is remarkable that our Lord introduces the Father’s testimony to his Sonship on an occasion in which the matter in dispute with the Jews was respecting his claim to be the Son of God. The Jews denied that God was his Father in the sense in which he had declared him to be so, and “they sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath; but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” In this case, what was the conduct of our Lord? He re-affirms his Sonship even in this very objectionable sense; asserts that “the Son doeth all things soever that the Father doeth,” verse 19; that “as the Father raiseth the dead, so the Son quickeneth whomsoever he will,” verse 21; that “all judgment has been committed to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,” verse 23; that “as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,” verse 26; and then confirms all these high claims of equality with the Father, by adding the Father’s own witness at his baptism: “And the Father himself hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape; and ye have not his word abiding in you, for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” With respect to this testimony, two critical remarks have been made, which, though not essential to the argument, farther corroborate the views just taken. The one is, that in all the three evangelists who record the testimony of the Father to Christ at his baptism, the article is prefixed both to the substantive and the adjective.
Matthew 3:17, Ὁντος εστιν ο υιος μου ο αγαπητος, the most discriminating mode of expression that could be employed, as if to separate Jesus from every other who, at any time, had received the appellation of the Son of God: This is that Son of mine who is the beloved. In the second clause, “in whom I am well pleased,” the verb in all the three evangelists is in the first aorist, εν ο ευδοκησα. Now, although we often render the Greek aorist by the English present, yet this can be done with propriety only when the proposition is equally true, whether it be stated in the present, in the past, or in the future time. And thus the analogy of the Greek language requires us not only to consider the name Son of God, as applied in a peculiar sense to Jesus, but also to refer the expression used at his baptism to that intercourse which had subsisted between the Father and the Son, before this name was announced to men.  

The epithet” ONLY BEGOTTEN,” which several times occurs in the New testament, affords farther proof of the Sonship of Christ in his Divine nature. One of these instances only need be selected. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the ONLY BEGOTTEN of the Father, full of grace and truth.” If the epithet only begotten referred to Christ’s miraculous conception, then the glory” as of the only begotten” must be a glory of the human nature of Christ only, for that alone was capable of being thus conceived. This is, however, clearly contrary to the scope of the passage, which does not speak of the glory of the nature, “the flesh,” which “THE WORD” assumed, but of the glory of the Word HIMSELF, who is here said to be the only begotten of the Father. It is, therefore, the glory of his Divine nature which is here intended. Such, too, was the sense in which the primitive Church and the immediate followers of the apostles understood the title μονογενης, only begotten, or only Son, as Bishop Bull has shown at length, (Judicium Ecclesiastes) and “to him and others,” says Dr. Waterland, “I may refer for proof that the title, Son of God, or only-begotten Son in Scripture, cannot be reasonably understood either of our Lord’s miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost, or of his Messiahship, or of his being the first begotten from the dead, or of his receiving all power, and his being appointed heir of all things. None of these circumstances, singly considered, nor all together, will be sufficient to account for the title only Son, or only begotten; but it is necessary to look higher up to the pre-existent and Divine nature of the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was himself very God, before the creation, and from all eternity. Angels and men have been called sons of God, in an
improper and metaphorical sense, but they have never been styled ‘only begotten,’ nor indeed, ‘sons,’ in any such distinguishing and emphatic manner as Christ is. They are sons by adoption, or faint resemblance; he is truly, properly, and eminently, Son of God. and, therefore, God, as every son of man is, therefore, truly man.” The note in the Socinian version tells us, “that this expression does not refer to any peculiar mode of derivation or existence; but is used to express merely a higher degree of affection, and is applied to Isaac, though Abraham had other sons.” Isaac is, however, so called, because he was the only child which Abraham had by his wife Sarah, and this instance is, therefore, against them. The other passages in this Gospel and in St. John’s First Epistle, in which the term is used, give no countenance to this interpretation, and in the only other passages in the New Testament, in which it occurs, it unquestionably means an “only son or child.” Luke 7:12, “Behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother.” Luke 8:42, “For he had one only daughter.” Luke 9:38, “Master, look upon my son, for he is my only child.” Here, then, on the one hand, there is no passage in which the epithet only begotten occurs, which indicates by any other phrase or circumstance, that it has the force of well beloved; while there are several, which, from the circumstances, oblige us to interpret it literally as expressive of a peculiar relationship of the child to the parent, an only, an only-begotten child. This is, then, the sense in which it is used of Christ, and it must respect either his Divine or human nature. Those who refer it to his human nature, consider it as founded upon his miraculous conception. It is, however, clear, that that could not constitute him a son, except as it consisted in the immediate formation of the manhood of our Lord by the power of God; but, in this respect, he was not the “only begotten,” not the “only Son,” because Adam was thus also immediately produced, and for this very reason is called by St. Luke, “the son of God.” Seeing, then, that μονογενὴς, only begotten, does not any where import the affection of a parent, but the peculiar relation of an only son; and that this peculiarity does not apply to the production of the mere human nature of our Lord, the first man being in this sense, and for this very reason, “a son of God,” thereby excluding Christ, considered as a man, from the relation of ONLY Son, the epithet can only be applied to the Divine nature of our Lord, in which alone, he is at once naturally and exclusively “the SON OF THE LIVING GOD.”

All those passages, too, which declare that “all things were made by the Son,” and that God “sent his Son,” into the world may be considered as
declarations of a Divine Sonship, because they imply that the Creator
was, at the very period of creation, a Son, and that he was the Son of
God, when and consequently before, he was sent into the world; and thus
both will prove, that that relation is independent either of his official
appointment as Messiah, or of his incarnation. The only plausible objection
to this is, that when a person is designated by a particular title, he is often
said to perform actions under that title, though the designation may have
been given to him subsequently. Certain acts may be said to have been
done by the king, though, in fact, he performed them before his
advancement to the throne; and we ascribe the “Principia” to Sir Isaac
Newton, though that work was written before he received the honour of
knighthood. In this manner we are told, by those who allow the Divinity of
Christ, while they deny his Divine Sonship, that, as Son of God was one of
the common appellations of Christ among his disciples, it was natural for
them to ascribe creation, and other Divine acts performed before the
incarnation, to the Son, meaning merely that they were done by that same
Divine person who in consequence of his incarnation and miraculous
conception, became the Son of God, and was by his disciples
acknowledged as such.

The whole of this argument supposes that the titles “THE SON,” “THE SON
OF GOD,” are merely human titles, and that they are applied to Christ,
when considered as God, and in his pre-existent state, only in consequence
of that interchange of appellations to which the circumstance of the union
of two natures, Divine and human, in one person, so naturally leads. Thus
it is said, that the “Lord of glory” was “crucified;” that GOD purchased the
Church “with his own blood;” that “THE SON OF MAN” was “in heaven”
before the ascension. So also in familiar style, we speak of the Divinity of
Jesus, and of the Godhead of the Son of Mary. An interchange of
appellations is acknowledged; but then even this supposes that some of
them are designations of his Divine, while others describe his assumed
nature; and the simple circumstance of such an interchange will no more
prove the title SON OF GOD to be a human designation, than it will prove
SON OF MARY to be a Divine one. Farther, if such an interchange of titles
be thus contended for, we may then ask, which of the titles, in strict
appropriation, designate the human, and which the Divine nature of our
Lord? If “Son of God” be, in strictness, a human designation, and so it
must be, if it relate not to his Divinity, then we may say that our Saviour,
as God, has no distinctive name at all in the whole Scriptures. The title
“GOD” does not distinguish him from the other persons of the trinity, and
WORD stands in precisely the same predicament as SON; for the same kind
of criticism may reduce it to merely an official appellative, given because
of his being the medium of instructing men in the will of God; and it may,
with equal force, be said that he is called “the Word” in his preexistent
state only, because he in time, became the Word, in like manner as, in time
also he became the Son. The other names of Christ are all official; and as
in the Scriptures we have no such phrase as “the second person in the
trinity” and other theological designations, since adopted, to express the
Divinity of Christ, the denial of the title SON as a designation of Divinity
leads to this remarkable conclusion, (remarkable especially, when
considered as coming from those who hold the Deity of Christ,) that we
have not in Scripture, neither in the Old nor the New Testament, a single
appellation which, in strictness and truth of speech, can be used to express
the Divine person of him who was made flesh and dwelt among us. If, then,
an interchange of Divine and human designations be allowed, the title
“SON OF GOD” may still be a Divine description for any thing which such
an interchange implies; if it is not a designation of his Divinity, we are left
without a name for our Saviour as God, and considered as existing before
the incarnation, and so there can properly be no interchange of Divine and
human titles at all. But the notion that the title Son of God is an appellation
of the human nature of our Lord, applied sometimes to him, when his
Divine character and acts are distinctly considered, by a customary
interchange of designations, is a mere assumption. There is nothing to
prove it, while all those passages which connect the title “Son,”
immediately, and by way of eminence, with his Divinity remain wholly
unaccounted for on this theory, and are, therefore, contrary to it. Let a few
of these be examined. It is evident that, in a peculiar sense, he claims God
as his Father, and that with no reference either to the incarnation or
resurrection, or to any thing beside a relation in the Divine nature. So,
when he had said to the Jews, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work;”
the Jews so understood him to claim God for his Father as to equal himself
with God — “they sought the more to kill him, because he had not only
broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, πατερα ιδιον,
HIS OWN PROPER FATHER, making himself EQUAL with God;” and, so far
from correcting this as an error in his hearers, which he was bound to do
by every moral consideration, if they had so greatly mistaken him, he goes
on to confirm them in their opinion as to the extent of his claims, declaring,
that “what things soever the Father doeth, these also doth the Son likewise;
and that as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given the Son to have life in himself.” In all this it is admitted by our Lord, that whatever he is and has is from the Father; which is, indeed, implied in the very name and relation of Son; but if this communication be not of so peculiar a kind as to imply an equality with God, a sameness of nature and perfections, there is not only an unwarrantable presumption in the words of our Lord, but, in the circumstances in which they were uttered, there is an equivocation in them inconsistent with the sincerity of an honest man. This argument is confirmed by attending to a similar passage in the tenth chapter of John. Our Lord says, “They shall never perish; my Father which gave them me is greater than I, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him.” And they assign, for so doing, the very same reason which St. John has mentioned in the fifth chapter: “We stone thee for blasphemy, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Our Lord’s answer is: “Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken,” i.e. if the language of Scripture be unexceptionable, “say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?” These words are sometimes quoted in support of the opinion of those who hold that our Saviour is called the Son of God, purely upon account of the commission which he received. “But the force of the argument and the consistency of the discourse require us to affix a much higher meaning to that expression. Our Lord is reasoning a fortiori. He vindicates himself from the charge of blasphemy in calling himself the Son of God, because even those who hold civil offices upon earth are called, in Scripture, gods. But that he might not appear to put himself upon a level with them, and to retract his former assertion, ‘I and my Father are one,’ he not only calls himself ‘him whom the Father hath sent into the world,’ which implies that he had a being, and that God was his Father, before he was sent; but he subjoins, ‘If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him,’ expressions which appear to be equivalent to his former assertion, ‘I and the Father are one,’ and which were certainly understood by the Jews in that sense, for as soon as he uttered them they sought again to take him.” (Hill’s Lectures.)
To these two eminent instances, in which our Lord claims God as his Father, in reference solely to his Divine nature, and to no circumstance whatever connected with his birth or his offices, may be added his unequivocal answer, on his trial, to the direct question of the Jewish council. — “Then said they all, Art thou the Son of God? and he saith unto them, Ye say that I am,” that is, I am that ye say; thus declaring that, in the very sense in which they put the question, he was the Son of God. In confessing himself to be, in that sense, the Son of God, he did more than claim to be the Messiah, for the council judged him for that reason guilty of “blasphemy;” a charge which could not lie against any one, by the Jewish law, for professing to be the Messiah. It was in their judgment a case of blasphemy, explicitly provided against by their “law,” which inflicted death upon the offence; but, in the whole Mosaic institute, it is not a capital crime to assume the title and character of Messiah. Why, then, did the confession of Christ, that he was the “Son of God,” in answer to the interrogatory of the council, lead them to exclaim, “What need we any farther witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth — he is worthy of death.” “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die.” The reason is given, “because he made himself THE SON OF GOD.” His “blasphemy” was alleged to lie in this; this, therefore, implied an invasion of the rights and honours of the Divine nature, and was, in their view, an assumption of positive Divinity. Our Lord, by his conduct, shows that they did not mistake his intention. He allows them to proceed against him without lowering his pretensions, or correcting their mistake; which, had they really fallen into one, as to the import of the title “Son of God,” he must have done, or been accessory to his own condemnation.

As in none of these passages the title Son of God can possibly be considered as a designation of his human nature or office; so, in the apostolic writings, we find proof of equal force that it is used even by way of opposition and contradistinction to the human and inferior nature. Romans 1:3, 4, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” A very few remarks will be sufficient to point out the force of this passage. The apostle, it is to be observed, is not speaking of what Christ is officially, but of what he is personally and essentially, for the truth of all his official claims depends upon the truth of his personal ones: if he be a Divine person, he is every thing else he
assumes to be. He is, therefore, considered by the apostle distinctly in his two natures. As a man he was “flesh,” “of the seed of David,” and a son of David; in a superior nature he was Divine, and the Son of God. To prove that he was of the seed of David, no evidence was necessary but the Jewish genealogies: to prove him Divine, or, as the apostle chooses to express it, “THE SON OF GOD,” evidence of a higher kind was necessary, and it was given in his “resurrection from the dead.” That “declared him to be the Son of God with power,” or powerfully determined and marked him out to be the Son of God, a Divine person. That an opposition is expressed between what Christ was according to the flesh, and what he was according to a higher nature, must be allowed, or there is no force in the apostle’s observation; and equally clear it must be, that the nature, put in opposition to the fleshly nature, can be no other than the Divine nature of Christ, the apostolic designation of which is the “SON OF GOD.”

This opposition between the two natures is sufficiently marked for the purpose of the argument, without taking into account the import of the phrase in the passage just quoted, “according to the Spirit of holiness,” which, by many critics, is considered as equivalent to “according to his Divine nature.”

Because of the opposition, stated by the apostle, between what Christ was, κατὰ, according to, in respect of the flesh; and his being declared the Son of God with power, κατὰ, according to, in respect of “the Spirit of holiness;” Macknight, following many others, interprets the “Spirit of holiness” to mean the Divine nature of Christ, as “the flesh” signifies his whole human nature. To this Schleusner adds his authority, sub voce ἁγιωσύνη. “Summa Dei majestas et perfectio, Romans 1:4, κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης. Quoad vim suam et majestatem divinam. Similiter in vers. Alex. non solum, Hebrews ἐν ὑπερεξουσία, Psalm 145:4, 5, sed etiam τῷ νῦν ὡς respondet, Psalm 97:12.”

Doddridge demurs to this, on the ground of its being unusual in Scripture to call the Divine nature of Christ “the Spirit of holiness,” or the “Holy Spirit.” This is, however, far from a conclusive objection: it is not so clear that there are not several instances of this in Scripture; and certain it is, that the most ancient fathers frequently use the terms “Spirit,” and “Spirit of God,” to express the Divine nature of our Lord. “Certissimum est,” says Bishop Bull, “Filium Dei, secundum Deitatis hypostasis in scriptis Patrum...
The whole argument of the Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is designed to prove our Lord superior to angels, and he adduces, as conclusive evidence on this point, that to none of the angels was it ever said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.” It is, therefore, clear, that on this very ground of Sonship, our Lord is argued to be superior to angels, that is, superior in nature, and in natural relation to God; for in no other way is the argument conclusive. He has his title Son, by inheritance, that is, by natural and hereditary right. It is by “inheritance” that he hath obtained a “more excellent name” than angels; that is, by his being of the Father, and, therefore, by virtue of his Divine filiation. Angels may be, in an inferior sense, the sons of God by creation; but they cannot inherit that title, for this plain reason, that they are created not begotten; while our Lord inherits the “more excellent name” because he is “begotten,” not created. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I BEGOTTEN thee?”

The same ideas of absolute Divinity, connect themselves with the title throughout this chapter. “THE SON,” by whom “God in these latter days hath spoken to us,” is “the brightness, the effulgence of his glory, and the express, or exact and perfect image of his person.” But it is only to the Divine nature of our Lord that these expressions can refer. “The brightness of his glory” is a phrase in which allusion is made to a luminous body which is made visible by its own effulgence. The Father is compared to the original fountain of light, and the Son to the effulgence or body of rays streaming from it. Thus we are taught, that the essence of both is the same; that the one is inseparable from, and not to be conceived of without the other; consequently, that neither of them ever was or could be alone. The Son is declared to be of the same nature and eternity with the Father; “And from hence, more particularly, the Church seems to have taken the occasion of confessing in opposition to the Arian heresy, as we find it done in one of our creeds, that ‘Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was begotten of the Father before all worlds, that he is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things are made.’” (Stanhope.) Certainly, this brightness, or effulgence from the Father is expressly spoken of the Son; but it cannot be affirmed of him with reference to his humanity; and if it must necessarily be understood of
his superior, his Divine nature, it necessarily implies the idea which is suggested by Sonship. For if the second person of the trinity were \textit{co-ordinate} and \textit{independent}, in no good sense could he be the effulgence, the lustre of the glory of the Father. He might exhibit an equal and rival glory, as one sun equally large and bright with another; but our Lord would, in that case, be no more an effulgence of the glory of the Father than one of these suns would be an effulgence of the other. The \textit{express image} of his person” is equally a note of filial Divinity. The word Χαρακτήρ signifies an impression or mark, answering to a seal or stamp, or die, and therefore an exact and perfect resemblance, as the figure on the coin answers to the die by which it is stamped, and the image on the wax to the engraving on the seal. It is impossible that this should be spoken of a creature, because it cannot be true of any creature; and therefore not true of the human nature of our Lord. “The sentiment is, indeed, too high for our ideas to reach. This, however, seems to be fully implied in it, that the Son is personally distinct from the Father, for the impression and the seal are not one thing, and that the essential nature of both is one and the same,” (\textit{Dr. P. Smith},) since one is so the exact and perfect image of the other, that our Lord could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Still, however, the likeness is not that of one \textit{independent}, and \textit{unrelated} being to another, as of \textit{man} to \textit{man}; but the more perfect one of \textit{Son} to \textit{Father}. So it is expressly affirmed; for it is “\textit{The Son}” who is this “express image:” nor would the resemblance of one independent Divine person to another come up to the idea conveyed by Χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστασεως. Both this and the preceding phrase, the “brightness of his glory,” with sufficient clearness denote not only \textit{sameness} of \textit{essence} and \textit{distinction} of \textit{person}, but \textit{dependence} and \textit{communication} also; ideas which are preserved and harmonized in the doctrine of the Sonship of Christ, and \textit{in no other}. 

In the same conjunction of the term \textit{Son} with ideas of absolute Divinity, the apostle, in a subsequent part of the same chapter, applies that lofty passage in the forty-fifth Psalm, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” &c. The Socinian criticisms on this passage have already been refuted; and it is only necessary to remark on this passage as it is in proof of the Divine Sonship. It is allowed, by all who hold his Deity, that Christ is here addressed as a being composed of two natures, God and man. “The unction with the ‘oil of gladness,’ and the elevation above his ‘fellows,’ characterize the manhood; and the perpetual stability of his throne, and the unsullied justice of the government, declare
the GODHEAD.” (Bishop Horsley.) He is, however, called the SON; but this is a term which could not characterize the Being here introduced, unless it agreed to his higher and Divine nature. The Son is addressed; that Son is addressed as God, as God whose throne is for ever and ever; and by this argument it is that the apostle proves the SON to be superior to angels.

A few other passages may be introduced, which, with equal demonstration, attach the term Son, eminently and emphatically, to our Lord’s Divine nature.

“God sending his own SON, in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Romans 8:3. Here the person entitled the SON, is said to be sent in the likeness of sinful FLESH. In what other way could he have been sent, if he were Son only as a man? The apostle most clearly intimates that he was SON before he was sent; and that FLESH was the nature assumed by the Son, but not the nature in which he was the Son, as he there uses the term.

“Moses, verily, was faithful in all his house as a SERVANT, but Christ as a SON over his own house.” “This is illustrative of the position before laid down, (verse 3,) that Jesus was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. The Jewish lawgiver was only ‘as a SERVANT,’ but Christ ‘as a Son;’ but if the latter were only a Son in a metaphorical sense, the contrast would be entirely destroyed; he could only be a servant, like Moses, and the grounds of his superiority, as a Son, would be completely subverted; he must, therefore, be a Son in respect to his Divine nature. In conformity with this conclusion, it is here said that Moses was faithful IN all his house as a servant in the Jewish Church, but Christ was faithful OVER his own house; over the Christian Church as its Lord and Master.” (Holden’s Testimonies.) “Moses erat εν τῳ οἶκῳ, et pertinebat ad familium; Christus vero επὶ τοῦ οἴκου, supra familiam, ut ejus præfectus et dominius.” (Rosenmuller.) “He says that Moses was faithful as a servant — Christ as a Son, and that Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house; that is, the difference between Christ and Moses is that which is between him who creates and the thing created.” (Bishop Tomline.) To be a Son is then, in the apostle’s sense of the passage, to be a Creator; and to be a servant, a creature; a decisive proof that Christ is called Son, as God, because he is put in contradistinction to a creature.

To these may be added all those passages in which the first person is called the FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ; because as, when the persons are
distinctly spoken of, it is clear, that he who produced the human nature of Christ, in the womb of the virgin, was the third person, a fact several times emphatically and expressly declared in the New Testament; so, as far as natured relation is concerned, the first person can only have paternity with reference to the Divine nature of the Son; and we are reduced to admit, either that the terms Father and Son are wholly figurative, or that they express a natural relation, which relation, however, can only subsist between these persons in the Godhead.

“For,” as it has been very justly observed, “at the very same time that our Lord, most expressly, calls the first person of the Godhead his Father, he makes the plainest distinction that is possible between the Father, as such, and the Holy Ghost. By the personal acts which he ascribes to the Spirit of God, he distinguishes the first person, as his Father, from the third person of the Divine essence; for, he said, ‘I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.’ This Comforter, said he, ‘is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,’ John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26. Here our Lord calls the first person, most expressly and undeniably, ‘the Father,’ and the third person, as expressly ‘the Holy Ghost.’ It is most evident, and beyond even the possibility of a doubt, that he does not, by these two appellatives, mean one and the self-same Divine person; for he says, he ‘will pray the Father’ to send the Comforter to his Church, calling him ‘the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in his name.’ And he sends ‘the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, from the Father, which proceedeth from the Father.’ Therefore, the Holy Ghost is not that Father, nor the self-same subsistent as that Father, nor is the creation of the human nature the only begetting, or the Scriptural Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ; for, if this were really so, the Father would be sending forth the Father, and the Father would be proceeding from the Father, and the Son would be praying for all this. But these are absurdities too glaring to be indulged for a single moment by common sense; so that we conceive it must be as clear as the light of heaven, that the first and second persons of the Godhead are to
each other a Father and a Son in the Divine essence.” (Martin on the Eternal Sonship of Christ.)

Thus, then, from the import of these passages, and many others might be added, were it necessary, I think that it is established, that the title SON OF GOD is not an appellative of the human nature applied by metonymy to the Divine nature, as the objectors say, and that it cannot, on this hypothesis, be explained. As little truth will be found in another theory, adopted by those who admit the Divinity of our Lord, but deny his eternal filiation; — that he is called “Son of God” on account of his incarnation: that in the Old Testament he was so called in anticipation of this event, and in the New because of the fact that he was God manifest in the flesh.

As, however, all such persons acknowledge the title “Son of God” to be a descriptive, not an arbitrary title, and that it has its foundation in some real relation; so, if the incarnation of Christ be the foundation of that title, it must be used with reference either to the nature in which he was incarnated, that is to say, his manhood; or to that which incarnated itself, that is to say, his Godhead; or to the action of incarnation, that is the act of assuming our nature. If the first be allowed, then this is saying no more than that he is the Son of God, because of his miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin, which has been already refuted. If the second, then it is yielded, that, with reference to the Godhead, he is the Son, which is what we contend for; and it is allowed, that the “holy thing,” or offspring, born of Mary, is, therefore, called the Son of God, not because his humanity was formed in her womb immediately by God; but, as it is expressly stated in Luke 1:35, because “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee,” the effect of which would be the assumption of humanity by the Divine nature of him who is, in that nature, the Son; and that the holy offspring should, on that account, be called the Son of God. This would fully allow the doctrine of Christ’s Divine Sonship, and is, probably, the real import of the important passage referred to. But if the title Son is given to Christ, neither with reference to the miraculous conception of the human nature, nor yet because the higher nature united to it in one person is, eminently and peculiarly, the Son of God; then it only remains to those who refer the title to the incarnation of our Lord, to urge that it is given to him with reference to the act of incarnation, that is to say, the act of assuming our nature. Now, it is impossible to maintain this, because it has no support from Scripture. The passage in Luke 1:35, has been adduced, but that admits certainly only
of one of the two interpretations above given. Either the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the virgin, and the overshadowing of the power of the Highest, refer to the immediate production of the humanity by Divine power, so that for this reason he is called the Son of God, which might be allowed without excluding a higher and more emphatic reason for the appellation; or it expresses the assumption of human nature through the “power of the Highest,” by the Divine nature of Christ, so that “the holy offspring” should be called “the Son of God,” not because a Divine person assumed humanity, but because that Divine person was antecedently the Son of God, and is spoken of as such by the prophets. The mere act of assuming our nature gives no idea of the relationship of a Son; it is neither a paternal nor a filial act in any sense, nor expresses any such relation. It was an act of the Son alone; “forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, HE ALSO TOOK PART of the same;” and, as his own act, it could never place him in the relation of Son to the Father. It was done, it is true, in pursuance of the will of the Father, who “sent him” on this errand of mercy into the world; but it was still an act done by the Son, and could not lay the foundation of a filial title and character. This hypothesis cannot, therefore, be supported. If, then, the title “SON OF GOD,” as given to our Lord, is not used chiefly, probably not at all, with reference to his miraculous conception; if it is not an appellative of his human nature, occasionally applied to him when Divine acts and relations are spoken of, as any other human appellation, by metonymy, might be applied; if it is not given him simply because of his assuming our nature; if we find it so used, that it can be fully explained by no office with which he is invested and by no event of his mediatorial undertaking; it then follows, that it is a title characteristic of his mode of existence in the Divine essence, and of the relation which exists between the first and second persons in the ever blessed trinity. Nor is it to be regarded as a matter of indifference, whether we admit the eternal filiation of our Lord, provided we acknowledge his Divinity. It is granted, that some divines, truly decided on this point, have rejected the Divine Sonship. But in this they have gone contrary to the judgment of the Churches of Christ in all ages; and they would certainly have been ranked among heretics in the first and purest times of the primitive Church, as Bishop Bull has largely and most satisfactorily shown in his “Judgment of the Catholic Church;” nor would their professions of faith in the Divinity of Christ have secured them from the suspicion of being allies in some sort of the common enemies of the faith, nor have been sufficient to guard them from the anathemas with which the fathers so
closely guarded the sacred doctrine of Scripture respecting the person of our Lord. Such theologians have usually rejected the doctrine, too, on dangerous grounds, and have resorted to modes of interpretation, so forced and unwarrantable, that, if turned against the doctrines which they themselves hold sacred, would tend greatly to unsettle them. In these respects they have often adopted the same modes of attack, and objections of the same character, as those which Arians and Socinians have wielded against the doctrine of the trinity itself, and have thus placed themselves in suspicious company and circumstances. The very allegation that the Divine Sonship of Christ is a mere speculation, of no importance, provided his Divinity be held, is itself calculated to awaken vigilance, since the most important doctrines have sometimes been stolen away “while men have slept,” and the plea which has lulled them into security has always been, that they were not fundamental. I would not, indeed, say that the doctrine in question is fundamental. I am not indisposed to give up that point with Episcopius and Waterland, who both admitted the Divine Sonship, though I would not concede its fundamental character on the same grounds as the former, but with the caution of the latter, who had views much more correct on the question of fundamental truths. But, though the Sonship of Christ may be denied by some who hold his Divinity, they do not carry out their own views into their logical conclusions, or it would appear that their notions of the TRINITY greatly differ, in consequence, from those which are held by the believers in this doctrine; and that on a point, confessedly fundamental, they are, in some important respects, at issue with the orthodox of all ages. This alone demands their serious reflection, and ought to induce caution; but other considerations are not wanting to show that points of great moment are involved in the denial or maintenance of the doctrine in question.

1. The loose and general manner in which many passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ as a Son, must be explained by those who deny the Divine filiation of Christ, seems to sanction principles of interpretation which would be highly dangerous, or rather absolutely fatal, if generally applied to the Scriptures.

2. The denial of the Divine Sonship destroys all relation among the persons of the Godhead; for no other relation of the hypostases are mentioned in Scripture, save those which are expressed by paternity, filiation, and procession; every other relation is merely economical; and these natural relations being removed, we must then conceive of the persons in the
Godhead as perfectly independent of each other, a view which has a strong tendency to endanger the unity of the essence.  

3. It is the doctrine of the Divine paternity only which preserves the Scriptural idea that the Father is the fountain of Deity, and, as such, the first, the original, the principle. Certainly, he must have read the Scriptures to little purpose, who does not perceive that this is their constant doctrine — that “of him are all things;” that though the Son is Creator, yet that it was “by the Son” the Father made the worlds; and that, as to the Son, he himself has declared, “that he lives by the Father;” and that the Father hath given him to have life in himself, which can only refer to his Divine nature, nothing being the source of life in itself but what is Divine; a view which is put out of all doubt by the declaration, that by the gift of the Father, the Son hath life in himself, “as the Father hath life in himself.” But where the essential paternity of the Father and the correlative filiation of the Son are denied, these Scriptural representations have no foundation in fact, and are incapable of interpretation. The term Son at once preserves the Scriptural character of the Father, and sets up an everlasting barrier against the Arian heresy of inferiority of essence; for, as Son, he must be of the same essence as the Father.

4. The Scriptural doctrines of the perfect equality of the Son, so that he is truly God, equal in glory and perfection to the Father, being of the same nature; and, at the same time, the subordination of the Son to the Father, so that he should be capable of being “sent,” are only to be equally maintained by the doctrine of the Divine Sonship. — According to those who deny this doctrine, the Son might as well be the first as the second person in the Godhead; and the Father the second as well as the first. The Father might have been sent by the Son, without incongruity; or either of them by the Holy Spirit. On the same ground, the order of the solemn Christian form of blessing, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, so often introduced in the New Testament, is grounded on no reason whatever, and might be altered at pleasure. These are most violent and repulsive conclusions, which the doctrine of the Sonship avoids, and thus proves its accordance with the Holy Scriptures.

5. The love of the Father, in the gift of his Son, a doctrine so emphatically and so frequently insisted upon in Scripture, can have no place at all in the religious system of those who deny the relations of Father and Son to exist in the Godhead. This I take to be fatal to the doctrine; for it insensibly runs
into the Socinian heresy, and restricts the love of the Father, in the gift of his Son, to the gift of a man only, if the Sonship of Christ be human only; and, in that case, the permission of the sufferings of Christ was no greater a manifestation of God’s love to the world than his permitting any other good man to die for the benefit of his fellow creatures, — St. Paul, for instance, or any of the martyrs. Episcopius, though he contends against the doctrine of the Divine Sonship of our Lord being considered as fundamental, yet argues the truth of the doctrine on this very ground.

“We have thus far adduced those passages of Scripture from which we believe it evident, that something more is ascribed to Jesus Christ than can possibly belong to him under the consideration of man born of a virgin; nay, something is attributed to him which not obscurely argues, that, before he was born of the virgin, he had been, (fuisse atque extitisse,) and had existed as the Son of God the Father. The reasons derived from Scripture which seem to demonstrate this are the following: —

“First, from John 5:18, and 10:33, it is apparent, that Jesus Christ had spoken in such a manner to the Jews, that they either understood or believed that nothing less than this was spoken by Christ, that he attributed to himself something greater than could be attributed to a human being,” &c. After proceeding to elucidate these two passages at some length, Episcopius adds,

“The second reason is, it is certain the charity and love of God is amazingly elevated and extolled, by which he sent his own and only-begotten Son into the world, and thus gave him up, even to the death of the cross, to save sinners, who are the sons of God’s wrath. — (John 3:16; Romans 5:10, and 8:32; 1 John 4:9, 10.) But if the only-begotten Son of God has no signification except Jesus with regard to his humanity and his being born of a virgin, the reason is not so apparent why this love should be so amazingly enhanced, as it is when God’s only-begotten Son signifies the Son who was begotten of the Father before all ages. For that Son, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was born of her for this very purpose — that he might be delivered to death for sinners. But what pre-eminence of love is there in the fact of God delivering this, his Son, to death, whom it was his will to be born of Mary, and to be conceived of his Holy Spirit, with the intention that
he should die for sinners? But if you form a conception of the Son of God, who was begotten of his Father before (ante secula) all worlds, whom it was not compulsory to send into the world, and who was under no obligation to become man; whose dignity was greater than allowed him to be involuntarily sent or to come into flesh, much less that he should be delivered to death; nay, who, as the only-begotten and sole Son, appeared dearer to the Father than to be thrust out from him into this misery. When you have formed this conception in your mind, then will the splendour and glory of the Divine charity and love toward the human race shine forth with the greater intensity.” (Episcopii Inst. Theol.)

To the doctrine of our Lord’s eternal Sonship some objections have been made, drawn from the supposed reason and nature of things; but they admit of an easy answer. The first is, “If the Son be of the Father in any way whatsoever, there must have been a commencement of his existence.” To this objection the following is a satisfactory answer: —

“As sure, they are ready to argue, as every effect is posterior to its cause, so must Christ have been posterior to that God of whom he is the effect, or emanation, or offspring, or Son, or image, or by whatever other name you please to call him. Hence a Socinian writer says, ‘The invention of men has been long enough upon the rack to prove, in opposition to common sense and reason, that an effect may be co-eternal with the unoriginate cause that produced it. But the proposition has mystery and falsehood written in its forehead, and is only fit to be joined with transubstantiation, and other mysteries of the same nature.’ If these terms are properly taken, it will be found, that though every effect may be said to be posterior to its cause, it is merely in the order of nature, and not of time; and, in point of fact, every effect, properly so called, is co-existent with its cause, and must, of necessity, exactly answer to it, both in magnitude and duration; so that an actually infinite and eternal cause implies an actually infinite and eternal effect.

“Many seem to imagine, as the words, cause and effect, must be placed one after the other, and the thing intended by the latter is different from what is meant by the former, that, therefore, a cause must precede its effect, at least some very short time. But they ought to consider, that if any thing be a cause, it is a cause. It
cannot be a cause and the cause of nothing; no, not for the least conceivable space of time. Whatever effect it may produce hereafter, it is not the actual cause of it till it is actually in being; nor can it be in the very nature of things.

“Now, suppose I should call the Son of God the infinite and eternal effect of an infinite and eternal cause; however the terms of the proposition might be cavilled with, and however sophistry avail itself of the imperfection of human language and the ambiguity of words to puzzle the subject, in the sense in which I take the terms, cause and effect, the proposition is true, and cannot be successfully controverted. And though I would by no means affect such language, yet I should be justified in its use by the early orthodox writers of the Church, both Greek and Latin, who do not hesitate to call the Father the cause of the Son; though the Latins generally preferred using the term principium, which, in such a connection, is of the same import as cause. Nor can we consider the following words of our blessed Redeemer in any other view: ‘I live by the Father,’ John 6:57, and ‘As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,’ John 5:26. Such language can never be understood of the mere humanity of Christ. When the early ecclesiastical writers used the terms in question, it was not with the most distant intention of intimating any inferiority of nature in the Son. And when they called him ‘God of God,’ they never meant to represent him as a creature. Therefore, it was added to the expression, in the Nicene Creed, ‘Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance,’ or nature, ‘with the Father and the Maker of all things.’ They neither confound the persons, nor divide the substance of the Godhead. And we shall soon see that, in this, they followed the obvious and undoubted meaning of the word of God. They made use of the very best terms they could find in human language, to explain the truth of God, in a most important article of faith, and to defend it against the insidious attacks of heresy. And if those who affect to despise them would study their writings with candour, they would find that, though they were men, and as such liable to err, they were great men, and men who thought as well as wrote; who thought deeply on the things of God, and did not speak at random.
“Some persons think they reduce the doctrine, in question, to an absurdity, by saying, ‘If the Father generate the Son, he must either be always generating him, or an instant must be supposed when his generation was completed. On the former supposition, the Son is and must ever remain imperfect, and, in fact, ungenerated; on the latter, we must allow that he cannot be eternal.’ No one can talk in this manner who has not first confounded time with eternity, the creature with the Creator; beings whose existence, and modes, and relations are swallowed up and lost in the Divine eternity and immensity with him who is, in all essential respects, eternal and infinite. The orthodox maintain that the Son of God is what he is from everlasting, as well as the Father. His generation no more took place in any imaginary, point of eternity than it took place in time. Indeed all duration, which is commenced, is time, and time it must ever remain. Though it may never end, it can never be actual eternity; nor can any being, whose existence has commenced, ever become actually eternal. The thing implies a contradiction in terms.

“The nature of God is perfect from everlasting; and the generation of the Son of God was no voluntary and successive act of God, but something essential to the Godhead, and therefore natural and eternal. We may illustrate this great subject, though we can never fully comprehend it. All natural agents, as we call them, act or operate uniformly and necessarily. If they should change their action or operation, we should immediately infer a change of their nature. For their existence, in a certain state, implies that action or operation. They act or operate by, what we call, a necessity of nature, or, as any plain uneducated man would express himself, it is their nature so to do. Thus the fountain flows. Thus the sun shines. Thus the mirror reflects whatever is before it. No sooner did the fountain exist, in its natural state, than it flowed. No sooner did the sun exist, in its natural state, than it shone. No sooner did the mirror exist, in its natural state, than it reflected the forms placed before it. These actions or operations are all successive, and are measured by time, because the things from whence they result exist in time, and their existence is necessarily successive. But had the fountain existed from everlasting, in its natural state, from everlasting it must have flowed. Had the sun so existed, so it must have shone. Had the mirror so existed, so it must have reflected
whatever was before it. The Son of God is no voluntary effect of the Father’s power and wisdom, like the created universe, which once did not exist, and might never have existed, and must, necessarily, be ever confined within the bounds of time and space: he is the natural and necessary, and therefore the eternal and infinite birth of the Divine fecundity, the boundless overflow of the eternal fountain of all existence and perfection, the infinite splendour of the eternal sun, the unspotted mirror and complete and adequate image, in whom may be seen all the fulness of the Godhead. This places the orthodox faith at an equal distance from the Sabellian and Arian heresies, and will ever make that distance absolutely infinite. This is no figure of speech, but a most sober truth.” (France’s Three Discourses on the Person of Christ.)

In the eloquent and forcible passage just quoted, the opposition between a necessary and a voluntary effect is to be understood of arbitrary will; for, otherwise, the ancients scrupled not to say, that the generation of the Son was with the will of the Father; some, that he could not but eternally will it, as being eternally good; others, that, since the will of God is God himself; as much as the wisdom of God is God himself, whatever is the fruit and product of God, is the fruit and product of his will, wisdom, &c; and so the Son, being the perfect image of the Father, is substance of substance, wisdom of wisdom, will of will, as he is light of light, and God of God, which is St. Austin’s doctrine. That the generation of the Son may be by necessity of nature, without excluding the concurrence or approbation of the will, in the sense of consent, approbation, and acquiescence, is shown by Dr. Waterland, in his “Defence of Queries,” and to that the reader who is curious in such distinctions is referred. They are distinctions, however, the subtlety of which will often be differently apprehended by different minds, and they are, therefore, scarcely allowable, except when used defensively, and to silence an opposer who resorts to subtleties for the propagation of error. The sure rock is the testimony of God, which admits of no other consistent interpretation than that above given. This being established, the incomprehensible and mysterious considerations, connected with the doctrine, must be left among those deep things of God which, in the present state at least, we are not able to search and fathom. For this reason, the attempts which have been made to indicate, though faintly, the manner of the generation of the Son are not to be commended. Some of the Platonizing fathers taught, that the existence
of the Son flowed necessarily from the Divine intellect exerted on itself. The schoolmen agitated the question, whether the Divine generation was effected by intellect or by will. The Father begetting a Son, the exact counterpart and equal of himself, by contemplating and exerting his intelligence upon himself, is the view advocated by some divines, both of the Romish and Protestant communions. Analogies have also been framed between the generation of the Son by the Father and the mind’s generation of a conception of itself in thought. Some of these speculations are almost obsolete; others continue to this day. It ought, however, to be observed, that they are wholly unconnected with the fact, as it is stated, authoritatively and doctrinally stated, in Scripture. These are atmospheric halos about the sun of revelation, which, in truth, are the product of a lower region, though they may seem to surround the orb itself. Of these notions Zanchius has well observed, “As we have no proof of these from the word of God, we must reject them as rash and vain, that is, if the thing be positively asserted so to be.” Indeed, we may ask, with the prophet, “Who shall disclose his generation?” On this subject, Cyril of Jerusalem wisely says, “Believe, indeed, that God has a Son; but to know how this is possible be not curious. For if thou searchest, thou shalt not find. Therefore, elevate not thyself, (in the attempt,) lest thou fall. Be careful to understand those things alone which are delivered to thee as commands. First, declare to me who is the Father, and then thou wilt acknowledge the Son. But if thou canst not ascertain (cognoscere) the nature of the Father, display no curiosity about knowing the mode of the Son. With regard to thyself, it is sufficient for all the purposes of godliness to know, that God has one only Son.”

Proved then, as I think it irrefragably is, by Scripture testimony that the title “SON OF GOD” contains a revelation of the Divinity of our Lord, as a person of the same nature and essence with the Father, we may proceed to another of the most emphatic and celebrated appellations of our blessed Saviour — “THE WORD.”

Under this title our Saviour is abruptly announced in the introduction to St. John’s Gospel, for that he is intended cannot be a matter of doubt. In the 5th verse, “the Word” is called “the Light.” In verse 7, John Baptist is said to bear witness of that “Light.” Again, in verse 14, the Word is said to have been made flesh, and to have dwelt among us; and, in verse 15, that “John bears witness of him.” “The Word” and “the Light,” to whom John
bears witness, are names, therefore, of the same Being; and that Being is, in verse 17, declared to be Jesus Christ.

The manner in which St. John commences his Gospel is strikingly different from the introductions to the histories of Christ by the other evangelists; and no less striking and peculiar is the title under which he announces him — “THE WORD.” It has, therefore, been a subject of much inquiry and discussion, from whence this evangelist drew the use of this appellation, and what reasons led him, as though intending to solicit particular attention, to place it at the very head of his Gospel. That it was for the purpose of establishing an express opinion, as to the personal character of him whom it is used to designate, is made more than probable from the predominant character of the whole Gospel, which is more copiously doctrinal, and contains a record more full of what Jesus “said,” as well as “did,” than the others.

As to the source from which the term “LOGOS” was drawn by the apostles, some have held it to be taken from the Jewish Scriptures; others, from the Chaldee paraphrases; others from Philo and the Hellenizing Jews. The most natural conclusion certainly appears to be, that, as St. John was a plain, “unlearned” man, chiefly conversant in the Holy Scriptures, he derived this term from the sacred books of his own nation, in which the Hebrew phrase Dabar Jehovah, the Word of Jehovah, frequently occurs in passages which must be understood to speak of a personal Word, and which phrase is rendered λόγος κυρίου by the Septuagint interpreters. Certainly, there is not the least evidence in his writings, or in his traditional history, that he ever acquainted himself with Philo or with Plato; and none, therefore, that he borrowed the term from them, or used it in any sense approaching to or suggested by these refinements: — In the writings of St. Paul there are allusions to poets and philosophers; in those of St. John, none. We have already seen that the Hebrew Scriptures contain frequent intimations of a distinction of persons in the Godhead: that one of these Divine persons is called JEHOVAH; and though manifestly represented as existing distinct from the Father, is yet arrayed with attributes of Divinity, and was acknowledged by the ancient Jews to be, in the highest sense, “their God,” the God with whom, through all their history, they chiefly “had to do.” This Divine person we have already proved to have been spoken of by the prophets as the future Christ; we have shown, too, that the evangelists and apostles represent Jesus as that Divine person of the prophets; and, if in the writings of the Old Testament, he is also called “THE WORD,” the
application of this term to our Lord is naturally accounted for. It will then appear to be a **theological**, not a **philosophic** appellation, and one which, previously even to the time of the apostle, had been stamped with the authority of inspiration. It is not, indeed, frequently used in the Old Testament, which may account for its not being adopted as a prominent title of Christ by the other evangelists and apostles; but that, notwithstanding this infrequency, it is thus used by St. John has a sufficient reason, which shall be presently adduced.

In Genesis 15:1, we are told, that “the **WORD** of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” Here the **WORD** of the Lord is the speaker — “the Word came — saying:” a mere word may be spoken or said; but a personal Word only can say, “I am thy shield.” The pronoun *I* refers to the whole phrase, “the Word of Jehovah;” and if a **personal Word** be not understood, no person at all is mentioned by whom this message is conveyed, and whom Abram, in reply, invokes as “LORD GOD.” The same construction is seen in Psalm 18:30, “The **WORD** of the Lord is tried; *he* is a buckler to all that trust in him.” Here the pronouns refer to “THE **WORD** of the Lord,” in the first clause; nor is there any thing in the context to lead us to consider the Word mentioned to be a **grammatical word**, a verbal communication of the will of another, in opposition to a **personal Word**. This passage is, indeed, less capable of being explained, on the supposition of an ellipsis, than that in Genesis. In this personal sense, also, 1 Samuel 3:21, can only be naturally interpreted. “And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed (showed) himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by THE **WORD** OF THE LORD.” Here it is first declared, that the Lord appeared; then follows the manner of his appearance, or manifestation, “by the **WORD** of the Lord.” In what manner could he appear, except by his personal Word in vision? Again, a comparison of two passages will make it probable, that the **personal WORD** is intended in some passages, and was so understood by the ancient Jews, where there are no marked circumstances of construction to call our attention to it. In 2 Samuel 7:21, we find, “For thy **WORD**’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these things.” But in the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 17:19, it is read, “O Lord, for thy **SERVANT**’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness.” **Servant** is unquestionably an Old Testament appellation of Messiah; and not a few passages might be adduced, where the phrases “for thy **servant**’s sake,”
“for thy name’s sake,” indicate a mediatorial character vested in some exalted and Divine personage. The comparison of these two passages, however, is sufficient to show, that a personal character is given to the Word mentioned in the former.

All that has been said by opposing criticism, upon these and a few other passages in which the phrase occurs, amounts to no more than that they may be otherwise interpreted, by considering them as elliptical expressions. The sense above given is, however, the natural and obvious one; and if it also accounts better for the frequent use of the terms” Word,” “Word of the Lord,” among the ancient Jewish writers, this is an additional reason why it should be preferred. The Targumists use it with great frequency; and should we even suppose Philo and the Hellenistic Jews to have adopted the term Logos from Plato and the Greeks, yet the favouritism of that term, so to speak, and the higher attributes of glory and Divinity with which they invest their Logos, is best accounted for by the correspondence of this term with one which they had found before, not only among their own interpreters, but in the sacred writings themselves.

Reference has been made to the Targums, and they are in farther evidence of the theological origin of this appellation. The Targums, or Chaldee paraphrases of the Old Testament, were composed for the use of the common people among the Jews, who, after their return from captivity, did not understand the original Hebrew. They were read in the synagogues every Sabbath day, and with the phrases they contain all Jews would, of course, be familiar. Now, in such of these paraphrases as are extant, so frequently does the phrase “the Word of Jehovah” occur, that in almost every place where Jehovah is mentioned in the Old Testament as holding any intercourse with men, this circumlocution is used. “The Lord created man in his own image,” is, in the Jerusalem Targum, “The Word of Jehovah created man.” “Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God,” is paraphrased, “they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God.” “The Lord thy God, he it is that goeth before thee,” is in the Targum, “Jehovah thy God, his Word goeth before thee.” The Targumists read, for “I am thy shield,” Genesis 15:1, “My Word is thy shield;” for “Israel shall be saved in the Lord,” Isaiah 45:17, “by the Word of the Lord;” for “I am with thee,” Jeremiah 1:8, “My Word is with thee;” and in Psalm 110:1, instead of “the Lord said unto my Lord,” they read, “the Lord said unto his Word;” and so in a great number of places.
The Socinian answer is, that this is an idiom of the Chaldee language, and that “the word of a person is merely synonymous to himself.” It must certainly be allowed that the *Memra* of the Chaldee paraphrasts has not in every case a personal sense, nor, indeed, has Logos, or Word by which it may be translated; but, as the latter is capable of being used in a personal sense, so is the former; and, if passages can be found in the Targums where it is evident that it is used personally and as distinct from God the Father, and cannot, without absurdity, be supposed to be used otherwise, the objection is fully invalidated. This has, I think, been very satisfactorily proved. So in one of the above instances, “They heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God walking in the garden.” Here *walking* is undoubtedly the attribute of a *person*, and not of a mere voice; and that the *person* referred to is not the Father, appears from the author, *Tzeror Hammor*, who makes this observation on the place, “Before they sinned, they saw the glory of the blessed God speaking with *him*, that is, with God; but after their sin they only heard the voice walking.” A trifling remark; but sufficient to show that the Jewish expositors considered the voice as a distinct person from God.

The words of Elijah, *1 Kings* 18:24, “*I will call on the name of the Lord,*** &c, are thus paraphrased by Jonathan: “I will pray in the name of the Lord, and he shall send his Word.” The paraphrast could not refer to any message from God; for it was not an answer by word, but by fire, that Elijah expected. It has never been pretended, either by Socinians, or by the orthodox, that God the Father is said to be sent. If there be but one Divine person, by whom is he sent?

We learn from *Genesis* 16:7, &c, that “the Angel of the Lord found Hagar by a fountain of water;” that he said, “*I will multiply thy seed exceedingly,”* and that “*she called the name of JEHOVAH that spake to her, Thou God seest me.*” It is evident that Hagar considered the person who addressed her as Divine. Philo asserts that it was the Word who appeared to her. Jonathan gives the same view. “She confessed before the Lord JEHOVAH, whose Word had spoken to her.” With this the Jerusalem Targum agrees: “She confessed and prayed to the Word of the Lord who had appeared to her.” It is in vain to say, in the Socinian sense, that God himself is here meant. For the paraphrasts must have known, from the text, that the person spoken of is called an angel. If the Father be meant, how is he called an angel?
“They describe the Word as a Mediator. It is said, Deuteronomy 4:7, ‘For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?’ Jonathan gives the following paraphrase of the passage: ‘God is near in the name of the Word of the Lord.’ Again, we find this paraphrase on Hosea 4:9, ‘God will receive the prayer of Israel by his Word, and have mercy upon them, and will make them by his Word like a beautiful fig tree.’ And on Jeremiah 29:14, ‘I will be sought by you in my Word, and I will be inquired of through you by my Word.’ According to the Jerusalem Targum on Genesis 21:33, Abraham at Beersheba ‘prayed in the name of the Word of the Lord, the God of the world.’ But it is inconceivable that the paraphrasts did not here mean to describe the Word as a Mediator; especially as we know that the ancient Jews, when supplicating God, entreated that he would ‘look on the face of his anointed.’

“They speak of *atonement* as made by this *Memra*. On Deuteronomy 32:43, Jonathan observes, ‘God will atone by his Word for his land, and for his people, even a people saved by the Word of the Lord.’

“They describe the *Memra* as a *Redeemer*, and sometimes as the *Messiah*. These words, Genesis 49:18, ‘I have waited for thy salvation,’ are thus paraphrased in the Jerusalem Targum: ‘Our father Jacob said thus, My soul expects not the redemption of Gideon the son of Joash, which is a temporary salvation; nor the redemption of Samson, which is a transitory salvation; but the redemption which thou didst promise should come through thy *Memra* to thy people. This salvation my soul waits for.’ In the blessing of Judah (ver. 10-12) particular mention is made of the King Messiah. It is a striking proof that by the *Memra* they meant him who was to appear as the Messiah, that in the Targum of Jonathan, verse 18 is thus rendered: ‘Our father Jacob said, I do not expect the deliverance of Gideon the son of Joash, which is a temporal salvation; nor that of Samson the son of Manoah, which is a transient salvation. But I expect the redemption of the *Messiah*, the Son of David, who shall come to gather to himself the children of Israel.’ It is evident that the one paraphrast has copied from the other; and as the one puts *Messiah* for *Memra*, it cannot well be
denied that they had considered both terms as denoting the same person.

“They describe this Memra as only begotten, and, in this character, as the Creator. That remarkable verse, Genesis 3:22, ‘The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us,’ is paraphrased in a very singular manner: ‘The Word of the Lord said, Behold, Adam whom I have created, is the only begotten in the world, as I am the only begotten in the highest heavens.’ The language here ascribed to the Memra, with what reference to the text avails not in the present inquiry, is applicable to a person only; and it will not be pretended by our opponents, that it can apply to the Father. The person intended was believed to be the only-begotten Word.’ How nearly does this language approach to that of inspiration! ‘In the beginning was the Word. All things were made by him. We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,’ John 1:1, 3.

“If, therefore, the paraphrasts describe the Memra as one sent, as a Mediator, as one by whom atonement is made, as a Redeemer and the Messiah, and as only begotten; it is undeniable that they do not mean God the Father. If, notwithstanding, they ascribe personal and Divine characters to the Word, they must mean a distinct person in the Divine essence.” (Jamieson’s Vindication.)

The same personality and the same distinction we find in the passage, ”God came to Abimelech;” in the Targum, “his Word came from the face of God to Abimelech.” Equally express is the personal distinction in Psalm 110:1, “Jehovah said unto his Word, Sit thou at my right hand.” Here the Word cannot be the Jehovah that speaks, and a person only could sit at his right hand. This passage, too, proves that the ancient Jews applied the term Word to the Messiah; for, as we may learn from our Lord’s conversation with the Pharisees, it was a received opinion that this passage was spoken of the Messiah.

Now, as some of the Targums still extant are older than the Christian era, and contain the interpretations of preceding paraphrases now lost; and as there is so constant an agreement among them in the use of this phrase, we can be at no loss to discover the source whence St. John derived the appellative Logos. He had found it in the Hebrew Scriptures, and he had heard it, in the Chaldee paraphrases, read in the synagogues, by which it
was made familiar to every Jew. Dr. P. Smith, in his Scripture Testimony, hesitates as to the personal sense of the *Memra* of the Chaldean paraphrasts, and inclines to consider it as used in the sense of a reciprocal pronoun, denoting, in its usual application to the Divine Being, *God his very self*. On this supposition it is, however, impossible to interpret some of the passages above given. Its primary import, he says, “is that, whatever it may be, which is the *medium* of communicating the mind and intentions of one person to another.” The Jews of the same age, or a little after, and Philo, he admits, used the term *Word* with a personal reference, for such “an *extension* and *reference* of the term would flow from the primary signification, a *medium of rational communication;*” but if Philo and those Jews thus *extended* the primary meaning of this word, why might not the Chaldee paraphrasts extend it before them? They did not invent the term, and affix to it its primary meaning. They found it in the Chaldee tongue, as we find *Word* in English; and that they sometimes use it in its primary sense is no proof at all that they did not use it also in a personal or extended one. That a second Jehovah is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, as the *medium of communication* with men, cannot be denied, and *Memra* would, therefore, be, according to this explanation of its primary meaning, a most fit term to express his *person* and office. It is also a strong evidence in favour of the personal sense of this term, that “Maimonides himself, anxious as he was to obscure all those passages of Scripture that imply a Divine plurality, and to conceal every evidence of the Jews having ever held this doctrine, had not boldness enough to assert, that with the Chaldee interpreters, the *Word of God* was merely ‘synonymous to *God*’ himself. He knew that the Targums afforded such unquestionable evidence of the introduction of a distinct person under this designation, that every one of his countrymen, who was in the least acquainted with them, would give him the lie. Therefore he finds himself reduced to the miserable shift of pretending that, when the paraphrasts speak of the Word of the Lord, and use this expression where the name of God occurs in the original, they mean to describe a created angel.” 771

“Upon the whole, then,” says Dr. Laurence, “how are we to determine the sense of this singular phrase? Although we consider it neither as a reciprocal, nor as intended to designate the second person in the trinity, who, becoming incarnate, lived and died for us, (of which, perhaps, the Targumists themselves might have had, at best, but indistinct or even incorrect ideas,) yet may we, most
probably, regard it, in its general use, as indicative of a Divine person. That it properly means the *Word of the Lord*, or his will declared by a verbal communication, and that it is sometimes literally so taken, cannot be denied, but it seems impossible to consult the numerous passages, where personal characteristics are attributed to it, and to conceive that it does not usually point out a real person. Whether the Targumist contemplated this hypostatical word as a true *subsistence* in the Divine nature, or as a distinct emanation of Deity, it may be useless to inquire, because we are deficient in data adequate to a complete decision of the question.” (*Dissertation.*)

Philo and the philosophic Jews may, therefore, be well spared in the inquiry as to the source from whence St. John derives the appellative Logos. Whether the Logos of Philo be a personified attribute or a person has been much disputed, but is of little consequence on this point. It may, however, be observed, that as the evidence predominates in favour of the *personality*, of the Logos of Philo, in numerous passages of his writings, this will also show, that not only the Jewish writers, who composed the paraphrases, and the common people among the Jews, in consequence of the Targums being read in the synagogues but also those learned men who addicted themselves to the study of the Greek philosophy, were familiar with the idea of a Logos as a person distinct from God, yet invested with Divine attributes and performing Divine works. The question as to Philo is not whether he sometimes speaks of a personified *Logos*, that is, of an attribute or conception of God, arrayed in poetic, personal properties: this is granted; but whether he also speaks of a Logos, who is a real and a Divine person. Now, when he calls this Logos God, a second God, the Son of God, the first begotten, the beloved Son; speaks of him as superior to angels, as the Creator of the world, as seeing all things, as the Governor and Sustainer, as a Messenger, as the Shepherd of the flock; of men being freed from their sins by him, as the true High Priest, as a Mediator, and in other similar and personal terms, which may all be verified by consulting his writings, or the selections given in Kidd’s Demonstration, Allix’s Judgment, Bryant’s Philo, Laurence’s Dissertation, and other works; he cannot, by any possibility of construction, be supposed to personify the mere attribute of the reason or wisdom of God, or any conception and operation of the Divine intellect. This may be the only Logos of Plato; for, though the Christianized Platonists, of a lower period, used this term in a
personal sense, there is but slender evidence to conclude that Plato used it as the name of a person distinct from God. Certain it is, that the Logos of Philo is arrayed in personal characters which are not found in the writings of Plato; a fact which will with great difficulty be accounted for, upon the supposition that the Jewish philosopher borrowed his notions from the Greek. Philo says, that “the Father has bestowed upon this Prince of angels his most ancient Logos, that he should stand as a Mediator to judge between the creature and the Creator. He, therefore, intercedes with him, who is immortal, in behalf of mortals; and, on the other hand, he acts the part of an ambassador, being sent from the supreme King to his subjects. And this gift he so willingly accepts, as to glory in it, saying, I have stood between God and you, being neither unbegotten as God, nor begotten like mortals, but one in the middle, between two extremes, acting the part of a hostage with both; with the Creator, as a pledge that he will never be provoked to destroy or desert the world, so as to suffer it to run into confusion; and, with creatures, to give them this certain hope, that God, being reconciled, will never cease to take care of his own workmanship. For I proclaim peace to the creation from that God who removes war and introduces and preserves peace for ever.” Now, when he expresses himself in this manner, who can reconcile this to a mere personification from the Greek philosophy? or suppose that Philo obtained from that ideas so evangelical, that, were there not good evidence that he was not acquainted with Christianity, we should rather conceive of him as of “a scribe,” so far as this passage goes. “well instructed” in the kingdom of heaven? Even Dr. Priestley acknowledges that Philo “made a much more substantial personification of the Logos than any of the proper Platonists had done.” (Early Opinions.) Substantial, indeed, it is; for, although, in some passages in the vigour of his discursive and allegorizing genius, “he enshrines his Logos behind such a veil of fancy, that we can scarcely discern his person in the sanctuary,” yet in the above, and many other passages, “he draws aside the veil and shows him to us in his full proportions.” (Whitaker’s Origin of Arianism.) For what conceivable attribute of Deity, or ideal thing whatever, could any writer, allegorist as he might be, not insanely raving, call “Prince of angels,” “Mediator,” “Intercessor,” “neither unbegotten as God, nor begotten like mortals,” “an Ambassador” sent from God to men, interposing between an offended God to restrain his anger and to give “peace” to the world? Who could speak of these attributes or idealities in language anticipatory of an incarnation, as “a man of God, immortal and incorruptible,” as “the man after the image of God,” or ascribe to him a
name “unspeakable and incomprehensible,” and affirm that he is a “fabricator,” or Creator, and “Divine, who will lie up close to the Father,” exactly where St. John places him “in the very bosom of the Father.” For, however mysteriously Philo speaks in other passages, he says nothing to contradict these, and they must be taken as they are. They express a real personality, and they show, at the same time, that they could not be borrowed from Plato. It is not necessary to enter into the question, whether that philosopher ascribed a real personality to his Logos or not. If he gives him a real and Divine personality, then the inference will be, that he derived his notion from the Jews, or from ancient patriarchal tradition; and it would be most natural for Philo, finding a personal and Divine Logos in Plato, to enlarge the scanty conceptions of the philosopher from the theology of his own country. On the other hand, if we suppose the Logos of Plato to be a mere personification, either Philo must have improved it into a real person, consistent with his own religion; or, sometimes philosophizing on a mere personified Logos, and sometimes introducing the personal Logos of his own nation and native schools, we have the key to all those passages which would appear inconsistent with each other, if interpreted only of one and the same subject, and if he were regarded as speaking exclusively either of a personified or a real Logos, “From all the circumstances it seems to be the most reasonable conclusion, that the leading acceptation of the Memra or Logos among the Jews of this middle age was to designate an intermediate agent; that, in the sense of a Mediator, between God and man, it became a recognized appellation of the Messiah; that the personal doctrine of the WORD was the one generally received, and that the conceptual notion which Philo interweaves with the other was purely his own invention, the result of his theological philosophy.” (Dr. Smith’s Person of Christ.)

As the doctrine of a personal Logos was not derived by Philo from Platonism, so his own writings, as decidedly as the reason of the case itself, will show, that the source from which he did derive it was the Scriptures and the Chaldee paraphrases, or, in other words, the established theology of his nation. Philo had not suffered the doctrine of the Hebrew Scriptures, of a Jehovah acting in the name and under the commission of another Jehovah as well as his own, to go unnoticed. The passages of the Old Testament, in which a personal Word, the Dabar Jehovah, occurs, had not been overlooked, nor the more frequent use of an equivalent phrase in the Memra of the paraphrasts. “There is a time,” he observes, “when he (the
holy Logos) inquires of some, *as of Adam,* Where art thou?” exactly corresponding with the oldest Targumists, “THE WORD of the Lord called to Adam.” Again, with reference to Abraham and Lot, — “of whom (the Logos) it is said the sun came out upon the earth, and Lot entered into Sijor, and the Lord rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. For the Logos of God, when he comes out to our earthly system, assists and helps those who are related to virtue,” &c. So by Onkelos and Jonathan, the appearances of God to Abram are said to be appearances of the Word, and twice in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, “the Word of the Lord” is said to come to Abraham. The Being who appeared to Hagar, of whom she said, “Thou God seest me,” Philo also calls the Logos. The Jehovah who stood above the ladder of Jacob and said, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father,” has the same appellation, and he who spake to Moses from the bush. It is thus that Philo accords with the most ancient of the interpreters of his nation in giving the title Memra, Logos, or Word, to the ostensible Deity of the Jewish dispensation, in which, too, they were authorized by the use of the same term, in the same application, by the sacred writers themselves. Why, then, resort to Plato, when the source of the Logos of Philo is so plainly indicated? and why suppose St. John to have borrowed from Philo, when the Logos was an established form of theological speech, and when the sources from which Philo derived it, the Scriptures and the paraphrases, were as accessible to the apostle as to the philosophical Jew of Alexandria?

As Philo mingled Platonic speculations with his discourses on the real Logos of his national faith, without, however, giving up personality and Divinity; so the Jews of his own age mingled various crude and darkening comments with the same ancient faith drawn from the Scriptures, and transmitted with the purer parts of their tradition. The paraphrases and writings of Philo remain, however, a striking monument of the existence of opinions as to a distinction of persons in the Godhead, and the Divine character of a Mediator and interposing agent between God and man, as indicated in their Scriptures, and preserved by their theologians.

Celebrated as this title of the Logos was in the Jewish theology, it is not, however, the appellation by which the Spirit of inspiration has chosen that our Saviour should be principally designated. It occurs but a very few times, and principally and emphatically in the introduction to St. John’s Gospel. A cogent reason can be given why this apostle adopts it, and we are not without a *probable* reason why, in the New Testament, the title
SON OF GOD should have been preferred, which is, likewise, a frequent title of the Logos in the writings also of Philo.

“Originating from the *spiritual* principle of connection, between the first and the second Being in the Godhead; marking this, by a *spiritual* idea of connection; and considering it to be as close and as necessary as the Word is to the energetic *mind* of God, which cannot bury its intellectual energies in silence, but must put them forth in speech; it is too *spiritual* in itself to be addressed to the faith of the multitude. If with so full a reference to our *bodily* ideas, and so positive *filiation* of the second Being to the first, we have seen the grossness of Arian criticism, endeavouring to resolve the doctrine into the mere dust of a figure; how much more ready would it have been to do so, if we had only such a *spiritual* denomination as this for the second? This would certainly have been considered by it as too unsubstantial for distinct personality, and therefore too evanescent for equal Divinity.” (Whitaker’s *Origin of Arianism.*)

Of the reason of its occasional use by St. John, a satisfactory account may also be given. The following is a clear abridgment of the ampler discussions on this subject which have employed many learned writers.

“Not long after the writings of Philo were published, there arose the Gnostics, a sect, or rather a multitude of sects, who having learnt in the same Alexandrian school to blend the principles of oriental philosophy with the doctrine of Plato, formed a system most repugnant to the simplicity of Christian faith. It is this system which Paul so often attacks under the name of ‘false philosophy, strife of words, endless genealogies, science, falsely so called.’ The foundation of the Gnostic system was the intrinsic and incorrigible depravity of matter. Upon this principle they made a total separation between the spiritual and the material world. Accounting it impossible to educe out of matter any thing which was good, they held that the Supreme Being, who presided over the innumerable spirits that were emanations from himself, did not make this earth, but that a spirit of an inferior nature, very far removed in character as well as in rank from the Supreme Being, formed matter into that order which constitutes the world, and gave life to the different creatures that inhabit the earth. They held that this inferior spirit
was the ruler of the creatures whom he had made, and they considered men, whose souls he imprisoned in earthly tabernacles, as experiencing under his dominion the misery which necessarily arose from their connection with matter, and as estranged from the knowledge of the true God. Most of the later sects of the Gnostics rejected every part of the Jewish law, because the books of Moses gave a view of the creation inconsistent with their system. But some of the earlier sects, consisting of Alexandrian Jews, incorporated a respect for the law with the principles of their system. They considered the Old Testament dispensation as granted by the Demiurgus, the maker and ruler of the world, who was incapable from his want of power, of delivering those who received it from the thraldom of matter: and they looked for a more glorious messenger, whom the compassion of the Supreme Being was to send for the purpose of emancipating the human race. Those Gnostics who embraced Christianity, regarded the Christ as this Messenger, an exalted Æon, who, being in some manner united to the man Jesus, put an end to the dominion of the Demiurgus, and restored the souls of men to communion with God. It was natural for the Christian Gnostics who had received a Jewish education to follow the steps of Philo, and the general sense of their countrymen, in giving the name Logos to the Demiurgus. And as Christos was understood from the beginning of our Lord’s ministry to be the Greek word equivalent to the Jewish name Messiah, there came to be, in their system, a direct opposition between Christos and Logos. The Logos was the maker of the world: Christos was the Æon sent to destroy the tyranny of the Logos.

“One of the first teachers of this system was Cerinthus. We have not any particular account of all the branches of his system; and it is possible that we may ascribe to him some of those tenets by which later sects of Gnostics were discriminated. But we have authority for saying that the general principle of the Gnostic scheme was openly taught by Cerinthus before the publication of the Gospel of John. The authority is that of Irenæus, a bishop who lived in the second century, who in his youth had heard Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John, and who retained the discourses of Polycarp in his memory till his death. There are yet extant of the works of Irenæus, five books which he wrote against heresies, one of the
most authentic and valuable monuments of theological erudition. In one place of that work he says, that Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the supreme God, but by a certain power very separate and far removed from the Sovereign of the universe, and ignorant of his nature. (Iren. contra Haer. lib. iii, cap. 11:1.) In another place he says, that John the apostle wished, by his Gospel, to extirpate the error which had been spread among men by Cerinthus; (Iren. contra Haer. lib. i, 26:1;) and Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, says that John wrote his Gospel at the desire of the bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and other heretics, and chiefly against the doctrines of the Ebionites, then springing up, who said, that Christ did not exist before he was born of Mary. (Jerom. De Vit. Illust. cap. 9.)

“From the laying these accounts together, it appears to have been the tradition of the Christian Church, that John, who lived to a great age, and who resided at Ephesus, in proconsular Asia, was moved by the growth of the Gnostic heresies, and by the solicitations of the Christian teachers, to bear his testimony to the truth in writing, and particularly to recollect those discourses and actions of our Lord, which might furnish the clearest refutation of the persons who denied his pre-existence. This tradition is a key to a great part of his Gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, had given a detail of those actions of Jesus which are the evidences of his Divine mission; of those events in his life upon earth which are most interesting to the human race; and of those moral discourses in which the wisdom, the grace, and the sanctity of the Teacher, shine with united lustre. Their whole narration implies that Jesus was more than man. But as it is distinguished by a beautiful simplicity, which adds very much to their credit as historians, they have not, with the exception of a few incidental expressions, formally stated the conclusion that Jesus was more than man, but have left the Christian world to draw it for themselves from the facts narrated, or to receive it by the teaching and the writings of the apostles. John, who was preserved by God to see this conclusion, which had been drawn by the great body of Christians, and had been established in the epistles, denied by different heretics, brings forward, in the form of a history of Jesus, a view of his exalted character, and draws our attention particularly to the truth
of that which had been denied. When you come to analyze the Gospel of John, you will find that the first eighteen verses contain the positions laid down by the apostle, in order to meet the errors of Cerinthus; that these positions, which are merely affirmed in the introduction, are proved in the progress of the Gospel, by the testimony of John the Baptist, and by the words and the actions of our Lord; and that after the proof is concluded by the declaration of Thomas, who, upon being convinced that Jesus had risen, said to him, ‘My Lord, and my God,’ John sums up the amount of his Gospel in these few words: ‘These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,’ i.e. that Jesus and the Christ are not distinct persons, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The apostle does not condescend to mention the name of Cerinthus, because that would have preserved, as long as the world lasts, the memory of a name which might otherwise be forgotten. But although there is dignity and propriety in omitting the mention of his name, it was necessary, in laying down the positions that were to meet his errors, to adopt some of his words, because the Christians of those days would not so readily have applied the doctrine of the apostle to the refutation of those heresies which Cerinthus was spreading among them, if they had not found in the exposition of that doctrine some of the terms in which the heresy was delivered: and as the chief of these terms, Logos, which Cerinthus applied to an inferior spirit, was equivalent to a phrase in common use among the Jews, ‘the Word of Jehovah,’ and was probably borrowed from thence, John by his use of Logos, rescues it from the degraded use of Cerinthus, and restores it to a sense corresponding to the dignity of a Jewish phrase.” (Hill’s Lectures.)

The Logos was no fanciful term, merely invented by St. John, pro re nata, or even suggested by the Holy Spirit, as a suitable title for a prophet, by whom God chose to reveal himself or his Word. It was a term diversely understood in the world before St. John began his Gospel. Is it possible, therefore, that he should have used the term without some express allusion to these prevailing opinions? Had he contradicted them all, it would, of course, have been a plain proof that they were all equally fabulous and fanciful; but by adopting the term, he certainly meant to show that the error did not consist in believing that there was a Logos, or Word of God, but in thinking amiss of it. We might, indeed, have wondered much had he
decidedly adopted the *Platonic or Gnostic* notions; in preference to the Jewish; but that he should harmonize with the latter is by no means surprising; first, because he was a Jew himself; and secondly, because Christianity was plainly to be shown to be connected with, and, as it were, regularly to have sprung out of Judaism. It is certainly, then, in the highest degree consistent with all we could reasonably expect, to find St. John and others of the sacred writers expressing themselves in terms not only familiar to the Jews under the old covenant, but which might tend, by a perfect revelation of the truth, to give instruction to all parties; correcting the errors of the *Platonic* and *oriental* systems, and confirming, in the clearest manner, the hopes and expectations of the Jews. (*See Nare’s Remarks on the Socinian Version.*)

While the reasons for the use of this term by St. John are obvious, the argument from it is irresistible; for, first, the Logos of the evangelist is a **PERSON**, not an **attribute**, as many Socinians have said, who have, therefore, sometimes chosen to render it “wisdom.” For if an attribute, it were a mere truism to say that it was in the beginning with God, for God could never be without his attributes. The apostle also declares, that the Logos was the *Light*; but that John Baptist was *not the Light*. Here is a kind of parallel supposed, and it presumes, also, that it was possible that the same character might be erroneously ascribed to both.

“Between person and person this may undoubtedly be the case; but what species of parallel can exist between man and an attribute? Nor will the difficulty be obviated by suggesting, that wisdom here means not the attribute itself, but him whom that attribute inspired, the man Jesus Christ, because the name of our Saviour has not yet been mentioned; because that rule of interpretation must be inadmissible, which at one time would explain the term Logos by an attribute, at another by a man, as best suits the convenience of hypothesis, and because, if it be, in this instance, conceived to indicate our Saviour, it must follow, that our Saviour created the world, (which the Unitarians will by no means admit,) for the Logos, who was that which John the Baptist was not, *the true Light*, is expressly declared to have made the world.” (*Laurence’s Dissertation on the Logos.*)

Again: the Logos was made flesh, that is, *became man*; but in what possible sense could an attribute become man? The Logos is “the only
begotten of the Father;” but it would be uncouth to say of any attribute, that it is begotten; and, if that were passed over it would follow, from this notion, either that God has only one attribute, or that wisdom is not his only-begotten attribute. Farther, St. John uses terms decisively personal, as that he is God, not Divine as an attribute, but God personally; not that he was in God, which would properly have been said of an attribute, but with God, which he could only say of a person: that “all things were made by him;” that he was “in the world;” that “he came to his own;” that he was “in the bosom of the Father;” and that “he hath declared the Father.” The absurdity of representing the Logos of St. John as an attributive seems, at length, to have been perceived by the Socinians themselves, and their New Version accordingly regards it as a personal term.

If the Logos is a person, then is he Divine; for, first eternity is ascribed to him, “in the beginning was the Word.” The Unitarian comment is, “from the beginning of his ministry, or the commencement of the Gospel dispensation;” which makes St. John use another trifling truism, and solemnly tell his readers, that our Saviour, when he began his ministry, was in existence! — “in the beginning of his ministry the Word was!” It is true that αρχη, the beginning, is used for the beginning of Christ’s ministry, when he says that the apostles had been “with him from the beginning;” and it may be used for the beginning of any thing whatever. It is a term which must be determined in its meaning by the context; and the question, therefore, is how the connection here determines it. Almost immediately it is added, “all things were made by him;” which, in a preceding chapter, has been proved to mean the creation of universal nature. He, then, who made all things was prior to all created things; HE WAS when they began to be, and before they began to be; and, if he existed before all created things, he was not himself created, and was, therefore, eternal. Secondly, he is expressly called God, in the same sense as the Father; and thirdly, he is as explicitly said to be the Creator of all things. The two last particulars have already been largely established, and nothing need be added, except, as another proof that the Scriptures can only be fairly explained by the doctrine of a distinction of Divine persons in the Godhead, the declaration of St. John may be adduced, that “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” What hypothesis but this goes a single step to explain this wonderful language? Arianism, which allows the pre-existence of Christ with God, accords with the first clause, but contradicts the second. Sabellianism, which reduces the personal to an official and
therefore a temporal, distinction, accords with the second clause, but contradicts the first; for Christ, according to this theory, was not with God in the beginning, that is, in eternity. Socinianism contradicts both clauses; for on that scheme Christ was neither with God “in the beginning,” nor was he God. “The faith of God’s elect” agrees with both clauses, and by both it is established, “The Word was with God, and the Word was GOD.”
HAVING considered the import of some of the titles applied to our Lord in
the Scriptures, and proved that they imply Divinity, we may next consider
the attributes which are ascribed to him in the New Testament. If, to
names and lofty titles which imply Divinity, we find added: attributes never
given to creatures, and from which all creatures are excluded, the Deity of
Christ is established beyond reasonable controversy. No argument can be
more conclusive, than this. Of the essence of Deity we know nothing, but
that he is a Spirit. He is made known by his attributes; and it is from them
that we learn, that there is an essential distinction between him and his
creatures, because he has attributes which they have not, and those which
they have in common with him, he possesses in a degree absolutely perfect.
From this it follows, that his is a peculiar nature, a nature sui generis, to
which no creature does or can possibly approximate. Should, then, these
same attributes be found ascribed to Christ, as explicitly and literally as to
the Father, it follows of necessity, that, the attributes being the same, the
essence is the same, and that essence the exclusive nature of the Θεοτης,
or “Godhead.” It would, indeed, follow, that if but one of the peculiar
attributes of Deity were ascribed to Christ, he must possess the whole,
since they cannot exist separately; and whoever is possessed of one must
be concluded to be in possession of all. But it is not one attribute only,
but all the attributes of Deity which are ascribed to him; and not only those
which are moral, and which are, therefore, capable of being communicated,
(though those, as they are attributed to Christ in infinite degree and in
absolute perfection, would be sufficient for the argument,) but those which
are, on all sides, allowed to be incommunicable, and peculiar to the
Godhead.

Eternity is ascribed to him. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is
given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall
be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,
the Prince of Peace.” “Everlasting Father” is variously rendered by the
principal orthodox critics; but every rendering is in consistency with the
application era positive eternity to the Messiah, of which this is allowed to
be a prediction. Bishop Lowth says, “the Father of the everlasting age.”
Bishop Stock, “the Father of Eternity;” i.e. the owner of it. Dathe and
Rosenmuller, “Æternus.” The former considers it an oriental idiom, by which names of affinity, as father, mother, &c, are used to denote the author, or eminent possessor of a quality or object. Revelation 1:17, 18, “I am the First and the Last, I am he that liveth and was dead;” so also Revelation 2:8; and in both passages the context shows, indisputably, that it is our Lord himself who speaks, and applies these titles to himself. In Revelation 22:13, also, Christ is the speaker, and declares himself to be “Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Now, by these very titles is the eternity of God declared, Isaiah 45:6, and 43:10 “I am the first, and I am the last: and beside me there is no God.” “Before me was there no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” But they are, in the book of Revelation, assumed by Christ as explicitly and absolutely; and they clearly affirm, that the Being to whom they are applied had no beginning, and will have no end. In Revelation 1:8, after the declaration, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord,” it is added, “which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Some have referred these words to the Father; but certainly without reason, as the very scope of the passage shows. It is Christ who speaks in the first person, throughout the chapter, when the sublime titles of the former part of the verse are used, and indeed, throughout the book; and to interpret this particular clause of the Father would introduce a most abrupt change of persons, which, but for a false theory, would never have been imagined. The words, indeed, do but express the import of the name Jehovah, so often given to Christ; and as, when the Father is spoken of, in verse 4, the same declaration is made concerning him which, in verse 8, our Lord makes of himself, it follows, that if the terms “which was, and is, and is to come,” are descriptive of the eternity of the Father, they are also descriptive of eternity as an attribute also of the Son. We have a similar declaration in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” where eternity, and its necessary concomitant, immutability, are both ascribed to him. That the phrase, “yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” is equivalent to eternity needs no proof; and that the words are not spoken of the doctrine of Christ, as the Socinians contend, appears from the context, which scarcely makes any sense upon this hypothesis, (See Macknight,) since a doctrine once delivered must remain what it was at first. This interpretation, also, gives a figurative sense to words which have all the character of a strictly literal declaration; and it is a farther confirmation of the literal sense, and that Christ is spoken of personally, that o αυτος is the phrase by which the
immutability of the Son is expressed in chapter i, verse 12: “But thou art o
αὐτός, the same.” Peirce, in his Paraphrase, has well expressed the
connection: “Considering the conclusion of their life and behaviour, imitate
their faith; for the object of their faith, Jesus Christ, is the same now as he
was then, and will be the same for ever.” A Being essentially unchangeable,
and therefore eternal, is the only proper object of an absolute “faith.” A
similar and most solemn ascription of eternity and immutability occurs
Hebrews 1:10-12, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the
foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thine hands.
They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a
garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be
changed; but thou art THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL NOT FAIL.” These
words are quoted from Psa. cii, which all acknowledge to be a lofty
description of the eternity of God. They are here applied to Christ, and of
him they affirm, that he was before the material universe — that it was
created by him — that he has absolute power over it — that he shall
destroy it — that he shall do this with infinite ease, as one who folds up a
vesture; and that, amid the decays and changes of material things, he
remains the same. The immutability here ascribed to Christ is not, however,
that of a created spirit, which will remain when the material universe is
destroyed; for then there would be nothing proper to Christ in the text,
nothing but in which angels and men participate with him, and the words
would be deprived of all meaning. His immutability and duration are
peculiar, and a contrast is implied between his existence and that of all
created things. They are dependent, he is independent; and his necessary,
and therefore eternal, existence must follow. The phrase “ETERNAL LIFE,”
when used, as it is frequently, in St. John’s Epistles, is also a clear
designation of the eternity of our Saviour. “For the LIFE was manifested,
and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that ETERNAL
LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” In the first
clause, Christ is called the Life, he is then said to be “eternal;” and, that
no mistake should arise, as though the apostle merely meant to declare that
he would continue for ever, he shows, that he ascribes eternity to him in his
pre-existent state, — “that eternal life” which was WITH THE FATHER; and
with him before he was “manifested to men.” And eternal pre-existence
could not be more unequivocally marked.

To these essential attributes of Deity, to be without beginning and without
change, is added that of being extended through all space. — He is not
only eternal, but OMNIPRESENT. Thus he declares himself to be at the same time in heaven and upon earth, which is assuredly a property of Deity alone. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which IS in heaven.” The genuineness of the last clause has been attacked by a few critics; but has been fully established by Dr. Magee. (Magee on the Atonement.) This passage has been defended from the Socinian interpretation already, and contains an unequivocal declaration of ubiquity.

For “where two or three are gathered together in my name, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM.” How futile is the Socinian comment in the New Version! This promise is to be “limited to the apostolic age.” But were that granted, what would the concession avail? In the apostolic age, the disciples met in the name of their Lord many times in the week, and in innumerable parts of the world at the same time, in Judea, Asia Minor, Europe, &c. He, therefore, who could be “in the midst of them,” whenever and wherever they assembled, must be omnipresent. But they add, “by a spiritual presence, a faculty of knowing things in places where he was not present;” “a gift,” they say,” given to the apostles occasionally,” and refer to I Corinthians 5:3. No such gift is, however, claimed by the apostle in that passage, who knew the affair in the Church of Corinth, not by any such faculty or revelation, but by “report,” verse 1. Nor does he say, that he was present with them, but judged “as though he were present.” If, indeed, any such gift were occasionally given to the apostles, it would be, not a “spiritual presence,” as the New Version has it; but a figurative presence. No such figurative meaning is however hinted at in the text before us, which is as literal a declaration of Christ’s presence every where with his worshippers as that similar promise made by Jehovah to the Israelites: “In all places where I record my name I will come to thee, and I will bless thee.” At the very moment, too, of his ascension, that is, just when, as to his bodily presence, he was leaving his disciples, he promises still to be with them, and calls their attention to this promise by an emphatic particle, “And LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even unto the end of the world,” Matthew 28:20. The Socinians render “to the end of the age,” that is, “the Jewish dispensation, till the destruction of Jerusalem.” All that can be said in favour of this is, that the words may be so translated, if no regard is paid to their import. But it is certain, that, in several passages, “the end of the world,” η συντέλεια του αιώνος, must be understood in its popular sense. That this is its sense here, appears, first,
from the clause “Lo I am with you always,” **πᾶσας τας ἡμερὰς**, “at all times;” secondly, because spiritual presence stands, by an evidently implied antithesis, opposed to bodily absence; thirdly, because that presence of Christ was as necessary to his disciples after the destruction of Jerusalem as till that period. But even were the promise to be so restricted, it would still be in proof of the omnipresence of our Lord, for, if he were present with all his disciples in all places, “always,” to the destruction of Jerusalem, it could only be by virtue of a property which would render him present to his disciples in all ages. The Socinian Version intimates, that the presence meant is the gift of miraculous powers. Let even that be allowed, though it is a very partial view of the promise; then, if till the destruction of Jerusalem the apostles were “always,” “at all times,” able to work miracles, the power to enable them to effect these wonders must “always” and in all places have been present with them; and if that were not a human endowment, if a power superior to that of man were requisite for the performance of the miracles, and that power was the power of Christ, then he was really, though spiritually, present with them, unless the attribute of power can be separated from its subject, and the power of Christ be where he himself is not. This, however, is a low view of the import of the promise, “Lo I am with you,” which, both in the Old and New Testament, signifies to be present with any one, to help, comfort, and succour him. “Εἶναι μετὰ τινός, alicui adesse, juvare aliquem, curare res alicujus.”

(Rosenmuller.)

It is not necessary to adduce more than another passage in proof of a point so fully determined already by the authority of Scripture. After the apostle, in Colossians 1:16, 17, has ascribed the creation of all things in heaven and earth, “visible and invisible,” to Christ, he adds, “and by him all things consist.” On this passage, Raphelius cites a striking passage from Aristotle, De Mundo, where the same verb, rendered “consist,” by our translators, is used in a like sense to express the constant dependence of all things upon their Creator for continued subsistence and preservation. “There is a certain ancient tradition common to all mankind, that all things subsist from and by God, and that no kind of being is self-sufficient, when alone, and destitute of his preserving aid.” The apostle then, here, not only attributes the creation, but the conservation of all things to Christ; but to preserve them his presence must be co-extensive with them, and thus the universe of matter and created spirits, heaven and earth, must be filled with his power and presence. “This short sentence implies that our Lord’s
presence extends to every part of the creation; to every being and system in the universe; a most striking and emphatical description of the omnipresence of God the Son.” (*Holden’s Scripture Testimonies.*)

To these attributes of essential Divinity is added, a **PERFECT KNOWLEDGE** of all things. This cannot be the attribute of a creature, for though it may be difficult to say how far the knowledge of the highest order of intelligent creatures may be extended, yet are there two kinds of knowledge which God has made peculiar to himself by solemn and exclusive claim. The first is, the perfect knowledge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins,” <241710>Jeremiah 17:10. “Thou, even thou only,” says Solomon, “knowest the hearts of all the children of men,” <110839>1 Kings 8:39. This knowledge is attributed to and was claimed by our Lord, and that without any intimation that it was in consequence of a special revelation, or **supernatural** gift, as in a few instances we see in the apostles and prophets, bestowed to answer a particular and temporary purpose. In such instances also, it is to be observed, the knowledge of the spirits and thoughts of men was obtained in consequence of a **revelation** made to them by Him whose prerogative it is to search the heart. In the case of our Lord, it is, however, not merely said, “And Jesus knew their thoughts,” that he perceived in his spirit, that they so reasoned among themselves; but it is referred to as an **attribute** or **original faculty**, and it is, therefore made use of by St. John, on one occasion, to explain his conduct with reference to certain of his enemies: — “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, FOR HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN.” After his exaltation, also, he claims the prerogative in the full style and majesty of the Jehovah of the Old Testament: “And all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart.”

A striking description of the omniscience of Christ is also found in <580412>Hebrews 4:12, 13, if we understand it, with most of the ancients, of the hypostatic Word; to which sense, I think the scope of the passage and context clearly determines it. “For the WORD OF GOD is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a **DISCERNER OF THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE HEART**; neither is there any creature that is not MANIFEST in his sight; for all things are NAKED and OPEN to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” The reasons for referring this passage rather to Christ, the author of the Gospel, than to the
Gospel itself, are, first, that it agrees better with the apostle’s argument. He is warning Christians against the example of ancient Jewish unbelief, and enforces his warning by reminding them, that the Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. The argument is obvious, if the personal Word is meant; not at all so, if the doctrine of the Gospel be supposed. Secondly, the clauses, “neither is there any creature that is not manifest in HIS sight,” and, all “things are naked and open to the eyes of HIM, with whom we have to do,” or “to whom we must give an account,” are undoubtedly spoken of a person, and that person our witness and judge. Those, therefore, who think that the Gospel is spoken of in verse 12, represent the apostle as making a transition from the Gospel to God himself in what follows. This, however, produces a violent break in the argument, for which no grammatical nor contextual reason whatever can be given; and it is evident that the same metaphor extends through both verses. This is taken from the practice of dividing and cutting asunder the bodies of beasts slain for sacrifice, and laying them open for inspection, lest any blemish or unsoundness should lurk within, and render them unfit for the service of God. The dividing asunder of “the joints and marrow” in the 12th verse, and the being made “naked and open to the eyes, in the 13th, are all parts of the same sacrificial and judicial action, to which, therefore, we can justly assign but one agent. The only reason given for the other interpretation is, that the term LOGOS is nowhere else used by St. Paul. This can weigh but little against the obvious sense of the passage. St. Luke, 1:2, appears to use the term LOGOS in a personal sense, and he uses it but once; and if St. Paul uses it here, and not in his other epistles, this reason may be given, that in other epistles he writes to Jews and Gentiles united in the same Churches; here, to Jews alone, among whom we have seen that the Logos was a well known theological term.

The Socinians urge against this ascription of infinite knowledge to our Lord, Mark 13:32: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.” The genuineness of the clause “neither the Son” has been disputed, and is not inserted by Griesbach in his text; there is not, however, sufficient reason for its rejection, though certainly in the parallel passage, Matthew 24:36, “neither the Son” is not found. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven; but my Father only.” We are then reduced to this — a number of passages explicitly declare that Christ knows all things; there is one which declares that the Son did not
know “the day and the hour” of judgment; again, there is a passage which certainly implies that even this period was known to Christ; for St. Paul, 1 Timothy 6:14, speaking of the “appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” as the universal judge, immediately adds, “which in his own times καὶ ἡμερὰς ἡμερῶν, shall show who is the blessed and only potentate,” &c. The day of judgment is here called “his own times,” or “his own seasons,” which, in its obvious sense, means the season he has himself fixed, since a certain manifestation of himself is in its fulness reserved by him to that period. As “the times and the seasons,” also are said, in another place, to be in the Father’s “own power;” so by an equivalent phrase, they are here said to be in the power of the Son, because they are “his own times.” Doubtless, then, he knew “the day and the hour of judgment.”

Now, certainly, no such glaring and direct contradiction can exist in the word of truth, as that our Lord should know the day of judgment, and, at the same time, and in the same sense, not know it. Either, therefore, the passage in Mark must admit of an interpretation which will make it consistent with other passages which clearly affirm our Lord’s knowledge of all things, and consequently of this great day, or these passages must submit to such an interpretation as will bring them into accordance with that in Mark. It cannot, however, be in the nature of things that texts, which clearly predicate an infinite knowledge, should be interpreted to mean a finite and partial knowledge, and this attempt would only establish a contradiction between the text and the comment. Their interpretation is imperative upon us; but the text in Mark is capable of an interpretation which involves no contradiction or absurdity whatever, and which makes it accord with the rest of the Scripture testimony on this subject. This may be done two ways. The first is adopted by Macknight.

“The word οἶδα here seems to have the force of the Hebrew conjunction, hiphil, which in verbs denoting action, makes that action, whatever it is, pass to another. Wherefore οἶδεν, which properly signifies, I know, used in the sense of the conjunction hiphil, signifies, I make another to know, I declare. The word has this meaning, without dispute, 1 Corinthians 2:2. ‘I determined, οἶδενα, to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified;’ i.e. I determined to make known, to preach nothing, but Jesus Christ. So, likewise, in the text, ‘But of that day and that hour, none maketh you to know,’ none hath power to make you know it; just as the phrase, Matthew 20:23, ‘is not mine to
give,’ signifies, ‘is not in my power to give:’ — ‘no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father.’ Neither man nor angel, nor even the Son himself, can reveal the day and hour of the destruction of Jerusalem to you: because the Father hath determined that it should not be revealed.” (Harmony.)

The second is the usual manner of meeting the difficulty, and refers the words “neither the Son” exclusively to the human nature of our Lord, which we know, as to the body, “grew in stature,” and as to the mind, in “wisdom.” Bishop Kidder, in answering the Socinian objection from the lips of a Jew, observes, —

“1. That we Christians do believe, not only that CHRIST was GOD, but also that he was perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting.

“We do believe, that his body was like one of ours: a real, not a fantastic and imaginary one.

“We do also believe, that he had a human soul, of the same nature and kind with one of ours; though it was free from sin, and all original stain and corruption. And no wonder then, that we read of him, that he increased, not only in stature, and in favour with GOD and man, but in wisdom also: Luke 2:52. Now wisdom is a spiritual endowment, and belongs to the mind or soul. He could not be said to increase in wisdom as he was GOD; nor could this be said of him with respect to his body, for that is not the subject of wisdom; but with regard to the human soul of CHRIST, the other part of our human nature.

“2. It must be granted, that as man he did not know beyond the capacities of human and finite understanding; and not what he knew as GOD. He could not be supposed to know in this respect things not knowable by man, any otherwise than as the Divine nature and wisdom thought fit to communicate and impart such knowledge to him.

“3. That therefore CHRIST may be said, with respect to his human nature and finite understanding, not to know the precise time, the day and hour of some future events.
“4. ‘Tis farther to be considered how the evangelists report this matter; they do it in such terms as are very observable. Of that day and hour knoweth no man; it follows, neither the Son. He doth not say the Son of God, nor the λόγος, or Word, but the Son only.

“I do not know all this while, where there is any inconsistency in the faith of Christians; [arising from this view:] when we believe that Jesus was in all things made like unto us, and in some respect a little lower than the angels, Hebrews 2:7, 17. I see no force in the above-named objection.” (Demonstration of Messiah.)

The “Son of man,” it is true, is here placed above the angels; but, as Waterland observes, “the particular concern the Son of man has in the last judgment is sufficient to account for the supposed climax or gradation.

“It is, indeed, objected by Socinians, that these interpretations of Mark 13:32, charge our Saviour, if not with direct falsehood, at least with criminal evasion; since he could not say with truth and sincerity, that he was ignorant of the day, if he knew it in any capacity; as it cannot be denied that man is immortal, so long as he is, in any respect, immortal. The answer to this is, that as it may truly be said of the body of man, that it is not immortal, though the soul is; so it may, with equal truth, be said, that the Son of man was ignorant of some things, though the Son of God knew every thing. It is not, then, inconsistent with truth and sincerity for our Lord to deny that he knew what he really did know in one capacity, while he was ignorant of it in another. Thus, in one place he says, ‘Now I am no more in the world, John 17:11; and in another, ‘Ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always,’ Matthew 26:11; yet on another occasion, he says, ‘Lo I am with you always,’ Matthew 28:20; and again, ‘If any man love me — my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,’ John 14:23. From hence we see that our Lord might, without any breach of sincerity, deny that of himself, considered in one capacity, which he could not have denied in another. There was no equivocation in his denying the knowledge of ‘that day and that hour,’ since, with respect to his human nature, it was most true; and that he designed it to refer alone to his human nature, is probable, because he does not say the Son of God was ignorant of that day, but the Son, meaning the Son of man, as appears from the
context, Matthew 24:37, 39; Mark 13:26, 34. Thus Mark 13:32, which, at first sight, may seem to favour the Unitarian hypothesis, is capable of a rational and unforced interpretation, consistently with the orthodox faith.” (Holden’s Testimonies.)

As the knowledge of the heart is attributed to Christ, so also is the knowledge of futurity, which is another quality so peculiar to Deity, that we find the true God distinguishing himself from all the false divinities of the heathen by this circumstance alone. “To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?” “I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,” Isaiah 46:5, 9, 10. All the predictions uttered by our Saviour, and which are nowhere referred by him to inspiration, the source to which all the prophets and apostles refer their prophetic gifts, but were spoken as from his own prescience, are in proof of his possessing this attribute. It is also affirmed, John 6:64, that “Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him;” and again, John 13:11, “For Jesus knew who should betray him.”

Thus we find the Scriptures ascribing to Jesus an existence without beginning, without change, without limitation, and connected, in the whole extent of space which it fills, with the exercise of the most perfect intelligence. These are essential attributes of Deity. “Measures of power may be communicated; degrees of wisdom and goodness may be imparted to created spirits; but our conceptions of God are confounded, and we lose sight of every circumstance by which he is characterized, if such a manner of existence as we have now described be common to him and any creature.” (Hill’s Lectures.)

To these attributes may also be added OMNIPOTENCE, Which is also peculiar to the Godhead; for, though power may be communicated to a creature, yet a finite capacity must limit the communication, nor can it exist infinitely, any more than wisdom, except in an infinite nature, Christ is, however, styled, Revelation 1:8, “THE ALMIGHTY.” To the Jews he said. “What things soever he [the Father] doeth, THESE ALSO DOETH THE SON LIKewise.” Farther, he declares, that “as the Father hath LIFE IN HIMSELF, so hath he given to the Son to have LIFE IN HIMSELF,” which is a
most strongly marked distinction between himself and all creatures whatever. He has “life in himself,” and he has it “AS the Father” has it, that is, perfectly and infinitely, which sufficiently demonstrates that he is of the same essence, or he could not have this communion of properties with the Father. The life is, indeed, said to be “given,” but this communication from the Father makes no difference in the argument. Whether the “life” mean the same original and independent life, which at once entitles the Deity to the appellations “THE LIVING GOD,” and “THE FATHER OF SPIRITS,” or the bestowing of eternal life upon all believers, it amounts to the same thing. The “life” which is thus bestowed upon believers, the continuance and perfect blessedness of existence, is from Christ as its fountain, and he has it as the Father himself hath it. By his eternal generation it was derived from the Father to him, and he possesses it equally with the Father; by the appointment of his Father he is made the source of eternal life to believers, as having that LIFE IN HIMSELF to bestow, and to supply for ever.

We may sum up the whole Scriptural argument, from Divine attributes being ascribed by the disciples to our Saviour, and claimed by himself, with his own remarkable declaration, “ALL THINGS which the Father hath are MINE,” John 16:15. “Here he challenges to himself the incommunicable attributes, and, consequently, that essence which is inseparable from them.” (Whitby.) “If God the Son hath all things that the Father hath, then hath he all the attributes and perfections belonging to the Father, the same power, rights, and privileges, the same honour and glory; and, in a word, the same nature, substance, and Godhead.” (Waterland.)
CHAPTER 14. — THE ACTS ASCRIBED TO CHRIST PROOFS OF HIS DIVINITY.

This argument is in confirmation of the foregoing; for, if not only the proper names of God, his majestic and peculiar titles, and his attributes, are attributed to our Lord; but if also acts have been done by him which, in the nature of things, cannot be performed by any creature, however exalted, then he by whom they were done must be truly God.

The first act of this kind is creation — the creation of all things. It is not here necessary to enter into any argument to prove that creation, in its proper sense, that is, the production of things out of nothing, is possible only to Divine power. The Socinians themselves acknowledge this; and, therefore, employ their perverting, but feeble criticisms in a vain attempt to prove, that the creation, of which Christ, in the New Testament, is said to be the author, is to be understood of a moral creation, or of the regulation of all things in the evangelic dispensation. I shall not adduce many passages to prove that a proper creation is ascribed to our Lord; for they are sufficiently in the recollection of the reader. It is enough that two or three of them only be exhibited, which cannot be taken, without manifest absurdity, in any other sense but as attributing the whole physical creation to him.

The ascription of the creation of “all things,” in the physical sense, to the Divine Word, in the introduction to St. John’s Gospel, has been vindicated against the Socinian interpretation in a preceding page. I shall only farther remark upon it, first, that if St. John had intended a moral, and not a physical creation, he could not have expressed himself as he does without intending to mislead; a supposition equally contrary to his inspiration and to his piety. He affirms that “all things,” and that without limitation or restriction, “were made by him;” that “without him was not any thing made that was made;” which clearly means, that there is no created object which had not Christ for its Creator; an assertion which contains a revelation of a most important and fundamental doctrine. If, however, it be taken in the Socinian sense, it is a pitiful truism, asserting that Christ did nothing in establishing his religion which he did not do: for to this effect their Version itself expresses it, — “all things were done by him, and without him was not any thing done that hath been done;” or, as they might have rendered
it, to make the folly still more manifest, “without him was not any thing done that was done by him, or which he himself did.” Unfortunately, however, for the notion of arranging or regulating the new dispensation, the apostle adds a full confirmation of his former doctrine, that the physical creation was the result of the power of the Divine Word, by asserting, that “THE WORLD WAS MADE by him;” that world into which he came as “the light,” that world in which he was when he was made flesh; that world which “knew him not.” It matters nothing to the argument, whether “the world” be understood of men or of the material world; on either supposition it was made by him, and the creation was, therefore, physical. In neither case could the creation be a moral one, for the material world is incapable of a moral renewal; and the world which “knew not” Christ, if understood of men, was not renewed, but unregenerated; or he would have been “known,” that is, acknowledged by them.

Another passage, equally incapable of being referred to any but a physical creation, is found in Hebrews 1:2, “By whom also he MADE THE WORLDS.” “God,” says the apostle, “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his SON, whom he hath appointed heir of all things;” and then he proceeds to give farther information of the nature and dignity of the personage thus denominated “SON” and “HEIR;” and his very first declaration concerning him, in this exposition of his character, in order to prove him greater than angels, who are the greatest of all created beings, is that “by him also God made the worlds.” Two methods have been resorted to, in order to ward off the force of this decisive testimony as to the Deity of Christ, grounded upon his creative acts. The first is, to render the words, “FOR whom he made the worlds;” thus referring creation immediately to the Father, and making the preposition δια, with a genitive case, signify the final cause, the reason or end, for which “the worlds” were created. Were this even allowed, it would be a strange doctrine to assert, that FOR a mere man, for the exercise of the ministry of a mere man, as Christ is taken to be upon the Socinian hypothesis, “the worlds,” the whole visible creation, with its various orders of intellectual beings, were created. This is a position almost as much opposed to that corrupt hypothesis as is the orthodox doctrine itself, and is another instance in proof that difficulties are multiplied, rather than lessened, by departing from the obvious sense of Scripture. But no example is found, in the whole New Testament, of the use of δια with a genitive to express the final cause; and, in the very next verse, St. Paul uses the same construction to
express the *efficient* cause, — “when he had *by himself* purged our sins.”

“This interpretation,” says Whitby, justly, “is contrary to the rule of all grammarians; contrary to the exposition of all the Greek fathers, and also without example in the New Testament.”

The second resource, therefore, is to understand “the worlds,” τοὺς ἀιῶνας, in the literal import of the phrase, for “the ages,” or the Gospel dispensation. But “οἱ αἰῶνες,” absolutely put, doth never signify the Church, or evangelical state; nor doth the Scripture ever speak of the *world to come* in the plural, but in the singular number only.” (Whitby.) The phrase οἱ αἰῶνες was adopted either as equivalent to the Jewish division of the whole creation into three parts, this lower world, the region of the stars, and the third heaven, the residence of God and his angels; or as expressive of the duration of the world, extending through an indefinite number of ages, and standing opposed to the short life of its inhabitants. Αἰῶν primo longum tempus, postea eternitatem, apud Scriptores N.T. vero κόσμον mundum significat, ex Hebraismo, ubi µל w ו יml ו de mundo accipitur, quia mundus post tot generationes hominum perpetuo durat. (Rosenmuller.) The apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, used, therefore, a mode of expression which was not only familiar to them; but which they could not but understand of the natural creation. This, however, is put out of all doubt by the use of the same phrase in the 11th chapter — “through faith we understand that the *WORLDS* were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear;” words which can only be understood of the physical creation. Another consideration, which takes the declaration, “by whom also he made the worlds,” out of the reach of all the captious and puerile criticism on which we have remarked, is, that, in the close of the chapter, the apostle reiterates the doctrine of the creation of the world by Jesus Christ: “But unto *THE SON* he saith,” not only, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;” but, “Thou, Lord, (Jehovah,) in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:” words to which the perverted adroitness of heretics has been able to affix no meaning, when taken in any other sense than as addressed to Christ, and which will for ever attach to him, on the authority of inspiration, the title of “Jehovah,” and array him in all the majesty of creative power and glory. It is, indeed, a very conclusive argument in favour of the three great points of Christian doctrine, as comprehended in the orthodox faith, that it is impossible to interpret this celebrated chapter, according to any fair rule
of natural and customary interpretation, without admitting that Christ is GOD, the DIVINE SON OF GOD, and the MEDIATOR. The last is indicated by his being the medium through whom, in these last days, the will of God is communicated to mankind, “God hath spoken” by him; and by his being “anointed” priest and king “above his fellows.” The second is expressed both by his title, “THE SON,” and by the superiority which, in virtue of that name, he has above angels, and the worship which, as the SON, they are enjoined to pay to him. He is also called GOD, and this term is fixed in its highest import, by his being declared “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” and by the creative acts which are ascribed to him; while his character of Son, as being OF the Father, is still preserved by the two metaphors of “brightness” and “image,” and by the expression, “God, even thy God.” On these principles only is the apostle intelligible; on any other, the whole chapter is incapable of consistent exposition.

The only additional passage which it is necessary to produce, in order to show that Christ is the Creator of all things, and that the creation of which he is the author, is not a moral but a physical creation; not the framing of the Christian dispensation, but the forming of the whole universe of creatures out of nothing, is Colossians 1:15-17: “Who is the IMAGE of the invisible GOD, the FIRST BORN of every creature: for by him were all things CREATED, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created BY him, and FOR him; and he is BEFORE all things, and by him all things CONSIST.” The Socinians interpret this of “that great change which was introduced into the moral world, and particularly into the relative situation of Jews and Gentiles, by the dispensation of the Gospel.” (Improved Version.) But,

1. The apostle introduces this passage as a reason why we have “redemption through his blood;” ver. 14; why, in other words, the death of Christ was efficacious, and obviously attributes this efficacy to the dignity of his nature. This is the scope of his argument.

2. He, therefore, affirms him to be “the image” (εἰκών,) the exact representation or resemblance of the invisible God; which, when compared with Hebrews 1:2, “who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” shows that the apostle uses the word in a sense in which it is not applicable to any human or angelic being, — “the
first born of every creature;” or, more literally, “the first born of the whole creation.” The Arians have taken this in the sense of the first-made creature; but this is refuted by the term itself, which is not “first made,” but “first born;” and by the following verse, which proves him to be first born, FOR, or BECAUSE (οτι) “by him were all things created.” As to the date of his being, he was before all created things, for they were created by him: as to the manner of his being, he was by generation not creation. The apostle does not say, that he was created the first of all creatures; but, that he was born before them: (Vide Wolf in loc.) — a plain allusion to the generation of the Son before time began, and before creatures existed. Wolf has also shown, that among the Jews Jehovah is sometimes called the primogenitum mundi, “the first born of the world,” because they attributed the creation of the world to the Logos, the Word of the Lord, the ostensible Jehovah of the Old Testament, whom certainly they never meant to include among the creatures; and that they called him also the Son of God. It was, then, in perfect accordance with the theological language of the Jews themselves, that the apostle calls our Lord “the first born of the whole creation.”

The Arian interpretation, which makes the first-made creature the Creator of the rest, is thus destroyed. The Socinian notion is as manifestly absurd. If the creation here be the new dispensation, the Christian Church, then to call Christ the first born of this creation is to make the apostle say that Christ was the first-made member of the Christian Church; and the reason given for this is, that he made or constituted the Church! If by this they mean simply that he was the author of Christianity, we have again a puerile truism put into the lips of the apostle. If they mean that the apostle declares that Christ was the first Christian, it is difficult to conceive how this can be gravely affirmed as a comment on the words; if any thing else, it is impossible to discover any connection in the argument, that is, between the proposition that Christ is the first born of the whole creation, and the proof of it which is adduced, that by him were all things created. The annotators on the New Version say, “It is plain from comparing this passage with verse 18, (where Christ is called the first born from the dead,) that Christ is called the first born of the whole creation, because he is the first who was raised from the dead to an immortal life.” This is far from being “plain;” but it is plain that, in these two verses, the apostle speaks of Christ in two different states, first, in his state “before all things,” and as the sustainer of all things; and, then, in his state in “the Church,” verse 18, in which is
added to the former particulars respecting him, — that “he is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead.”

Again, if in verses 15, 16, 17, the apostle is speaking of what Christ is in and to the Church, under the figure of a creation of all things in heaven and in earth, when he drops the figure and teaches us that Christ is the head of the Church, the first born from the dead, he uses a mere tautology; nor is there any apparent reason why he should not, in the same plain terms, have stated his proposition at once, without resorting to expressions which, in this view, would be far-fetched and delusive. In “the Church” he was “head,” and “the first born from the dead,” the only one who ever rose to die no more, and who gives an immortal life to those he quickens; but before the Church existed, or he himself became incarnate, “before all things,” says the apostle, he was the “first born of the whole creation,” that is, as the fathers understood it, he was born or begotten before every creature. But the very terms of the text are an abundant refutation of the notion, “that the creation here mentioned is not the creation of natural substances. The things created are said to be “all things in heaven and upon the earth;” and, lest the invisible spirits in the heaven should be thought to be excluded, the apostle adds “things visible and things invisible;” and, lest the invisible things should be understood of inferior angels or spiritual beings, and the high and glorious beings, who “excel in strength,” and are, in Scripture, invested with other elevated properties, should be suspected to be exceptions, the apostle becomes still more particular, and adds, whether “thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,” terms by which the Jews expressed the different orders of angels, and which are used in that sense by this apostle, Ephesians 1:21. It is a shameless criticism of the authors of the New Version, and shows how hardly they were pushed by this decisive passage, that “the apostle does not here specify things themselves, namely, celestial and terrestrial substances, but merely states of things, namely, thrones, dominions, &c, which are only ranks and orders of beings in the rational and moral world.” Was it, then, forgotten, that before St. Paul speaks of things in rank and order, he speaks of all things collectively which are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible? If so, he then, unquestionably, speaks of “things themselves,” or he speaks of nothing. Nor is it true, that, in the enumeration of thrones, dominions, &c, he speaks of the creation of ranks and orders. He does not speak “merely of states of things, but of things in, states; he does not say that Christ created thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, which would have been more to their purpose,
but that he created all things, ‘whether’ ἐὰντε, ‘they be thrones,’ &c.” The apostle adds, that all things were created by him, and for him, as the end; which could not be said of Christ, even if a moral creation were intended, since, on the Socinian hypothesis that he is a mere man, a prophet of God, he is but the instrument of restoring man to obedience and subjection, for the glory and in accomplishment of the purposes of God. But how is the whole of this description to be made applicable to a figurative creation, to the moral restoration of lapsed beings? It is as plainly historical as the words of Moses, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” “Things visible” and “things on earth” comprise, of course, all those objects which, being neither sensible nor rational, are incapable of moral regeneration, while “things in heaven” and “things invisible” comprise the angels which never sinned and who need no repentance and no renewal. Such are those gross perversions of the word of God which this heresy induces, and with such indelible evidence is the Divinity of our Lord declared by his acts of power and glory, as the Universal Creator. The admirable observations of Bishop Pearson may, properly, conclude what has been said on this important passage of inspired writ.

“In these words our Saviour is expressly styled the ‘first born of every creature,’ that is, begotten by God, as ‘the Son of his love, antecedently to all other emanations, before any thing proceeded from him, or was framed and created by him. And that precedency is presently proved by this undeniable argument, that all other emanations or productions come from him, and whatsoever received its being by creation was by him created, which assertion is delivered in the most proper, full, and frequent expressions imaginable: First, in the plain language of Moses, as most consonant to his description: ‘for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth;’ signifying thereby that he speaketh of the same creation. Secondly, by a division which Moses never used, as describing the production only of corporeal substances: lest, therefore, those immaterial beings might seem exempted from the Son’s creation, because omitted in Moses’s description, he addeth ‘visible and invisible;’ and lest in that invisible world, among the many degrees of celestial hierarchy, any order might seem exempted from an essential dependence on him, he nameth those which are of greatest eminence, ‘whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,’ and under them
comprehendeth all the rest. Nor doth it yet suffice, thus to extend the object of his power, by asserting all things to be made by him, except it be so understood as to acknowledge the sovereignty of his person, and the authority of his action. For lest we should conceive the Son of God framing the world as a mere instrumental cause which worketh by and for another, he showeth him as well the final as the efficient cause; for, ‘all things were created by him and for him.’ Lastly, whereas all things first receive their being by creation, and when they have received it, continue in the same by virtue of God’s conservation, ‘in whom we live and move and have our being;’ lest in any thing we should not depend immediately upon the Son of God, he is described as the conserver, as well as the Creator, for ‘He is before all things, and by him all things consist.’ If then we consider these two latter verses by themselves, we cannot deny but they are a most complete description of the Creator of the world; and if they were spoken of God the Father, could be no way injurious to his majesty, who is nowhere more plainly, or fully set forth unto us as the Maker of the world.”

But our Lord himself professes to do other acts, beside the great act of creating, which are peculiar to God; and such acts are also attributed to him by his inspired apostles. His preserving of all things made by him has already been mentioned, and which implies not only a Divine power, but also ubiquity, since he must be present to all things, in order to their constant conservation. The final destruction of the whole frame of material nature is also as expressly attributed to him as its creation. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands; these shall perish, but thou remainest, and as a vesture SHALT THOU FOLD THEM UP, and they shall be changed.” Here omnipotent power is seen “changing,” and removing, and taking away the vast universe of material things with the same ease as it was spoken into being and at first disposed into order. Generally, too, our Lord claims to perform the works of his Father. “If I do not the WORKS of my Father, believe me not; but if I DO, though ye believe not me, believe the works.” — Should this, even, be restrained to the working of miracles, the argument remains the same. No prophet, no apostle, ever used such language in speaking of his miraculous gifts. Here Christ declares that he performs the works of his Father; not merely that the Father worked by him, but that he himself did the works of God; which can only mean works
proper or peculiar to God, and which a Divine power only could effect. 179 
So the Jews understood him, for, upon this declaration, “they sought again to take him.” That this power of working miracles was in him an original power, appears also from his bestowing that power upon his disciples. “Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you,” Luke 10:19. — “And he gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases,” Luke 9:1. Their miracles were, therefore, to be performed in his name, by which the power of effecting them was expressly reserved to him. “In my name shall they cast out devils;” “and his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong.”

The manner in which our Lord promises the Holy Spirit is farther in proof that he performs acts peculiar to the Godhead. He speaks of “sending the Spirit” in the language of one who had an original right and an inherent power to bestow that wondrous gift which was to impart miraculous energies, and heavenly wisdom, comfort, and purity to human minds. Does the Father send the Spirit? He claims the same power, — “the Comforter, whom I will send unto you.” The Spirit is, on this account, called “the Spirit of Christ,” and “the Spirit of God.” Thus the giving of the Spirit is indifferently ascribed to the Son and to the Father; but when that gift is mediately bestowed by the apostles, no such language is assumed by them: they pray to Christ, and to the Father in his name, and he, their exalted Master, sheds forth the blessing — “therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

Another of the unquestionably peculiar acts of God, is the forgiveness of sins. In the manifest reason of the thing, no one can forgive but the party offended; and as sin is the transgression of the law of God, he, alone, is the offended party, and he only, therefore, can forgive. — Mediately, others may declare his pardoning acts, or the conditions on which he determines to forgive; but, authoritatively, there can be no actual forgiveness of sins against God but by God himself. But Christ forgives sin authoritatively, and he is, therefore, God. One passage is all that is necessary to prove this. “He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” The scribes, who were present, understood that he did this authoritatively, and assumed, in this case, the rights of Divinity. They therefore said, among themselves, “This man blasphemeth.” What then is the conduct of our Lord? Does he admit that he only ministerially declared,
in consequence of some revelation, that God had forgiven the sins of the paralytic? On the contrary, he works a miracle to prove to them, that the very right which they disputed was vested in him, that he had this authority — “but that ye may KNOW that the Son of man hath POWER on earth to forgive sins, then saith he to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine own house.”

Such were the acts performed by our Saviour, in the days of his sojourn on earth, and which he is represented, by his inspired apostles, to be still constantly performing, or as having the power to perform. — If any creature is capable of doing the same mighty works, then is all distinction between created, finite natures, and the uncreated Infinite destroyed. If such a distinction, in fact, exists; if neither creation, preservation, nor salvation be possible to a mere creature, we have seen that they are possible to Christ, because he actually creates, preserves, and saves; and the inevitable conclusion is, THAT HE IS VERY GOD.
CHAPTER 15. —
DIVINE WORSHIP PAID TO CHRIST.

FROM Christ’s own acts we may pass to those of his disciples and particularly to one which unequivocally marks their opinion respecting his Divinity: they WORSHIP him as a Divine person, and they enjoin this also upon Christians to the end of time. If Christ, therefore, is not God, the apostles were idolaters, and Christianity is a system of impiety. This is a point so important as to demand a close investigation.

The fact that Divine worship was paid to Christ by his disciples must be first established. Instances of falling down at the feet of Jesus and worshipping him are so frequent in the Gospel, that it is not necessary to select the instances which are so familiar; and though we allow that the word προσκυνεῖν is sometimes used to express that lowly reverence with which, in the east, it has been always customary to salute persons considered as greatly superior, and especially rulers and sovereigns, it is yet the same word which, in a great number of instances; is used to express the worship of the supreme God. We are, then, to collect the intention of the act of worship, whether designed as a token of profound civil respect, or of real and Divine adoration, from the circumstances of the instances on record. When a leper comes and “WORSHIPS” Christ, professing to believe that he had the power of healing diseases, and that in himself, which power he could exercise at his will, all which he expresses by saying, “Lord, if thou WILT, thou CANST make me clean,” we see a Jew retaining that faith of the Jewish Church in its purity, which had been corrupted among so many of his nation, that the Messiah was to be a Divine person; and, viewing our Lord under that character, he regarded his miraculous powers as original and personal, and so hesitated not to worship him. Here then, is a case in which the circumstances clearly show that the worship was religious and supreme. When the man who had been cured of blindness by Jesus, and who had defended his prophetic character before the council, before he knew that he had a higher character than that of a prophet, was met in private by Jesus, and instructed in the additional fact, that he was “THE SON OF GOD,” he worshipped him. “Jesus heard, that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is
he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he WORSHIPPED him:” — worshipped him, be it observed, under his character, “Son of God,” a title which, we have already seen, was regarded by the Jews as implying actual Divinity, and which the man understood to raise Jesus far above the rank of a mere prophet. The worship paid by this man must, therefore, in its intention, have been supreme, for it was offered to an acknowledged Divine person, the Son of God. When the disciples, fully yielding to the demonstration of our Lord’s Messiahship, arising out of a series of splendid miracles, recognized him also under his personal character, “they came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God!” Matthew 14:33. When Peter, upon the miraculous draught of fishes, “fell at his feet,” and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” those expressions themselves mark as strongly the awe and apprehension which is produced in the breast of a sinful man, when he feels himself in the presence of Divinity itself, as when Isaiah exclaims, in his vision of the Divine glory, “Wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

The circumstances then, which accompany these instances make it evident, that the worship here paid to our Lord was of the highest order; and they will serve to explain several other cases in the Gospels, similar in the act, though not accompanied with illustrative circumstances so explicit. But there is one general consideration of importance which applies to them all. Such acts of lowly prostration as are called worship were chiefly paid to civil governors. Now our Lord cautiously avoided giving the least sanction to the notion that he had any civil pretensions, and that his object was to make himself king. It would, therefore, have been a marked inconsistency to suffer himself to be saluted with the homage and prostration proper to civil governors, and which, indeed, was not always in Judea, rendered to them. He did not receive this homage, then, under the character of a civil ruler or sovereign; and under what character could he receive it? Not in compliance with the haughty custom of the Jewish rabbis, who exacted great external reverence from their disciples, for he sharply reproved their haughtiness and love of adulation and honour: not as a simple teacher of religion, for his apostles might then have imitated his example, since, upon the Socinian hypothesis of his mere manhood, they, when they had collected disciples and founded Churches, had as clear a right to this distinction as he himself, had it only been one of appropriate and common
courtesy sanctioned by their master. But when do we read of their receiving worship without spurning it on the very ground that “they were MEN of like passions” with others? How, then, is it to be accounted for, that our Lord never forbade or discouraged this practice as to himself, or even shunned it? In no other way than that he was conscious of his natural right to the homage thus paid; and that he accepted it as the expression of a faith which, though sometimes wavering, because of the obscurity which darkened the minds of his followers, and which even his own conduct, mysterious as it necessarily was, till “he openly showed himself” after his passion, tended to produce, yet sometimes pierced through the cloud, and saw and acknowledged, in the Word made flesh, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

But to proceed with instances of worship subsequent to our Lord’s resurrection and ascension: “He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and they WORSHIPPED him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,” Luke 24:51, 52. Here the act must necessarily have been one of Divine adoration, since it was performed after “he was parted from them,” and cannot be resolved into the customary token of personal respect paid to superiors. This was always done in the presence of the superior; never by the Jews in his absence.

When the apostles were assembled to fill up the place of Judas, the lots being prepared, they pray, “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these men thou hast chosen.” That this prayer is addressed to Christ is clear, from its being his special prerogative to choose his own disciples, who, therefore, styled themselves “apostles,” not of the Father, but “of Jesus Christ.” Here, then, is a direct act of worship, because an act of prayer; and our Lord is addressed as he who “knows the hearts of all men.” Nor is this more than he himself claims in the Revelation, “And all the Churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the heart.”

When Stephen, the protomartyr, was stoned, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles records two instances of prayer offered to our Lord by this man “full of the Holy Ghost,” and therefore, according to this declaration, under plenary inspiration. “LORD JESUS! RECEIVE MY SPIRIT!” “LORD, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE!” In the former he acknowledges Christ to be the disposer of the eternal states of men: in the latter, he acknowledges him to be the governor and judge of men, having power to remit, pass by, or
visit their sins. All these are manifestly Divine acts, which sufficiently show, that St. Stephen addressed his prayers to Christ as God. The note from Lindsay, inserted in the Socinian version, shows the manner in which the Socinians attempt to evade this instance of direct prayer being offered by the apostles to Christ. “This address of Stephen to Jesus, when he actually saw him, does not authorize us to offer prayers to him now he is invisible.” And this is seriously alleged! How does the circumstance of an object of prayer and religious worship being seen or unseen alter the case? May a man, when seen, be an object of prayer, to whom, unseen, it would be unlawful to pray? The papists, if this were true, would find a new refutation of their practice of invoking dead saints furnished by the Socinians. Were they alive and seen, prayer to them would be lawful; but now they are invisible, it is idolatry! Even image worship would derive, from this casuistry, a sort of apology, as the seen image is, at least, the visible representation of the invisible saint or angel. But let the case be put fairly: suppose a dying person to pray to a man, visible and near his bed, “Lord, receive my spirit: Lord, lay not sin to the charge of my enemies,” who sees not that this would be gross idolatry? And yet if Jesus be a mere man, the idolatry is the same, though that man be in heaven. It will not alter the case, for the Socinian to say that the man Jesus is exalted to great dignity and rule in the invisible world; for he is, after all, on their showing, but a servant; not a dispenser of the eternal states of men, not an avenger or a passer by of sin, in his own right, that he should lay sin to the charge of any one, or not lay it, as he might be desired to do by a disciple; and if St. Stephen had these views of him, he would not, surely, have asked of a servant, what a servant had no power to grant. Indeed, the Socinians themselves give up the point, by denying that Christ is lawfully the object of prayer. There, however, he is prayed to, beyond all controversy, and his right and power to dispose of the disembodied spirits of men is as much recognized in the invocation of the dying Stephen, as the same right and power in the Father, in the last prayer of our Lord himself: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

To Dr. Priestley’s objection, that this is an inconsiderable instance, and is to be regarded as a mere ejaculation, Bishop Horsley forcibly replies: “St. Stephen’s short ejaculatory address you had not forgotten; but you say it is very inconsiderable. But, sir, why is it inconsiderable? Is it because it was only an ejaculation? Ejaculations are often prayers of the most fervid kind; the most expressive of self-abasement and adoration. Is it for its brevity
that it is inconsiderable? What, then, is the precise length of words which is requisite to make a prayer an act of worship? Was this petition preferred on an occasion of distress, on which a Divinity might be naturally invoked? Was it a petition for a succour which none but a Divinity could grant? If this was the case, it was surely an act of worship. Is the situation of the worshipper the circumstance which, in your judgment, sir, lessens the authority of his example? You suppose, perhaps, some consternation of his faculties, arising from distress and fear. The history justifies no such supposition. It describes the utterance of the final prayer, as a deliberate act of one who knew his situation, and possessed his understanding. After praying for himself, he kneels down to pray for his persecutors: and such was the composure with which he died, although the manner of his death was the most tumultuous and terrifying, that as if he had expired quietly upon his bed, the sacred historian says, that ‘he fell asleep.’ If, therefore, you would insinuate, that St. Stephen was not himself, when he sent forth this ‘short ejaculatory address to Christ,’ the history refutes you. If he was himself, you cannot justify his prayer to Christ, while you deny that Christ is God, upon any principle that might not equally justify you or me, in praying to the blessed Stephen. If St. Stephen, in the full possession of his faculties, prayed to him who is no God, why do we reproach the Romanist, when he chaunts the litany of his saints?”

St. Paul, also, in that affliction, which he metaphorically describes by “a thorn in the flesh,” “sought the Lord thrice” that it might depart from him; and the answer shows that “the LORD,” to whom he addressed his prayer, was CHRIST; for he adds, “and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness, most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the POWER OF CHRIST may rest upon me;” clearly signifying the power of him who had said, in answer to his prayer, “My strength, δυνάμεις, power, is made perfect in weakness.”

St. Paul also prays to Christ, conjointly with the Father, in behalf of the Thessalonians. “Now our LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good work,” 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17. In like manner he invokes our Lord to grant his spiritual presence to Timothy: “The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit,” 2 Timothy 4:22. The invoking of Christ is, indeed, adduced by St. Paul as a distinctive characteristic of Christians, so that among all the primitive Churches this practice must have been universal. “Unto the
Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,” 1 Corinthians 1:2. “It appears, from the expression here and elsewhere used, that to invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ was a practice characterizing and distinguishing Christians from infidels.” (Dr. Benson.) Thus St. Paul is said, before his conversion, to have had “authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name.” The Socinian criticism is, that the phrase ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα may be translated either “to call on the name,” or be called by the name; and they, therefore, render 1 Corinthians 1:2, “all that are called by the name of Jesus Christ.” If, however, all that can be said in favour of this rendering is, that the verb may be rendered passively, how is it that they choose to render it actively in all places, except where their system is to be served? This itself is suspicious. But it is not necessary to produce the refutations of this criticism given by several of their learned opponents, who have shown that the verb, followed by an accusative case, usually, if not constantly, is used, in its active signification, to call upon, to invoke. One passage is sufficient to prove both the active signification of the phrase, when thus applied, and also that to call upon the name of Christ is an act of the highest worship. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” Romans 10:13. This is quoted from the Prophet Joel. St. Peter, in his sermon on the day of pentecost, makes use of it as a prophecy of Christ, and the argument of St. Paul imperatively requires us also to understand it of him. Now this prophecy proves that the phrase in question is used for invocation, since it is not true that whosoever shall be called by the name of the Lord will be saved, but those only who rightly call upon it; it proves also that the calling upon the name of the Lord, here mentioned, is a religious act, for it is calling upon the name of Jehovah, the word used by the Prophet Joel, the consequence of which act of faith and worship is salvation. “This text, indeed, presents us with a double argument in favour of our Lord’s Divinity. First, it applies to him what, by the Prophet Joel, is spoken of Jehovah; secondly, it affirms him to be the object of religious adoration. Either of these particulars does, indeed, imply the other; for if he be Jehovah, he must be the object of religious adoration; and if he be the object of religious adoration, he must be Jehovah.” (Bishop Horne.)

In the Revelation, too, we find St. John worshipping Christ, “falling at his feet as one dead.” St. Paul also declares “that at the name of Jesus every
KNEE shall bow,” which, in Scripture language, signifies an act of religious worship. “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But this homage and adoration of Christ is not confined to men; it is practised among heavenly beings. “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.” For the purpose of evading the force of these words, the Socinians, in their version, have chosen the absurdity of rendering αγγελοι throughout this chapter, by “messengers,” but in the next chapter, as though the subject would, by that time, be out of the reader’s mind, they return to the common version, “angels.” Thus they make the “spirits and flames of fire,” or, as they render it, “winds and flames of lightning,” to be the ancient prophets or messengers, not angels; and of these same prophets and messengers, who lived several thousand years ago, their translation affirms that they “are sent forth to minister for them who shall be (in future!) heirs of salvation.” The absurdity is so apparent, that it is scarcely necessary to add, that, in the New Testament, though “angel” is sometimes applied to men, yet “angels of God” is a phrase never used, but to express an order of heavenly intelligences.

If, however, either prophets or angels were commanded to worship Christ, his Divinity would be equally proved, and, therefore, the note on this text, in the New Version teaches, that “to worship Christ” here means to acknowledge him as their superior; and urges that the text is cited from the LXX, Deuteronomy 32:43, “where it is spoken of the Hebrew nation, and, therefore, cannot be understood of religious worship.” But whoever will turn to the LXX, will see that it is not the Hebrew nation, but Jehovah, who is exhibited in that passage as the object of worship; and if, therefore, the text were cited from the book of Deuteronomy, and the genuineness of the passage in the LXX were allowed, for it is not in the present Hebrew text, it would only afford another proof, that, in the mind of the apostles, the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New are the same being, and that equal worship is due to both. We have, however, an unquestioned text in the Old Testament, Psalm 97:7, from which the quotation is obviously made; where, in the Hebrew, it is “worship him, all ye gods,” a probable ellipsis for “the angels of the Aleim;” for the LXX uses the word “angels.” This psalm the apostle, therefore, understood of Christ, and in this the old Jewish interpreters agree with him; and though he is not mentioned in it by any of his usual Old Testament titles, except
that of Jehovah, it clearly predicts the overthrow of idolatry by the introduction of the kingdom of this Jehovah. It follows then, that as idolatry was not overthrown by Judaism, but by the kingdom of Christ, it is Christ, as the head and author of this kingdom, of whom the psalmist speaks, and whom he sees receiving the worship of the angels of God upon its introduction and establishment. This, also, agrees with the words by which the apostle introduces the quotation. “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world,” the habitable world; which intimates that it was upon some solemn occasion, when engaged in some solemn act, that the angels were commanded to worship him, and this act is represented in the ninety-seventh Psalm as the establishment of his kingdom. Bishop Horsley’s remarks on this psalm are equally just and beautiful.

“That Jehovah’s kingdom in some sense or other is the subject of this Divine song, cannot be made a question, for thus it opens, — ‘Jehovah reigneth.’ The psalm, therefore, must be understood, either of God’s natural kingdom over his whole creation; of his particular kingdom over the Jews, his chosen people; or of that kingdom which is called in the New Testament the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ. For of any other kingdom beside these three, man never heard or read. God’s peculiar kingdom over the Jews cannot be the subject of this psalm, because all nations of the earth are called upon to rejoice in the acknowledgment of this great truth, ‘Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the many isles be glad thereof.’ The many isles are the various regions of the habitable world.

“The same consideration, that Jehovah’s kingdom is mentioned as a subject of general thanksgiving, proves that God’s universal dominion over his whole creation cannot be the kingdom in the prophet’s mind. For in this kingdom a great majority of the ancient world, the idolaters, were considered, not as subjects who might rejoice in the glory of their monarch; but as rebels who had every thing to fear from his just resentment.

“It remains, therefore, that Christ’s kingdom is that kingdom of Jehovah which the inspired poet celebrates as the occasion of universal joy. And this will farther appear by the sequel of the song. After four verses, in which the transcendent glory, the irresistible
power, and inscrutable perfection of the Lord, who to the joy of all nations reigneth, are painted in poetical images, taken partly from the awful scene on Sinai which accompanied the delivery of the law, partly from other manifestations of God’s presence with the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, he proceeds, in the sixth verse, ‘The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.’ We read in the 19th Psalm, that ‘the heavens declare the glory of God.’ And the glory of God, the power and the intelligence of the Creator, is indeed visibly declared in the fabric of the material world. But I cannot see how the structure of the heavens can demonstrate the righteousness of God. Wisdom and power may be displayed in the contrivance of an inanimate machine; but righteousness cannot appear in the arrangement of the parts, or the direction of the motions of lifeless matter. The heavens therefore, in their external structure, cannot declare their Maker’s righteousness. But the heavens, in another sense, attested the righteousness of Christ when the voice from heaven declared him the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased; and when the preternatural darkness of the sun at the crucifixion, and other agonies of nature, drew that confession from the heathen centurion who attended the execution, that the suffering Jesus was the Son of God; ‘And all the people see his glory.’ The word people, in the singular, for the most part denoted God’s chosen people, the Jewish nation, unless any other particular people happen to be the subject of discourse. But peoples, in the plural, is put for all the other races of mankind as distinct from the chosen people. The word here is in the plural form, ‘And all the peoples see his glory.’ But when, or in what did any of the peoples, the idolatrous nations, see the glory of God? Literally they never saw his glory. The effulgence of the Shechinah never was displayed to them, except when it blazed forth upon the Egyptians to strike them with a panic; or when the towering pillar of flame, which marshalled the Israelites in the wilderness, was seen by the inhabitants of Palestine and Arabia as a threatening meteor in their sky. Intellectually no idolaters ever saw the glory of God, for they never acknowledged his power and Godhead: had they thus seen his glory, they had ceased to be idolaters. But all the peoples, by the preaching of the Gospel, saw the glory of Christ. They saw it literally in the miracles performed by his apostles; they saw it
spiritually when they perceived the purity of his precepts, when they acknowledged the truth of his doctrine, when they embraced the profession of Christianity, and owned Christ for their Saviour and their God. The psalmist goes on, ‘Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols. Worship him, all ye gods.’ In the original this verse has not at all the form of a malediction, which it has acquired in our translation from the use of the strong word confounded. ‘Let them be ashamed.’ This is the utmost that the psalmist says. The prayer that they may be ashamed of their folly and repent of it, is very different from an imprecation of confusion. But in truth the psalmist rather seems to speak prophetically, without any thing either of prayer or imprecation — ‘they shall be ashamed.’ Having seen the glory of Christ they shall be ashamed of the idols, which in the times of ignorance they worshipped. In the 8th and 9th verses, looking forward to the times when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and the remnant of Israel shall turn to the Lord, he describes the daughter of Judah as rejoicing at the news of the mercy extended to the Gentile world, and exulting in the universal extent of Jehovah’s kingdom, and the general acknowledgment of his Godhead.” (Nine Sermons.)

The argument of the apostle is thus made clear; he proves Christ superior to angels, and therefore Divine. because angels themselves are commanded “to worship him.” Nor is this the only prophetic psalm in which the religious worship of Messiah is predicted. The 72d Psalm, alone, is full of this doctrine. “They shall FEAR thee as long as the sun and moon endure.” “All kings shall WORSHIP (or, FALL DOWN) before him; all nations shall SERVE him.” “PRAYER shall be made ever for (or, to) him, and daily shall he be PRAISED.”

Finally, as to the direct worship of Christ, the book of Revelation, in its scenic representations, exhibits him as, equally with the Father, the object of the worship of angels and of glorified saints; and, in chapter eighth, places every creature in the universe, the inhabitants of hell only excepted, in prostrate adoration at his footstool. “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, AND UNTO THE LAMB for ever and ever.”
To these instances are to be added, all the DOXOLOGIES to Christ, in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and all the BENEDICTIONS made in his name in common with theirs; for all these are forms of worship. The first consist of ascriptions of equal and Divine honours, with grateful recognitions of the Being addressed, as the author of benefits received; the second are a solemn blessing of others in the name of God, and were derived from the practice of the Jewish priests and the still older patriarchs, who blessed others in the name of Jehovah, as his representatives.

Of the first, the following may be given as a few out of many instances: “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom: to whom be GLORY for ever and ever,” 2 Timothy 4:18. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be GLORY both now and for ever. Amen,” 2 Peter 3:18. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be GLORY and DOMINION for ever and ever. Amen,” Revelation 1:5, 6. “When we consider the great difference between these doxologies and the commendations but sparingly given in the Scriptures to mere men; the serious and reverential manner in which they are introduced; and the superlative praise they convey, so far surpassing what humanity can deserve, we cannot but suppose that the Being to whom they refer is really Divine. The ascription of eternal glory and everlasting dominion, if addressed to any creature, however exalted, would be idolatrous and profane.” (Holden’s Testimonies.) Of benedictions the commencement and conclusion of several of the epistles furnish instances, so regular in their form, as to make it clearly appear, that the apostles and the priests of the New Testament constantly blessed the people ministerially in the name of Christ, as one of the blessed trinity. This consideration alone shows that the benedictions are not, as the Socinians would take them, to be considered as cursory expressions of good will. “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This, with little variation, is the common form of salutation; and the usual parting benediction is, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all;” or, more fully, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” In answer to the Socinian perversion, that these are mere “wishes,” it has been well and wisely observed, that “this objection overlooks, or notices very slightly, the
point on which the whole question turns, the nature of the blessings sought, and the qualities which they imply in the Person as whose donation they are deliberately desired. These blessings are not of that kind which one creature is competent to bestow upon another. They refer to the judicial state of an accountable being before God, to the remission of moral offences, to the production and preservation of certain mental qualities which none can efficaciously and immediately give but He who holds the dominion of human minds and feelings, and to the enjoyments of supreme and endless felicity. They are grace, mercy, and peace. Grace, the free favour of the Eternal Majesty to those who have forfeited every claim to it, such favour as in its own nature and in the contemplation of the supplicant, is the sole and effective cause of deliverance from the greatest evils, and acquisition of the greatest good. Mercy, the compassion of infinite goodness, conferring its richest bestowments of holiness and happiness on the ruined, miserable, and helpless. Peace, the tranquil and delightful feeling which results from the rational hope of possessing these enjoyments. These are the highest blessings that Omnipotent Benevolence can give, or a dependent nature receive. To desire such blessings, either in the mode of direct address or in that of precatory wish, from any being who is not possessed of omnipotent goodness, would be, not 'innocent and proper,' but sinful and absurd in the highest degree. When, therefore, we find every apostle whose epistles are extant, pouring out his 'expressions of desire,' with the utmost simplicity and energy, for these blessings, as proceeding from 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' equally with 'God our Father,' we cannot but regard it as the just and necessary conclusion that Christ and the Father are one in the perfection which originates the highest blessings, and in the honour due for the gift of those blessings.” (Smith’s Person of Christ.)

So clearly does the New Testament show that supreme worship was paid to Christ, as well as to the Father; and the practice obtained as a matter of course, as a matter quite undisputed in the primitive Church, and has so continued, in all orthodox Churches, to this day. Thus heathen writers represented the first Christians as worshippers of Christ; and, as for the practice of the primitive Church, it is not necessary to quote passages from the fathers, which are so well known, or so easily found in all books which treat on this subject. It is sufficient evidence of the practice, that when, in the fourth century, the Arians taught, that our Lord was a super angelic creature only, they departed not, in the instance of worship, from the
homage paid to him in the universal Church; but continued to adore Christ. On this ground the orthodox justly branded them with idolatry; and, in order to avoid the force of the charge, they invented those sophistical distinctions as to superior and inferior worship which the papists, in later times, introduced, in order to excuse the worship of saints and angels. Even the old Socinians allowed Christ to be the object of religious adoration; so impossible was it, even for them, to oppose themselves all at once to the reproving and condemning universal example of the Church of Christ in all ages.

Having, then, established the fact of the worship of Christ by his immediate followers, whose precepts and example have, in this matter, been followed by all the faithful; let us consider the religious principles which the first disciples held, in order to determine whether they could have so worshipped Christ, unless his true Divinity had been, with them, a fundamental and universally received doctrine. They were Jews; and Jews of an age in which their nation had long shaken off its idolatrous propensities, and which was distinguished by its zeal against all worship, or expressions of religious trust and hope being directed, not only to false gods, (to idols,) but to creatures. The great principle of the law was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before (or, beside) me.” It was, therefore, commanded by Moses, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and him shalt thou serve;” which words are quoted by our Lord in his temptation, when solicited to worship Satan, so as to prove that to fear God and to serve him are expressions which signify worship, and that all other beings but God are excluded from it. “Thou shalt WORSHIP the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The argument, too, in the quotation, is not that Satan had no right to receive worship because he was an evil spirit; but that, whatever he might be, or whoever should make that claim, God only is to be worshipped. By this, also, we see that Christianity made no alteration in Judaism, as to the article of doctrine, for our Lord himself here adopts it as his own principle; he quotes it from the writings of Moses, and so transmitted it on his own authority, to his followers. Accordingly, we find the apostles teaching and practising this as a first principle of their religion, St. Paul, Romans 1:21-25, charges the heathen with not glorifying God when they knew him, and worshipping and serving “the creature more than (or, beside) the Creator, who is blessed for ever.” “Wherein the apostle,” says Waterland, “plainly intimates, that the Creator only is to be served, and that the idolatry of the heathens lay in their
worshipping of the creature. He does not blame them for giving sovereign or absolute worship to creatures; they could scarcely be so silly as to imagine there could be more than one supreme God; but for giving any worship to them at all, sovereign or inferior.” (Defence of Queries.) Again: when he mentions it as one of the crimes of the Galatians, previous to their conversion to Christianity, that they “did service unto them which by nature were no gods,” he plainly intimates, that no one has a title to religious service but he who is by nature God; and, if so, he himself could not worship or do service to Christ, unless he believed him to possess a natural and essential Divinity.

The practice of the apostles, too, was in strict accordance with this principle. Thus, when worship was offered to St. Peter, by Cornelius, who certainly did not take him to be God, he forbade it: so also Paul and Barnabas forbade it at Lystra, with expressions of horror, when offered to them. An eminent instance is recorded, also, of the exclusion of all creatures, however exalted, from this honour, in Revelation 19:10, where the angel refuses to receive so much as the outward act of adoration, giving this rule and maxim upon it, “Worship God;” intimating thereby, that God only is to be worshipped; that all acts of religious worship are appropriated to God alone. He does not say, “Worship God, and whom God shall appoint to be worshipped,” as if he had appointed any beside God; nor “Worship God with sovereign worship,” as if any inferior sort of worship was permitted to be paid to creatures; but simply, plainly, and briefly, “Worship God.”

From the known and avowed religious sentiments, then, of the apostles, both as Jews and as Christians, as well as from their practice, it follows that they could not pay religious worship to Christ, a fact which has already been established, except they had considered him as a Divine person, and themselves as bound, on that account, according to his own words, to honour the Son, even as they honoured the Father.

The Arians, it is true, as hinted above, devised the doctrine of supreme and inferior worship, and a similar distinction was maintained by Dr. Samuel Clarke, to reconcile the worship of Christ with his semi-Arianism. The same sophistical distinctions are resorted to by Roman Catholics to vindicate the worship of angels, the Virgin Mary, and departed saints. This distinction they express by λατρεία and δουλεία. St. Paul, however, and other sacred writers, and the early fathers, certainly use these terms
promiscuously and indifferently, so that the argument which is founded upon them, in defence of this inferior and subordinate worship, falls to the ground; and, as to all these distinctions of worship into ultimate or supreme, mediate or inferior, Dr. Waterland has most forcibly observed, —

1. “I can meet with nothing in Scripture to countenance those fine-spun notions. Prayer we often read of; but there is not a syllable about absolute and relative, supreme and inferior prayer. We are commanded to pray fervently and incessantly; but never sovereignly or absolutely that I know of. We have no rules left us about raising or lowering our intentions, in proportion to the dignity of the objects. Some instructions to this purpose might have been highly useful; and it is very strange that, in a matter of so great importance, no directions should be given, either in Scripture, or, at least, in antiquity, how to regulate our intentions and meanings, with metaphysical exactness; so as to make our worship either high, higher, or highest of all, as occasion should require.

2. “But a greater objection against this doctrine is, that the whole tenor of Scripture runs counter to it. This may be understood, in part, from what I have observed above. To make it yet plainer, I shall take into consideration such acts and instances of worship, as I find laid down in Scripture, whether under the old or new dispensation.

“Sacrifice was one instance of worship required under the law; and it is said, ‘He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed,’ <sup>Exodus 22:20</sup>. Now suppose any person, considering with himself that only absolute and sovereign sacrifice was appropriated to God, by this law, should have gone and sacrificed to other gods, and have been convicted of it before the judges: — the apology he must have made for it, I suppose, must have run thus: ‘Gentlemen, though I have sacrificed to other gods, yet, I hope, you’ll observe, that I did it not absolutely: I meant not any absolute or supreme sacrifice, (which is all that the law forbids,) but relative and inferior only. I regulated my intentions with all imaginable care, and my esteem with the most critical exactness: I considered the other gods, whom I sacrificed to, as inferior only, and infinitely so; reserving all sovereign sacrifice to the supreme God of Israel.’ This, or the like apology, must, I presume, have brought off the criminal, with some applause for his acuteness, if your principles be true. Either you
must allow this; or you must be content to say, that not only absolute supreme sacrifice, (if there be any sense in that phrase,) but all sacrifice was, by the law, appropriated to God only.

“Another instance of worship is, making of vows, religious vows. We find as little appearance of your famed distinction here, as in the former case. We read nothing of sovereign and inferior, absolute and relative vows; that we should imagine supreme vows to be appropriate to God, inferior permitted to angels or idols, or to any creature.

“Swearing is another instance much of the same kind with the foregoing. Swearing by God’s name is a plain thing, and well understood: but if you tell us of sovereign and inferior swearing, according to the inward respect or intention you have, in proportion to the dignity of the person by whose name you swear, it must sound perfectly new to us. All swearing which comes short in its respects, or falls below sovereign, will, I am afraid, be little better than profaneness.

“Such being the case in respect of the acts of religious worship already mentioned, I am now to ask you, what is there so peculiar in the case of invocation and adoration, that they should not be thought of the same kind with the other? Why should not absolute and relative prayer and prostration appear as absurd as absolute and relative sacrifice, vows oaths, or the like? They are acts and instances of religious worship, like the other; appropriated to God in the same manner, and by the same laws, and upon the same grounds and reasons. Well then, will you please to consider whether you have not begun at the wrong end, and committed an ὑπέρτερον πρὸτερον in your way of thinking. You imagine that acts of religious worship are to derive their signification and quality from the intention and meaning of the worshippers; whereas the very reverse of it is the truth. Their meaning and signification is fixed and determined by God himself; and therefore we are never to use them with any other meaning, under peril of profaneness or idolatry. God has not left us at liberty to fix what sense we please upon religious worship, to render it high or low, absolute or relative, at discretion, supreme when offered to God, and if to others inferior: as when to angels, or saints, or images, in suitable
proportion. No: religion was not made for metaphysical heads only; such as might nicely distinguish the several degrees and elevations of respect and honour among many objects. The short and plain way, which (in pity to human infirmity, and to prevent confusion,) it has pleased God to take with us, is to make all religious worship his own; and so it is sovereign of course. This I take to be the true Scriptural, as well as only reasonable account of the object of worship. We need not concern ourselves (it is but vain to pretend to it) about determining the sense and meaning of religious worship. God himself has taken care of it; and it is already fixed and determined to our hands. It means, whether we will or no, it means, by Divine institution and appointment, the divinity, the supremacy, the sovereignty of its object. To misapply those marks of dignity, those appropriate ensigns of Divine majesty; to compliment any creature with them, and thereby to make common what God has made proper, is to deify the works of God’s hands, and to serve the creature instead of the Creator, God blessed for ever. We have no occasion to talk of sovereign, absolute prayers, and such other odd fancies: prayer is an address to God, and does not admit of those novel distinctions. In short then, here is no room left for your distinguishing between sovereign and inferior adoration. You must first prove, what you have hitherto presumed only, and taken for granted, that you are at liberty to fix what meaning and signification you please to the acts of religious worship, to make them high or low at discretion. This you will find a very difficult undertaking. Scripture is beforehand with you; and, to fix it more, the concurring judgment of the earliest and best Christian writers. All religious worship is hereby determined to be what you call absolute and sovereign. Inferior or relative worship appears now to be contradiction in sense, as it is novel in sound; like an inferior or relative god.” (Defence of Queries.)

These absurdities have, at length, been discovered by Socinians themselves, who, notwithstanding the authority of Socinus, have, at length, become, in this respect, consistent; and, as they deny the Divinity of our Lord, so they refuse him worship, and do NOT “honour the Son as they honour the Father.” Their refusal to do so must be left to him who hath said, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way;” but, though they have
not shunned error, they have, at least, by refusing all worship to Christ, escaped from hypocrisy.

Numerous other passages in the New Testament, in addition to those on which some remarks have been offered, might be adduced, in which the Divinity of our Lord is expressly taught, and which might be easily rescued from that discreditable and unscholarly criticism, by which Socinian writers have attempted to darken their evidence. It has, however, been my object rather to adduce passages which directly support the arguments in the order in which they have been adduced, than to collect those which are more insulated. All of them ought, however, to be consulted by the careful student; and, indeed, from many texts of this description, which appear to be but incidentally introduced, the evidence that the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ was taught by the apostles, is presented to us with this impressive circumstance, that the inspired writers of the New Testament all along assume it as a point which was never, in that age, questioned by true Christians. It influenced, therefore, the turn of their language, and established a *theological style* among them when speaking of Christ, which cannot possibly be reconciled to any hypothesis which excludes his essential Deity; and which no honest, or even rational, men could have fallen into, unless they had acknowledged and worshipped their Master as God.

Out of this numerous class of passages, one will suffice for illustration.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation,” &c, \[344\] Philippians 2:5-7. Here the apostle is recommending an humble and benevolent disposition to the Philippians; and he enforces it, not certainly by considerations which themselves needed to be established by proof, or in which the Philippians had not been previously instructed, but in the most natural manner, and that only which a good writer could adopt, by what was already established, and received as true among them. It was already admitted by the Philippians as an undoubted verity of the Christian religion, that before Christ appeared in “the form of a servant,” he existed “in the form of God,” and before he was “found in fashion as a man,” he was such a being as could not think it “robbery to be equal with God.” On these very grounds the example of Christ is proposed to his followers, and its imitation enforced upon them. This incidental and familiar manner of introducing so great a subject,
clearly shows that the Divinity of Christ was a received doctrine; but, though introduced incidentally, the terms employed by the apostle are as strong and unequivocal as if he had undertaken formally to propose it. It is not necessary to show this by going through that formidable mass of verbal criticism which commentators, scholiasts, and other critics, have accumulated around this passage. Happily as to this, as well as many other important texts which form the bases of the great dogmata of Christianity, much less is left to verbal criticism than many have supposed; the various clauses, together with the connection, so illustrate and guard the meaning as to fix their sense, and make it obvious to the general reader. “Who being” or “subsisting in the form of God.” This is the first character of Christ’s exalted pre-existent state, and it is adduced as the ground of a claim which, for a season, he divested himself of, and became, therefore, an illustrious example of humility and charity. The greatness of Christ is first laid down, then what he renounced of that which was due to his greatness, and finally the condition is introduced to which he stooped or humbled himself. “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” These are, obviously, the three great points in this celebrated text, to the consideration of which we are strictly bound by the apostle’s argument. Let each be briefly considered, and it will be seen how impossible it is to explain this passage in any way which does not imply our Lord’s essential Divinity. To be or to subsist in “the form of God,” is to be truly and essentially God. This may, indeed, be argued from the word μορφή, though some have confined its meaning to external form or appearance. The Socinian exposition, that “the form of God” signifies his power of working miracles, needs no other refutation than that the apostle here speaks of what our Lord was before he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. The notion, too, of Whitby and others, who refer it to the visible glory of God, in which he appeared to the patriarchs, is also disproved by this manifest consideration, that the phrase “subsisting (υπαρχων) in the form of God,” describes the permanent pre-existent state of Christ. He subsisted in the form of God, therefore, from eternity, and consequently before he made any visibly glorious manifestations of himself to the patriarchs; nor, as God is invisible and immaterial, and consequently has no likeness of figure, could our Lord, in their sense, “subsist” in the form or appearance of God. It, indeed, “form” means likeness, it must be intellectual likeness, and, therefore, to subsist in the form of God is to be God, for he could not be
the likeness of God, or, as the apostle has it in the Hebrews, the “express image” or character of his person, without being God; for how could he be expressly like, or expressly resemble, or have the appearance of omnipotence, if he were not himself almighty; or of omniscience, if not himself all-knowing? Let us then allow that μορφή in its leading sense has the signification of form, shape, image, and similitude, yet this can only be applied to the Divine Being figuratively. He has no sensible form, no appearance, and nothing can be in this form or image, therefore, but what has the same essential properties and perfections. “Sed age,” says Eisner, “largiamur Socinianis μορφήν θεου speciem et imaginem Dei esse, tamen valido inde argumento docebimus; Deum esse natura, qui in forma et imagine Dei existeret; nisi Deum personatum, et commentitium, qui speciem quidem et φαντασμα haberet veritate carens, credere et adorare malint.” (Observationes Sacrae in loc.) But it is not true, as some have hastily stated, that μορφή signifies only the outward form of any thing; it is used in Greek authors for the essential form, or nature itself of a thing, of which examples may be seen in Wetstein, Elsner, Rosenmuller, Schleusner, and others; and accordingly Schleusner explains it “per metonymiam; ipsa natura et essentia alicujus rei,” and adds, “sic legitur in N.T. Philip. 2:6, ubi Christus dicitur εν μορφη Θεου υπαρχων ad designandam sublimiorem ipsius naturam.” The Greek fathers also understood μορφή in the sense of ουσια, and to use the phrase “being in the form of God,” to signify the “being really and truly GOD.’

Thus the term itself is sufficiently explicit of the doctrine; but the context would decide the matter, were the verbal criticism less decidedly in favour of this interpretation. “The form of God” stands opposed to “the form of a servant.” This, say those critics who would make the form of God an external appearance only, means “the appearance and behaviour of a bondsman or slave, and not the essence of such a person.”

But δουλος, a slave, is not in the New Testament taken in the same opprobrious sense as among us. St. Paul calls himself “the slave of Jesus Christ,” and our translators have, therefore, properly rendered the word by servant, as more exactly conveying the meaning intended. Now it is certain, that Christ was the servant or minister both of the Father and of his creatures. He himself declares, that he came not “to be ministered unto, but to minister;” and as to be in the form of a servant is not, therefore, to have the appearance of a servant, but to be really a servant, so to be in the form of God is to be really GOD. This is rendered still stronger by the following
clause, which is exegetic of the preceding, as will appear from the literal rendering, the force of which is obscured by the copulative introduced into the common version. It is not, “and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,” but “being made in the likeness of men,” which clearly denotes that he took the form of a servant by “being made in the likeness of men,” so that, as Bishop Pearson irresistibly argues,

“The phrase ‘in the form of God,’ not elsewhere mentioned, is used by the apostle with respect unto that other, of ‘the form of a servant,’ exegetically continued, ‘in the likeness of men;’ and the respect of one unto the other is so necessary, that if the form of God be not real and essential as the form of a servant, or the likeness of man, there is no force in the apostle’s words, nor will his argument be fit to work any great degree of humiliation upon the consideration of Christ’s exinanition. But by the form is certainly understood the true condition of a servant, and by the likeness is infallibly meant the real nature of man: nor doth the fashion, in which he was found, destroy, but rather assert the truth of his humanity. And therefore, as sure as Christ was really and essentially man, of the same nature with us, in whose similitude he was made; so certainly was he also really and essentially God, of the same nature and being with him, in whose form he did subsist.”

(Discourses on the Creed.)

The greatness of him who “humbled himself” being thus laid down by the apostle, he proceeds to state what, in the process of his humiliation, he waived of that which was due to his greatness. He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation;” or, as many choose to render it, “he emptied himself.” Whether the clause, “thought it not robbery,” be translated “esteemed it not an object to be caught at, or eagerly desired, to be as God,” or did not think it a “usurpation;” or, as our translators have it, a “robbery” to be equal with GOD, signifies little; for, after all the criticism expended on this unusual phrase, that Christ had a right to that which he might have retained, but chose to waive when he humbled himself, is sufficiently established both by the meaning of the word and by the connection itself. Some Socinians allow the common translation, and their own version is to the same effect, — he “did not esteem it a prey,” which can only mean, though they attempt to cloud the matter in their note, that he did not esteem that as his own property to which he had no right. That, then, which he did not account a “prey,” a
seizure of another’s right or property, was “to be equal with GOD.” Whether, in the phrase τὸ ἰσα Θεοῦ, to be equal with God, ἰσα is to be taken adverbially, and translated as, like as, GOD; or, by enallage, for the singular adjective masculine, and to be rendered equal to God, has been matter of dispute. The grammatical authority appears to predominate in favour of the latter, and it is supported by several of the fathers and the ancient versions; but here, again, we are not left to the niceties of verbal criticism. If taken in either way, the sense is much the same: he thought it not a robbery, or usurpation, to be equal with God or, as God, which, as the sense determines, was an equality of honour and dignity; but made himself of no reputation. For as the phrase, the form of God, signifies his essential Divinity, so that of which he “emptied” or divested himself for the time was something to which he had a right consequent upon his Divinity; and if to be equal with God, or to be as God, was his right, as a Divine person, it was not any thing which he was essentially of which he divested himself, for that were impossible, but something which, if he had not been God, it would have been a robbery and usurpation either to claim or retain. This, then, can be nothing else than the assumption of a Divine majesty and glory; the proclamation of his own rights, and the demand of his creatures’ praise and homage, the laying aside of which, indeed, is admirably expressed in our translation, “but made himself of no reputation!” This is also established by the antithesis in the text. “The form of a servant” stands opposed to “the form of God,” — a real servant to real Divinity; and to be “equal” with God, or, as God, in glory, honour, and homage, is contrasted with the humiliations of a human state. “In that state he was made flesh, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to the infirmities and miseries of this life; in that state he was “made of a woman, made under the law,” and so obliged to fulfil the same; in that state he was born, and lived to manhood in a mean condition: was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” in that state, being thus made man, he took upon him “the form of a servant.” If any man doubt how Christ emptied himself, the text will satisfy him, — “by taking the form of a servant:” if any still question how he took the form of a servant, he hath the apostle’s solution, — “by being made in the likeness of men.” And being found in fashion as a man; being already by his exinanition, in the form of a servant, he humbled himself, becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Bishop Pearson.) The first stage of his humiliation was his assuming “the form of a servant;” the completion of it, his “obedience unto death.” But what say the Socinians?
As with them to be in the form of God means to be invested with miraculous powers, so to empty or divest himself, was his not exerting those powers in order to prevent his crucifixion. The truth, however, is, that he “emptied” himself, not at his crucifixion, but when he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; so that if to divest or empty himself be explained of laying down his miraculous gifts, he laid them down before he became man, that is, according to them, before he had any existence. There is no alternative, in this and many similar passages, between orthodoxy and the most glaring critical absurdity.
CHAPTER 16. — HUMANITY OF CHRIST — HYPOSTATIC UNION — ERRORS AS TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

In the present day, the controversy as to the person of Christ is almost wholly confined to the question of his Divinity; but, in the early ages of the Church, it was necessary to establish his proper humanity. The denial of this appears to have existed as early as the time of St. John, who, in his epistles, excludes from the pale of the Church all who denied that Christ was come in the flesh. As his Gospel, therefore, proclaims the Godhead, so his epistles defend also the doctrine of his humanity.

The source of this ancient error appears to have been a philosophical one. Both in the oriental and Greek schools, it was a favourite notion, that whatever was joined to matter was necessarily contaminated by it, and that the highest perfection of this life was abstraction from material things, and, in another, a total and final separation from the body. This opinion was, also, the probable cause of leading some persons, in St. Paul’s time, to deny the reality of a resurrection, and to explain it figuratively. But, however that may be, it was one of the chief grounds of the rejection of the proper humanity of Christ among the different branches of the Gnostics, who, indeed, erred as to both natures. The things which the Scriptures attribute to the human nature of our Lord they did not deny; but affirmed that they took place in appearance only, and they were, therefore, called Docetæ and Phantasiasæ. At a later period, Eutyches fell into a similar error, by teaching that the human nature of Christ was absorbed into the Divine, and that his body had no real existence. These errors have passed away, and danger now lies only on one side; not, indeed, because men are become less liable or less disposed to err, but because philosophy, — from vain pretences to which, or a proud reliance upon it, almost all great religious errors spring, — has, in later ages, taken a different character.

While these errors denied the real existence of the body of Christ, the Apolloninarian heresy rejected the existence of a human soul in our Lord, and taught that the Godhead supplied its place. Thus both these views denied to Christ a proper humanity, and both were, accordingly, condemned by the general Church.
Among those who held the union of two natures in Christ, the Divine and human, which, in theological language is called the hypostatical, or personal union, several distinctions were also made which led to a diversity of opinion. The Nestorians acknowledged two persons in our Lord, mystically and more closely united than any human analogy can explain. The Monophysites contended for one person and one nature, the two being supposed to be, in some mysterious manner, confounded. The Monothelites acknowledged two natures and one will. Various other refinements were, at different times, propagated; but the true sense of Scripture appears to have been very accurately expressed by the council of Chalcedon, in the fifth century, — that in Christ there is one person; in the unity of person, two natures, the Divine and the human; and that there is no change, or mixture, or confusion of these two natures, but that each retains its own distinguishing properties. With this agrees the Athanasian Creed, whatever be its date, — “Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting — Who although he be God and man, yet he is not two; but one Christ: one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.” The Church of England, by adopting this creed, has adopted its doctrine on the hypostatical union, and has farther professed it in her second article. “The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed virgin of her substance, so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.”

Whatever objections may be raised against these views by the mere reason of man, unable to comprehend mysteries so high, but often bold enough to impugn them, they certainly exhibit the doctrine of the New Testament on these important subjects, though expressed in different terms. Nor are these formularies to be charged with originating such distinctions and adding them to the simplicity of Scripture, as they often unjustly are by those who, either from lurking errors in their own minds, or from a vain affectation of being independent of human authority, are most prone to question them. Such expositions of faith were rendered necessary by the dangerous speculations and human refinements to which we have above
adverted; and were intended to be (what they may be easily proved from Scripture to be in reality) summaries of inspired doctrines; not new distinctions, but declarations of what had been before taught by the Holy Spirit on the subject of the hypostatical union of natures in Christ; and the accordance of these admirable summaries with the Scriptures themselves will be very obvious to all who yield to their plain and unperverted testimony. That Christ is very God, has been already proved from the Scriptures, at considerable length; that he was truly a man, no one will be found to doubt; that he is but one person, is sufficiently clear from this, that no distinction into two was ever made by himself, or by his apostles, and from actions peculiar to Godhead being sometimes ascribed to him under his human appellations; and actions and sufferings peculiar to humanity being also predicated of him under Divine titles. That in him there is no confusion of the two natures, is evident from the absolute manner in which both his natures are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures. His Godhead was not deteriorated by uniting itself with a human body, for “he is the true God;” his humanity was not, while on earth, exalted into properties which made it different in kind to the humanity of his creatures; for, “as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same.” If the Divine nature in him had been imperfect, it would have lost its essential character, for it is essential to Deity to be perfect and complete; if any of the essential properties of human nature had been wanting, he would not have been man; if, as some of the preceding notions implied, Divine and human had been mixed and confounded in him, he would have been a compounded being, neither God nor man. Nothing was deficient in his humanity, nothing in his Divinity, and yet he is one Christ. This is clearly the doctrine of the Scripture, and it is admirably expressed in the creeds above quoted; and, on that account, they are entitled to great respect. They embody the sentiments of some of the greatest men that ever lived in the Church, in language weighed with the utmost care and accuracy; and they are venerable records of the faith of distant ages.

These two circumstances, the completeness of each nature, and the union of both in one person, is the only key to the language of the New Testament, and so entirely explains and harmonizes the whole as to afford the strongest proof, next to its explicit verbal statements, of the doctrine that our Lord is at once truly God and truly man. On the other hand, the impracticability of giving a consistent explanation of the testimony of God “concerning his Son Jesus Christ” on all other hypotheses, entirely confutes
them. In one of two ways only will it be found, by every one who makes
the trial honestly, that all the passages of holy writ respecting the person
of Christ can be explained; either by referring them, according to the rule
of the ancient fathers, to the Θεολογία, by which they meant every thing
that related to the Divinity of our Saviour; or to the Οἰκονομία, by which
they meant his incarnation, and every thing that he did in the flesh to
procure the salvation of mankind. This distinction is expressed in modern
theological language, by considering some things which are spoken of
Christ, as said of his Divine, others of his human nature; and he who takes
this principle of interpretation along with him will seldom find any difficulty
in apprehending the sense of the sacred writers, though the subjects
themselves be often, to human minds, inscrutable.

Does any one ask, for instance, if Jesus Christ was truly God, how he
could be born and die? how he could grow in wisdom and stature? how he
could be subject to law? be tempted? stand in need of prayer? how his soul
could be “exceeding sorrowful even unto death?” be “forsaken of his
Father?” purchase the Church with “his own blood?” have “a joy set before
him?” be exalted? have “all power in heaven and earth” given to him? &c.
The answer is, that he was also Man.

If, on the other hand, it be a matter of surprise, that a visible Man should
heal diseases at his will, and without referring to any higher authority, as he
often did; still the winds and the waves; know the thoughts of men’s hearts;
foresee his own passion in all its circumstances; authoritatively forgive sins;
be exalted to absolute dominion over every creature in heaven and earth;
be present wherever two or three are gathered, in his name; be with his
disciples to the end of the world; claim universal homage and the bowing
of the knee of all creatures to his name; be associated with the Father in
solemn ascriptions of glory and thanksgiving, and bear even the awful
names of God, names of description and revelation, names which express
Divine attributes: — what is the answer? Can the Socinian scheme, which
allows him to be a man only, produce a reply? Can it furnish a reasonable
interpretation of texts of sacred writ which affirm all these things? Can it
suggest any solution which does not imply that the sacred penmen were
not only careless writers, but writers who, if they had studied to be
misunderstood, could not more delusively have expressed themselves? The
only hypothesis, explanatory of all these statements, is, that Christ is God
as well as Man, and by this the consistency of the sacred writers is brought
out, and a harmonizing strata of sentiment is seen compacting the Scriptures into one agreeing and mutually adjusted revelation.

But the union of the two natures in Christ in one hypostasis, or person, is equally essential to the full exposition of the Scriptures, as the existence of two distinctively, the Divine and the human; and without it many passages lose all force, because they lose all meaning. In what possible sense could it be said of THE WORD, that “he was made (or became) FLESH,” if no such personal unity existed? The Socinians themselves seem to acknowledge the force of this, and therefore translate “and the Word was flesh,” affirming falsely, as various critics have abundantly shown, that the most usual meaning of γίνομαι is to be. Without the hypostatical union, how could the argument of our Lord be supported, that the Messiah is both David’s SON and David’s LORD? If this is asserted of two persons, then the argument is gone; if of one, then two natures, one which had authority as Lord, and the other capable of natural descent, were united in one person. Allowing that we have established it, that the appellative “Son of God” is the designation of a Divine relation, but for this personal union the visible Christ could not be, according to St. Peter’s confession, “the Son of the living God.” By this doctrine we also learn how it was that “the Church of GOD” was “purchased by his OWN BLOOD.” Even if we concede the genuine reading to be “the Lord,” this concession yields nothing to the Socinians, unless the term LORD were a human title, which has been already disproved, and unless a mere man could be “LORD both of the dead and the living,” could wield universal sovereignty, and be entitled to universal homage. If, then, the title “THE LORD” be an appellation of Christ’s superior nature, in no other sense could it be said that the Church was purchased by HIS OWN blood, than by supposing the existence of that union which we call personal; a union which alone distinguishes the sufferings of Christ from that of his martyred followers, gave to them a merit which theirs had not, and made “his blood” capable of PURCHASING the salvation of the “Church.” For, disallow that union, and we can see no possible meaning in calling the blood of Christ “the blood of God,” or, if it please better, “of the Lord;” or in what that great peculiarity consisted which made it capable of purchasing or redeeming.

Dr. Pye Smith, in his very able work on the person of Christ, has rather inconsiderately blamed the orthodox, for “the very serious offence of sometimes using language which applies to the Divine nature the circumstances and properties which could only attach to his humanity,” as
giving unhappy occasion to the objections and derisions of their opponents. As he gives no instances, he had his eye, probably, upon some extreme cases; but if he meant it as a remark of general application, it seems to have arisen from a very mistaken view, and assumes, that the objections of opponents lie rather against terms than against the doctrine of Christ’s Divinity itself.

This is so far from being the case, that, if the orthodox were to attend to the caution given by this writer on this subject, they would not approach one step nearer to the conversion of those who are in this fundamental error, supporting it, as they do, by perversions so manifest, and by criticisms so shameless. I am no apologist, however, of real “errors and faults” in theological language; but the practice referred to, so far from being “a serious offence,” has the authority of the writers of the New Testament. Argumentatively, the distinction between the Divine and human natures, according to the rule before given, must be maintained; but when speaking cursorily, and on the assumption of the unquestionable truth of the hypostatic union of the Divine and human natures, — a manner of speaking, which, it is hoped, all true Christians adopt, as arising from their settled convictions on this point, — those very terms, so common among the orthodox, and so objectionable to those who “deny the Lord that bought them,” must be maintained in spite of “derision,” or the language of the New Testament must be dropped, or at least be made very select, if this dangerous, and in the result, this betraying courtesy be adopted. For what does Dr. P. Smith gain, when cautioning the believer against the use of the phrase “the blood of GOD,” by reminding him that there is reason to prefer the reading, “the Church of the Lord, which he hath purchased by his own blood?” The orthodox contend, that the appellation “THE LORD,” when applied to our Saviour, is his title as GOD, and the heterodox know, also, that the “blood of the Lord” is a phrase with us entirely equivalent to “the blood of GOD.” They know, too, that we neither believe that “GOD” nor “THE LORD” could die; but in using the established phrase, the all-important doctrine of the existence of such a union between the two natures of our Lord as to make the blood which he shed more than the blood of a mere man, more than the blood of his mere humanity itself, is maintained and exhibited; and while we allow that God could not die, yet that there is a most important sense in which the blood of Christ was “the blood of GOD.”
We do not attempt to explain this mystery, but we find it on record; and, in point of fact, that careful appropriation of the properties of the two natures to each respectively, which Dr. Pye Smith recommends, is not very frequent in the New Testament, and for this obvious reason, first the question of our Lord’s Divinity is more generally introduced as an indisputed principle, than argued upon. It is true, that the Apostle Paul lays it down, that our Lord was of the seed of David, “according to the FLESH” and “the Son of God, according to the SPIRIT OF HOLINESS.” Here is an instance of the distinction; but generally this is not observed by the apostles, because the equally fundamental doctrine was always present to them, that the SAME PERSON who was FLESH was also truly GOD. Hence they scruple not to say, that “the Lord of glory was crucified,” that “the Prince of life was killed,” and that HE who was “in the form of God,” became “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

We return, from this digression, to notice a few other passages, the meaning of which can only be opened by the doctrine of the personal union of the Divine and human natures in Christ. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead BODILY,” Colossians 2:9; not by a type and figure, but, as the word σωματικῶς signifies really and substantially, and for the full exposition, we must add, by personal union; for we have no other idea by which to explain an expression never used to signify the inhabitation of good men by God, and which is here applied to Christ in a way of eminence and peculiarity.

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had BY HIMSELF purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” Hebrews 1:3. To this passage, also, the hypostatical union is the only key. Of whom does the apostle speak, when he says, “when he had BY HIMSELF purged our sins,” but of Him who is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person?” He, by HIMSELF, “purged our sins;” yet this was done by the shedding of his blood. In that higher nature, however, he could not suffer death; and nothing could make the sufferings of his humanity a purification of sins BY HIMSELF, but such a union as should constitute one person: — for, unless this be allowed, either the characters of Divinity in the preceding verses are characters of a merely human being; or else that higher nature was capable of suffering death; or, if not, the purification was not made by HIMSELF, which yet the text affirms.
In fine, all passages which (not to mention many others) come under the following classes have their true interpretation thus laid open, and are generally utterly unmeaning on any other hypothesis.

1. Those which, like some of the foregoing, speak of the **efficacy** of the sufferings of Christ for the remission of sins. In this class the two following may be given as examples. Hebrews 2:14, “Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,” &c. Here the efficacy of the death of Christ is explicitly stated; but as explicitly is it said to be the death of one who partook of flesh and blood, or who **assumed** human nature. The power of deliverance is ascribed to him who thus invested himself with a nature below that of his own original nature; but in that lower nature **HE dies**, and by that **DEATH** he delivers those who had been all their lifetime subject to bondage. The second is Colossians 1:14. &c, “In whom we have redemption through **HIS** blood, even the forgiveness of sins, **WHO** is the image of the invisible God,” &c. In this passage, the lofty description which is given of the person of Christ stands in immediate connection with the mention of the efficacy of “his blood,” and is to be considered as the reason why, through that blood, redemption and remission of sins became attainable. Thus “without shedding of blood there could be no remission;” but the blood of Jesus only is thus efficacious, who is “the image of the invisible God,” the “Creator” of all things. His blood it could not be but for the hypostatical union; and it is equally true, that but for that he could have had no blood to shed; because, as “the image of the invisible God,” that is, God’s equal, or God himself, his nature was incapable of death.

2. In the second class are all those passages which argue from the compassion which our Lord manifested in his humiliation, and his own experience of sufferings, to the exercise of confidence in him by his people in dangers and afflictive circumstances. Of these the following may be given for the sake of illustration. Hebrews 4:15, 16, “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Several similar passages occur in the early part of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the argument of them all is precisely the same. The humiliation of our Lord, and his acquaintance with human woes, may assure us of his sympathy; but sympathy is not help. He
is represented, therefore, as the source of “succour,” as the “Author of salvation,” “the Captain of our salvation,” in consequence of the sufferings he endured; and to him all his people are directed to fly for aid in prayer, and by entire trust in his power, grace, and presence, to assure themselves that timely succour and final salvation shall be bestowed upon them by him. Now here, also, it is clear, that the sufferer and the Saviour are the same person The man might suffer; but sufferings could not enable the man to save; they could give no new qualification to human nature, nor bestow upon that nature any new right. But, beside the nature which suffered, and learned the bitterness of human woes by experience, there is a nature which can know the sufferings of all others, in all places, at all times; which can also ascertain the “time of need” with exactness, and the “grace” suitable to it; which can effectually “help” and sustain the sorrows of the very heart, a power peculiar to Divinity, and finally bestow “eternal salvation.” This must be Divine; but it is one in personal union with that which suffered and was taught sympathy, and it is this union constitutes that “GREAT HIGH PRIEST” of our profession, that “merciful and faithful High Priest,” who is able “to succour us when we are tempted.” Thus, as it has been well observed on this subject, “It is by the union of two natures in one person that Christ is qualified to be the Saviour of the world. He became man, that, with the greatest possible advantage to those whom he was sent to instruct, he might teach them the nature and the will of God; that his life might be their example; that by being once compassed with the infirmities of human nature, he might give them assurance of his fellow feeling; that by suffering on the cross he might make atonement for their sins; and that in his reward they might behold the earnest and the pattern of theirs.

“But had Jesus been only man, or had he been one of the spirits that surround the throne of God, he could not have accomplished the work which he undertook: for the whole obedience of every creature being due to the Creator, no part of that obedience can be placed to the account of other creatures, so as to supply the defects of their service, or to rescue them from the punishment which they deserve. The Scriptures, therefore, reveal, that he who appeared upon earth as man, is also God, and as God, was mighty to save; and by this revelation they teach us, that the merit of our Lord’s obedience, and the efficacy of his interposition, depend upon the hypostatical union.
“All modern sects of Christians agree in admitting that the greatest benefits arise to us from the Saviour of the world being man; but the Arians and Socinians contend earnestly, that his sufferings do not derive any value from his being God; and their reasoning is specious. You say, they argue, that Jesus Christ, who suffered for the sins of men, is both God and man. You must either say that God suffered, or that he did not suffer: if you say that God suffered, you do indeed affix an infinite value to the sufferings; but you affirm that the Godhead is capable of suffering, which is both impious and absurd: if you say that God did not suffer, then, although the person that suffered had both a Divine and a human nature, the sufferings were merely those of a man, for, according to your own system, the two natures are distinct, and the Divine is impassible.

“In answer to this method of arguing, we may admit that the Godhead cannot suffer, and we do not pretend to explain the kind of support which the human nature derived, under its sufferings, from the Divine, or the manner in which the two were united. But from the uniform language of Scripture, which magnifies the love of God in giving his only-begotten Son, which speaks in the highest terms of the preciousness of the blood of Christ, which represents him as coming, in the body that was prepared for him, to do that which sacrifice and burnt offering could not do: from all this we infer that there was a value, a merit, in the sufferings of this person, superior to that which belonged to the sufferings of any other: and as the same Scriptures intimate, in numberless places, the strictest union between the Divine and human nature of Christ, by applying to him promiscuously the actions which belong to each nature, we hold that it is impossible for us to separate in our imagination, this peculiar value which they affix to his sufferings from the peculiar dignity of his person.

“The hypostatical union, then, is the corner stone of our religion. We are too much accustomed, in all our researches, to perceive that things are united, without our being able to investigate the bond which unites them, to feel any degree of surprise that we cannot answer all the questions which ingenious men have proposed upon this subject; but we can clearly discern, in those purposes of the incarnation of the Son of God which the Scriptures declare, the
reason why they have dwelt so largely upon his Divinity; and if we are careful to take into our view the whole of that description which they give of the person by whom the remedy in the Gospel was brought; if, in our speculations concerning him, we neither lose sight of the two parts which are clearly revealed, nor forget, what we cannot comprehend, that union between the two parts which is necessarily implied in the revelation of them, we shall perceive, in the character of the Messiah, a completeness and a suitableness to the design of his coming, which of themselves create a strong presumption that we have rightly interpreted the Scriptures.” (Dr. Hill.)

On this evidence from the Holy Scriptures the doctrine of the Divinity of our blessed Saviour rests. Into the argument from antiquity my limits will not allow me to enter. If the great “falling away,” predicted by St. Paul, had involved, generally, this high doctrine; if both the Latin and Greek Churches had wholly departed from the faith, instead of having united, without intermission, to say, “Thou art the King of glory, O Christ,” “Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father,” the truth of God would not have been made of “none effect.” God would still have been true, though every man, from the age of inspiration, had become “a liar.” The Socinians have, of late years, shown great anxiety to obtain some suffrages from antiquity in their favour, and have collected every instance possible of early departure from the faith.

They might, indeed, have found heretical pravity and its adherents, without travelling out of the New Testament; men not only near the apostolic age, but in the very days of the apostles, who rejected the resurrection, who consented not “to wholesome doctrine,” who made “shipwreck of faith,” as well as of a good conscience, who denied “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ,” “the Lord that bought them.” This kind of antiquity is, in truth, in their favour; and, as human nature is substantially the same in all ages, there is as much reason to expect errors in one age as another; but that any body of Christians, in any sense entitled to be considered as an acknowledged branch of the Church of Christ, can be found, in primitive times, to give any sanction to their opinions and interpretations of Scripture, they have failed to establish. For full information on the subject of the opinions of the primitive Churches, and a full refutation of all the pretences which Arians and Socinians, in these later times, have made to be, in part, supported by primitive authority, the works of Bishop Bull, Dr.
Waterland, and Bishop Horsley, \textsuperscript{186} must be consulted; and the result will show, that in the interpretation of the Scriptures given above, we are supported by the successive and according testimonies of all that is truly authoritative in those illustrious ages which furnished so many imperishable writings for the edification of the future Church, and so many martyrs and confessors of “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

Among the numerous errors, with respect to the person of our Lord, which formerly sprung up in the Church, and were opposed, with an ever watchful zeal, by its authorities, three only can be said to have much influence in the present day, Arianism, Sabellianism, and Socinianism. In our own country, the two former are almost entirely merged in the last, whose characteristic is the tenet of the simple humanity of Christ. ARIUS, who gave his name to the first, seems to have wrought some of the floating errors of previous times into a kind of system, which, however, underwent various modifications among his followers. The distinguishing tenet of this system was, that Christ was the first and most exalted of creatures; that he was produced in a peculiar manner, and endowed with great perfections; that by him God made the world; that he alone proceeded immediately from GOD, while other things were produced mediately by him, and that all things were put under his administration. The semi-Arians divided from the Arians, but still differed from the orthodox, in refusing to admit that the Son was \textit{homoousios}, or of the \textit{same} substance with the Father; but acknowledged him to be \textit{homoiousios}, of a \textit{like} substance with the Father. It was only, however, in appearance that they came nearer to the truth than the Arians themselves, for they contended that this \textit{likeness} to the Father in essence was not by \textit{nature}, but by peculiar privilege. In their system Christ, therefore, was but a creature. A still farther refinement on this doctrine was, in this country, advocated by Dr. Samuel Clarke, which Dr. Waterland, his great and illustrious opponent, showed, notwithstanding the orthodox terms employed, still implied that Christ was a created being, unless an evident absurdity were admitted. \textsuperscript{187}

The \textit{Sabellian} doctrine stands equally opposed to trinitarianism and to the Arian system. It asserts the Divinity of the Son and the Spirit against the latter, and denies the personality of both, in opposition to the former. Sabellius taught that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are only denominations of one \textit{hypostasis}; in other words, that there is but one person in the Godhead, and that the Son or Word are virtues, emanations, or functions only: that, under the Old Testament God delivered the law as
Father; under the New, dwelt among men, or was incarnate, as the Son; and descended on the apostles as the Spirit. Because their scheme, by denying a real Sonship, obliged them to acknowledge that it was the Father who suffered for the sins of men, the Sabellians were often, in the early ages, called Patripassians.

On the refutation of these errors it is not necessary to dwell, both because they have now little influence, and chiefly because both are involved in the Socinian question, and are decided by the establishment of the Scriptural doctrine of a trinity of Divine persons in the unity of the Godhead. If Jesus Christ be the Divine Son of God; if he was “sent” from God, and “returned” to God; if he distinguished himself from the Father both in his Divine and human nature, saying, as to the former, “I and my Father are ONE,” and as to the latter,” My Father is GREATER than I;” if there be any meaning at all in his declaration, “that no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son,” words which cannot, by any possibility, be spoken of an official distinction, or of an emanation or operation; then all these passages prove a real personality, and are incapable of being explained by a modal one. This is the answer to the Sabellian opinion; and as to the Arian hypothesis, it falls, with Socinianism, before that series of proofs which has already been adduced from Holy Writ, to establish the eternity, consubstantiality, coequality, and, consequently, the proper Divinity of our Redeemer; and, perhaps, the true reason why not even the semi-Arianism, argued with so much subtlety by Dr. Samuel Clarke, has been able to retain any influence among us, is less to be attributed to the able and learned writings of Dr. Waterland and others, who chased the error through all its changeful transformations, than to the manifest impossibility of conceiving of a being which is neither truly God nor a creature; and the total absence of all countenance in the Scriptures, however tortured, in favour of this opinion. Socinianism assumes a plausibility in some of its aspects, because Christ was really a man; but semi-Arianism is a mere hypothesis, which can scarcely find a text of Scripture to pervert.
CHAPTER 17. — THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The discussion of this great point of Christian doctrine may be included in much narrower limits than those I have assigned to the Divinity of Christ, so many of the principles on which it rests having been closely considered, and because the Deity of the Spirit, in several instances, inevitably follows from that of the Son. As the object of this work is to educe the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures on all the leading articles of faith, it will, however, be necessary to show the evidence which is there given to the two propositions in the title of the chapter: — that the Holy Ghost (from the Saxon word G*AST, a Spirit,) is a person; and that he is God.

As to the manner of his being, the orthodox doctrine is, that as Christ is God by an eternal filiation, so the Spirit is God by procession from the Father and the Son. “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and Son together, is worshipped and glorified.” (Nicene Creed.) “The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.” (Athanasian Creed.) “The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.” (Articles of the English Church.) The Latin Church introduced the term spiration, from spiro, to breathe, to denote the manner of this procession; on which Dr. Owen remarks, “as the vital breath of a man has a continual emanation from him, and yet is never separated utterly from his person, or forsaketh him, so doth the Spirit of the Father and the Son proceed from them by a continual Divine emanation, still abiding one with them.” On this refined view little can be said which has obvious Scriptural authority; and yet the very term by which the third person in the trinity is designated wind or breath may as to the third person, be designed, like the term Son applied to the second, to convey, though imperfectly, some intimation of that manner of being by which both are distinguished from each other, and from the Father; and it was a remarkable action of our Lord, and one certainly which does not discountenance this idea, that when he imparted the Holy Ghost to his disciples, “he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” <sup>188</sup> John 20:22.
But whatever we may think as to the doctrine of “spiration,” the PROCESSION of the Holy Ghost rests on direct Scriptural authority, and is thus stated by Bishop Pearson: —

“Now this procession of the Spirit, in reference to the Father, is delivered expressly, in relation to the Son, and is contained virtually in the Scriptures. First, it is expressly said, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father, as our Saviour testifieth, ‘When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,’ John 15:26. And this is also evident from what hath been already asserted: for being the Father and the Spirit are the same God, and being so the same in the unity of the nature of God, are yet distinct in the personality, one of them must have the same nature from the other; and because the Father hath been already shown to have it from none, it followeth that the Spirit hath it from him.

“Secondly, though it be not expressly spoken in the Scripture, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and Son, yet the substance of the same truth is virtually contained there; because those very expressions, which are spoken of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father, for that reason because he proceedeth from the Father, are also spoken of the same Spirit in relation to the Son; and therefore there must be the same reason presupposed in reference to the Son, which is expressed in reference to the Father. Because the Spirit proceedeth from the Father, therefore it is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Father. ‘It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you,’ Matthew 10:20. For by the language of the apostle, the Spirit of God is the Spirit which is of God, saying, ‘The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. And we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God,’ 1 Corinthians 2:11, 12. Now the same Spirit is also called the Spirit of the Son; for ‘because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,’ Galatians 4:6: the Spirit of Christ; ‘Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,’ Romans 8:9; ‘even the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets,’ 1 Peter 1:11; the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the apostle speaks, ‘I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your
prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,’ Philippians 1:19. If then the Holy Ghost be called the Spirit of the Father, because he proceedeth from the Father, it followeth that, being called also the Spirit of the Son, he proceedeth also from the Son.

“Again: because the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father, he is therefore sent by the Father, as from him who hath by the original communication, a right of mission; as ‘the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send,’ John 14:26. But the same Spirit which is sent by the Father is also sent by the Son, as he saith, ‘When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you.’ Therefore the Son hath the same right of mission with the Father, and consequently must be acknowledged to have communicated the same essence. The Father is never sent by the Son, because he received not the Godhead from him; but the Father sendeth the Son, because he communicated the Godhead to him: in the same manner, neither the Father nor the Son is ever sent by the Holy Spirit; because neither of them received the Divine nature from the Spirit: but both the Father and the Son sendeth the Holy Ghost, because the Divine nature, common to both the Father and the Son, was communicated by them both to the Holy Ghost. As therefore the Scriptures declare expressly, that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father; so do they also virtually teach that he proceedeth from the Son.” (Discourses on the Creed.)

In opposition to the doctrine of the personality and Deity of the Spirit, stands the Socinian hypothesis, which I state before the evidence from Scripture is adduced, that it may be seen, upon examination of inspired testimony, how far it is supported by that authority. ARIUS regarded the Spirit not only as a creature, but as created by Christ, κτισμα κτισματος, the creature of a creature. Some time afterward, his personality was wholly denied by the Arians, and he was considered as the exerted energy of God. This appears to have been the notion of Socinus, and, with occasional modifications, has been adopted by his followers. They sometimes regard him as an attribute, and at others resolve the passages in which he is spoken of into a periphrasis, or circumlocution for God himself; or, to express both in one, into a figure of speech.

In establishing the proper personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, the first argument is drawn from the frequent association, in Scripture, of a person;
under that appellation, with two other persons, one of whom, "the Father," is by all acknowledged to be Divine; and the ascription to each of them, or to the three in union, of the same acts, titles, and authority, with worship of the same kind, and, for any distinction that is made, in an equal degree. This argument has already been applied to establish the Divinity of the Son, whose personality is not questioned; and the terms of the proposition may be as satisfactorily established as to the Holy Spirit, and will prove at the same time both his personality and his Divinity.

With respect to the Son, we have seen that, as so great and fundamental a doctrine as his Deity might naturally be expected to be announced in the Old Testament revelation, though its full manifestation should be reserved to the New; so it was, in fact, not faintly shadowed forth, but displayed with so much clearness as to become an article of faith in the Jewish Church. The manifestation of the existence and Divinity of the Holy Spirit may also be expected in the law and the prophets, and is, in fact, to be traced there with equal certainty. The Spirit is represented as an agent in creation, “moving upon the face of the waters;” and it forms no objection to the argument, that creation is ascribed to the Father, and also to the Son, but a great confirmation of it. That creation should be effected by all the three persons of the Godhead, though acting in different respects, yet so that each should be a Creator, and, therefore, both a person and a Divine person can be explained only by their unity in one essence. On every other hypothesis this Scriptural fact is disallowed, and therefore no other hypothesis can be true. If the Spirit of God be a mere influence, then he is not a Creator, distinct from the Father and the Son, because he is not a person; but this is refuted both by the passage just quoted and by Psalm 33:6, “By the WORD of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the BREATH (Hebrews SPIRIT) of his mouth.” This is farther confirmed by Job 33:4, “The SPIRIT OF GOD hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life;” where the second clause is obviously exegetic of the former, and the whole text proves that, in the patriarchal age, the followers of the true religion ascribed creation to the Spirit, as well as to the Father; and that one of his appellations was “the BREATH of the Almighty.” Did such passages stand alone, there might indeed be some plausibility in the criticism which solves them by a personification; but, connected as they are with that whole body of evidence, which has been and shall be adduced, as to the concurring doctrine of both Testaments, they are inexpugnable. Again: if the
personality of the Son and the Spirit be allowed, and yet it is contended that they were but *instruments* in creation, through whom the creative power of another operated, but which creative power was not possessed by them; on this hypothesis, too, neither the Spirit nor the Son can be said to *create*, any more than Moses created the serpent into which his rod was turned, and the Scriptures are again contradicted. To this association of the three persons in creative acts may be added a like association in acts of *preservation*, which has been well called a continued *creation*, and by that term is expressed in the following passage: <PSA0427>Psalm 104:27-30, “These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to dust: thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.” It is not surely here meant that the Spirit, by which the generations of animals are perpetuated, is wind; and if he be called an attribute, wisdom, power, or both united, where do we read of such attributes being “sent,” “sent forth from God?” The personality of the Spirit is here as clearly marked as when St. Paul speaks of God “sending forth the Spirit of his Son,” and when our Lord promises to “send” the Comforter; and as the upholding and preserving of created things is ascribes to the Father and the Son, so here they are ascribed, also, to the Spirit, “sent forth from” God to “create and renew the face of the earth.”

The next association of the three persons we find in the *inspiration* of the prophets. “God, spake unto our fathers by the prophets,” says St. Paul, Hebrews 1:1. St. Peter declares, that these “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” 2 Peter 1:21; and also that it was “the Spirit of Christ which was in them,” 1 Peter 1:11. We may defy any Socinian to interpret these three passages by making the Spirit an influence or attribute, and thereby reducing the term Holy Ghost into a figure of speech. “God,” in the first passage, is, unquestionably, God the Father, and the “holy men of God,” the prophets, would then, according to this view, be moved by the *influence* of the Father; but the influence, according to the third passage, which was the source of their inspiration, was the Spirit, or the *influence* of “Christ.” Thus the passages contradict each other. Allow the trinity in unity, and you have no difficulty in calling the Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son, or the Spirit of either; but if the Spirit be an influence, that influence cannot be the influence of two persons, one God, and the other a creature. Even if they
allowed the pre-existence of Christ, with Arians, the passages are inexplicable by Socinians; but, denying his pre-existence, they have no subterfuge but to interpret “the Spirit of Christ,” the Spirit which prophesied of Christ, (New Version in loc.) which is a purely gratuitous paraphrase; or “the spirit of an anointed one, or prophet;” that is, the prophet’s own spirit, which is just as gratuitous, and as unsupported by any parallel, as the former. If, however, the Holy Spirit be the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, united in one essence, the passages are easily harmonized. In conjunction with the Father and the Son, he is the source of that prophetic inspiration under which the prophets spoke and acted. So the same SPIRIT which raised Christ from the dead is said by St. Peter to have preached by Noah, while the ark was preparing, an allusion to the passage, “My Spirit shall not always strive (contend, debate) with man.” This, we may observe, affords an eminent proof, that the writers of the New Testament understood the phrase “the Spirit of God,” as it occurs in the Old Testament, personally. For, whatever may be the full meaning of that difficult passage in St. Peter, Christ is clearly declared to have preached by the Spirit in the days of Noah; that is, he, by the Spirit, inspired Noah to preach. If, then, the apostles understood that the Holy Ghost was a person, a point which will presently be established, we have, in the text just quoted from the book of Genesis, a key to the meaning of those texts in the Old Testament, where the phrases “My Spirit,” “the Spirit of God,” and “the Spirit of the Lord,” occur; and inspired authority is thus afforded us to interpret them as of a person; and if of a person, the very effort made by Socinians to deny his personality, itself indicates that that person must, from the lofty titles and works ascribed to him, be inevitably Divine. Such phrases occur in many passages of the Hebrew Scriptures; but in the following the Spirit is also eminently distinguished from two other persons. “And now the LORD GOD and his SPIRIT hath sent ME.” Isaiah 48:16; or, rendered better, “hath sent ME and his SPIRIT,” both terms being in the accusative case. “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: — for my mouth it hath commanded, and HIS SPIRIT it hath gathered them,” Isaiah 34:16. “I am with you, saith the LORD OF HOSTS: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so MY SPIRIT remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD OF HOSTS, — I will shake all nations, and the DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS shall come,” Haggai 2:4-7. Here, also, the SPIRIT of the Lord is seen collocated with the LORD OF HOSTS and the DESIRE OF ALL
NATIONS, who is the Messiah. For other instances of the indication of a trinity of Divine persons in the Old Testament, see chap. 9.

Three persons, and three only, are associated also, both in the Old and New Testament, as objects of supreme worship; as the one name in which the religious act of solemn benediction is performed, and to which men are bound by solemn religious covenant.

In the plural form of the name of God, which has already been considered, (chapter 9,) each received equal adoration. That threefold personality seems to have given rise to the standing form of triple benediction used by the Jewish high priest, also before mentioned, (chapter 9.) The very important fact, that, in the vision of Isaiah, chapter vi, the LORD OF HOSTS, who spake unto the prophet, is in <442825>Acts 28:25, said to be the HOLY GHOST who spake to the prophet, while St. John declares that the glory which Isaiah saw was the glory of CHRIST, proves, indisputably, (chapter 9,) that each of the three persons bears this august appellation; it gives also the reason for the threefold repetition “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY,” and it exhibits the prophet and the very seraphs in deep and awful adoration before the triune Lord of hosts. Both the prophet and the seraphim were, therefore, worshippers of the Holy Ghost and of the Son, at the very time and by the very acts in which they worshipped the Father, which proves that, as the three persons received equal homage in a case which does not admit of the evasion of pretended superior and inferior worship, they are equal in majesty, glory, and essence.

As in the tabernacle form of benediction, the triune Jehovah is recognized as the source of all grace and peace to his creatures; so in apostolic formula of blessing, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, be with you all. Amen.” Here the personality of the three is kept distinct, and the prayer to the three is, that Christians may have a common participation of the Holy Spirit, that is, doubtless, as he was promised by our Lord to his disciples, as a Comforter, as the source of light and spiritual life, as the author of regeneration. Thus the Spirit is acknowledged, equally with the Father and the Son, to be the source and the giver of the highest spiritual blessings, while the solemn ministerial benediction is, from its specific character, to be regarded as an act of prayer to each of the three persons, and therefore is, at once, an acknowledgment of the Divinity and personality of each. The same remark applies to Rev. 1:4. 5, “Grace be unto you and peace from
Him which was, and which is, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne,” (an emblematical representation, in reference, probably, to the golden branch with its seven lamps.) “and from Jesus Christ.” The style of the book sufficiently accounts for the Holy Spirit being called “the seven spirits;” but no created spirit or company of created spirits are ever spoken of under that appellation; and the place assigned to the seven spirits between the mention of the Father and the Son, indicates, with certainty, that one of the sacred three, so eminent, and so exclusively eminent in both dispensations, is intended.

The form of baptism next presents itself with demonstrative evidence on the two points before us, the personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. It is the form of COVENANT by which the sacred three become our ONE or ONLY GOD, and we become HIS people. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in THE NAME of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.” In what manner is this text to be disposed of, if the personality of the Holy Ghost is denied? Is the form of baptism to be so understood as to imply that it is baptism in the name of one God, one creature, and one attribute? The grossness of this absurdity refutes it, and proves that here, at least, there can be no personification. If all the three, therefore, are persons, are we to make Christian baptism a baptism in the name of one God and two creatures? This would be too near an approach to idolatry, or rather, it would be idolatry itself; for, considering baptism as an act of dedication to God, the acceptance of God as our God, on our part, and the renunciation of all other deities, and all other religions, what could a heathen convert conceive of the two creatures so distinguished from all other creatures in heaven and in earth, and so associated with God himself as to form together the one name, to which, by that act, he was devoted, and which he was henceforward to profess and honour, but that they were equally Divine, unless special care were taken to instruct him that but one of the three was God, and the two others but creatures? But of this care, of this cautionary instruction, though so obviously necessary upon this theory, no single instance can be given in all the writings of the apostles.

Baptism was not a new rite. It was used as a religious act among heathens, and especially before initiation into their mysteries. Proselytes to the law of Moses were, probably, received by baptism; whether in, or into, the name of the God of Israel does not appear; but necessarily on professing their faith in him as the true and only God. John, the forerunner of our Lord,
baptized, but it does not appear that he baptized in the name or into the name of any one. This baptism was to all but our Lord, who needed it not, a baptism “unto repentance,” that is, on profession of repentance, to be followed by “fruits meet for repentance,” and into the expectation of the speedy approach of Messiah. But Christian baptism was directed to be in the NAME of three persons, which peculiarly implies, first, the form of words to be used by the administration; second, the authority conveyed to receive such persons as had been made disciples into the Church, and, consequently, into covenant with God; third, the faith required of the person baptized, faith in the existence of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in their character according to the revelation made of each, first, by inspired teachers, and in after times by their writings; and, fourth, consecration to the service of the three persons, having one name, which could be no other than that of the one GOD. What stronger proof of the Divinity of each can be given than in this single passage? The form exhibits three persons, without any note of superiority or inferiority, except that of the mere order in which they are placed. It conveys authority in the united name, and the authority is, therefore, equal. It supposes faith, that is, not merely belief, but, as the object of religious profession and adherence, trust in each, or collectively in the one name which unites the three in one; yet that which is Divine only can be properly the object of religious truth. It implies devotion to the service of each, the yielding of obedience, the consecration of every power of mind and body to each, and therefore each must have an equal right to this surrender and to the authority which it implies.

It has been objected, that baptism is, in the book of Acts, frequently mentioned as baptism “in the name of the Lord Jesus” simply, and from hence the Socinians would infer that the formula in the Gospel of St. Matthew was not in use. If this were so, it would only conclude against the use of the words of our Lord as the standing form of baptism, but would prove nothing against the significance of baptism in whatever form it might be administered. For as this passage in St. Matthew was the original commission under which, alone, the apostles had authority to baptize at all, the import of the rite is marked out in it, and, whatever words they used in baptism, they were found to explain the import of the rite, as laid down by their Master, to all disciples so received. But, from the passages adduced from the Acts, the inference that the form of baptism given in Matthew was not rigorously followed by the apostles does not follow, “because the
earliest Christian writers inform us, that this solemn form of expression was uniformly employed from the beginning of the Christian Church. It is true, indeed, that the Apostle Peter said to those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ;’ and that, in different places of the book of Acts it is said, that persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; but there is internal evidence from the New Testament itself, that when the historian says, that persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, he means they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Jesus. Thus the question put, Acts 19:3, ‘Unto what then were ye baptized?’ shows that he did not suppose it possible for any person who administered Christian baptism to omit the mention of ‘the Holy Ghost;’ and even after the question, the historian, when he informs us that the disciples were baptized, is not solicitous to repeat the whole form, but says in his usual manner, Acts 19:5, ‘when they heard this, they were baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus.’ There is another question put by the Apostle Paul, which shows us in what light he viewed the form of baptism: 1 Corinthians 1:13, ‘Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?’ Here the question implies that he considered the form of baptism as so sacred, that the introducing the name of a teacher into it was the same thing as introducing a new master into the kingdom of Christ.”

Ecclesiastical antiquity comes in, also, to establish the exact use of this form in baptism, as the practice from the days of the apostles. The most ancient method was for the persons to be baptized to say, “I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” This was his profession of faith, and with respect to the administration, Justin Martyr, who was born soon after the death of the Apostle John, says, in his first Apology, “Whosoever can be persuaded and believe that those things which are taught and asserted by us are true — are brought by us to a place where there is water, and regenerated according to the rite of regeneration, by which we ourselves have been born again. For then they are washed in the water, in the name of God the Father and Lord of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost.” This passage, I may observe by the way, shows that, in the primitive Church, men were not baptized in order to their being taught, but taught in order to their being baptized, and that, consequently, baptism was not a mere expression of willingness to be instructed, but a profession of faith, and a consecration to the Trinity, after the course of instruction was completed. Tertullian also says, “the law of
baptism is enjoined and the form prescribed, Go teach the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (De Baptismo.)

The testimonies to this effect are abundant, and, together with the form given by our Lord, they prove that every Christian in the first ages did, upon his very entrance into the Church of Christ, profess his faith in the Divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father and the Son.

But other arguments are not wanting to prove both the personality and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. With respect to the former,

1. The mode of his subsistence in the sacred trinity proves his personality. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and cannot, therefore, be either. To say that an attribute proceeds and comes forth would be a gross absurdity.

2. From so many Scriptures being wholly unintelligible and even absurd, unless the Holy Ghost is allowed to be a person. For as those who take the phrase as ascribing no more than a figurative personality to an attribute, make that attribute to be the energy or power of God, they reduce such passages as the following to utter unmeaningness: “God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power,” that is, with the power of God and with power. “That ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost,” that is, through the power of power. “In demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” that is, in demonstration of power and of power. And if it should be pleaded that the last passage is a Hebraism for “powerful demonstration of the Spirit,” it makes the interpretation still more obviously absurd, for it would then be “the powerful demonstration of power.” “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost,” to the power of God, “and to us.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come,” — the power of God and the bride say; Come. Modern Unitarians, from Dr. Priestley to Mr. Belsham, venture to find fault with the style of the apostles in some instances; and those penmen of the Holy Spirit have, indeed, a very unfortunate method of expressing themselves for those who would make them the patrons of Socinianism; but they would more justly deserve the censures of these judges of the “words which the Holy Ghost” taught, had they been really such writers as the Socinian scheme would make them, and of which the above are instances.
3. Personification of any kind is, in some passages in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of, impossible. The reality which this figure of speech is said to present to us is either some of the attributes of God, or else the doctrine of the Gospel. Let this theory, then, be tried upon the following passages: — “He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” What attribute of God can here be personified? And if the doctrine of the Gospel be arrayed with personal attributes, where is there an instance of so monstrous a prosopopæia as this passage would present? — the doctrine of the Gospel not speaking “of himself” but speaking “whatsoever he shall hear!” “The Spirit maketh intercession for us.” What attribute is capable of interceding, or how can the doctrine of the Gospel intercede? Personification, too, is the language of poetry, and takes place naturally only in excited and elevated discourse; but if the Holy Spirit be a personification, we find it in the ordinary and cool strain of mere narration and argumentative discourse in the New Testament, and in the most incidental conversations. “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” How impossible is it here to extort, by any process whatever, even the shadow of a personification of either any attribute of God, or of the doctrine of the Gospel. So again, “The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Could it be any attribute of God which said this, or could it be the doctrine of the Gospel?

It is in vain, then, to speak of the personification of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, and of charity in the writings of St. Paul; and if even instances of the personification of Divine attributes and of the doctrine of the Gospel could be found under this very term, the Holy Spirit, yet the above texts and numerous other passages being utterly incapable of being so resolved, would still teach the doctrine of a personal Holy Ghost. The passage on which such interpreters chiefly rely as an instance of the personification of the doctrine of the Gospel is 2 Corinthians 3:6, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” To this Witsius well replies: —

“Were we to grant that the Spirit, by a metonymy, denotes the doctrine of the Gospel; what is improperly ascribed there to the Gospel as an exemplary cause, is properly to be attributed to the person of the Holy Spirit, as the principal efficient cause. Thus also that which is elsewhere ascribed to the letter of the law is, by the
same analogy, to be attributed to the person of the lawgiver. But it does not seem necessary for us to make such a concession. The apostle does not call the law, ‘the letter;’ or the Gospel, ‘the Spirit;’ but teaches that the letter is in the law, and the Spirit in the Gospel, so that they who minister to the law, minister to the letter; they who minister to the Gospel, to the Spirit. He calls that the letter, which is unable at first, and by itself, to convert a man; or to give a sinner the hope of life, much less to quicken him. By the Spirit, he understands both the person of the Spirit, and his quickening grace; which is clearly disclosed, and rendered efficacious, by means of the Gospel. In a preceding verse the apostle undoubtedly distinguishes the Spirit from the doctrine, when he calls the Corinthians ‘the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.’” (Exposition of Creed.)

Finally, that the Holy Ghost is a person, and not an attribute, is proved by the use of masculine pronouns and relatives in the Greek of the New Testament, in connection with the neuter noun \( \pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha \), Spirit; and by so many distinct personal acts being ascribed to him, as, \( \text{to come, to go, to be sent, to teach, to guide, to comfort, to make intercession, to bear witness, to give gifts, “dividing them to every man as he will,” to be vexed, grieved, and quenched.} \) These cannot be applied to the mere fiction of a person, and they, therefore, establish the Spirit’s true personality.

Some additional arguments, to those before given to establish the DIVINITY of the Holy Ghost may also be adduced.

The first is taken from his being the subject of blasphemy — “the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,” Matthew 12:31. This blasphemy consisted in ascribing his miraculous works to Satan; and that he is capable of being blasphemed proves him to be as much a person as the Son; and it proves him to be Divine, because it shows that he may be sinned against, and so sinned against, that the blasphemer shall not be forgiven. A person he must be, or he could not be blasphemed; a Divine person he must be to constitute this blasphemy a sin against him in the proper sense, and of so malignant a kind as to place it beyond the reach of mercy.

He is called GOD. “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men; but unto God.” Ananias is said to have lied, particularly “unto
the Holy Ghost,” because the apostles were under his special direction, in establishing the temporary regulation among Christians that they should have all things in common; the detection of the crime itself was a demonstration of the Divinity of the Spirit, because it showed his omniscience, his knowledge of the most secret acts. In addition to the proof of his Divinity thus afforded by this history, he is also called God, “Thou hast not lied unto men; but unto GOD.” He is also called the LORD, “Now the Lord is that Spirit,” 2 Corinthians 3:17. He is ETERNAL, “the eternal Spirit,” Hebrews 9:14. OMNIPRESENCE is ascribed to him, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;” “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Now, as all true Christians are his temples, and are led by him, he must be present to them at all times and in all places. He is said to be OMNISCIENT, “The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of GOD.” Here the Spirit is said to search or know “all things” absolutely; and then, to make this more emphatic, that he knows “the deep things of God.” things hidden from every creature, the depths of his essence, and the secrets of his counsels; for, that this is intended, appears from the next verse, where he is said to know “the things of God,” as the spirit of a man knows the things of a man. SUPREME MAJESTY is also attributed to him, so that “to lie to him,” to “blaspheme” him, “to vex” him, to do him “despite,” are sins, and render the offender liable to Divine punishment. He is the source of INSPIRATION. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” “He shall lead you into all truth.” He is the source and fountain of LIFE. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth.” “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” As we have seen him acting in the material creation, so he is the author of the NEW CREATION, which is as evidently a work of Divine power as the former: “Born of the Spirit;” “The renewing of the Holy Ghost.” He is the author of religious COMFORT — “The Comforter.” The moral attributes of God are also given to him. HOLINESS, which includes all in one: — the HOLY Ghost is his eminent designation. GOODNESS and GRACE are his attributes. “Thy Spirit is good.” “The Spirit of grace.” TRUTH also, for he is “the Spirit of truth.” How impracticable it is to interpret the phrase, “The Holy Ghost,” as a periphrasis for God himself, has been proved in considering some of the above passages, and will be obvious from the slightest consideration of the texts. A Spirit, which is the Spirit OF GOD; which is so often distinguished
FROM the Father: which “SEES” and “HEARS” “the Father;” which SEARCHES “the deep things” of God; which is “SENT” by the Father; which “PROCEEDETH” from him; and who has special PRAYER addressed to him at the same time as the Father, cannot, though “one with him,” be the Father; and that he is not the Son, is acknowledged on both sides.

As a DIVINE PERSON, our regards are, therefore, justly due to him as the object of worship and trust, of prayer and blessing; duties to which we are specially called, both by the general consideration of his Divinity, and by that affectingly benevolent and attractive character under which he is presented to us in the whole Scriptures. In creation we see him moving upon the face of chaos, and reducing it to a beautiful order; in providence, “renewing the face of the earth,” “garnishing the heavens,” and “giving life” to man. In grace we behold him expanding the prophetic scene to the vision of the seers of the Old Testament, and making a perfect revelation of the doctrine of Christ to the apostles of the New. He “reproves the world of sin,” and works secret conviction of its evil and danger in the heart. He is “the Spirit of grace and supplication;” the softened heart, the yielding will, all heavenly desires and tendencies are from him. He hastens to the troubled spirits of penitent men, who are led by his influence to Christ, and in whose hearts he has wrought faith, with the news of pardon, and “bears witness” of their sonship “with their spirit.” He aids their “infirmities;” makes “intercession for them;” inspires thoughts of consolation and feelings of peace; plants and perfects in them whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report; delights in his own work in the renewed heart; dwells in the soul as in a temple; and, after having rendered the spirit to God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, sanctified and meet for heaven, finishes his benevolent and glorious work by raising the bodies of saints in immortal life at the last day. So powerfully does “the Spirit of glory and of God” claim our love, our praise, and our obedience! In the forms of the Churches of Christ, in all ages, he has, therefore, been associated with the Father and the Son, in equal glory and blessing; and where such forms are not in use, this distinct recognition of the Spirit, so much in danger of being neglected, ought, by ministers, to be most carefully and constantly made, in every gratulatory act of devotion, that so equally to each person of the eternal trinity glory may be given “in the Church throughout all ages. Amen.”

The essential and fundamental character of the doctrine of the holy and undivided trinity has been already stated, and the more fully the evidences
of the Divinity of the Son and the Spirit are educed from the sacred writings, the more deeply we shall be impressed with this view, and the more binding will be our obligation to “content earnestly for” this part of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Nor can the plea here be ever soundly urged, that this is a merely speculative doctrine; for, as it has been well observed by a learned writer, “The truth is, the doctrine of the trinity is so far from being merely a matter of speculation, that it is the very essence of the Christian religion, the foundation of the whole revelation, and connected with every part of it. All that is peculiar in this religion has relation to the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit. And whosoever is endeavouring to invalidate these articles is overthrowing or undermining the authority of this dispensation, and reducing it to a good moral system only, or treatise of ethics.

“If the Word, or Logos, who became incarnate, was a created being only, then the mystery of his incarnation, so much insisted on in Scripture, and the love expressed to mankind thereby, so much magnified, dwindle into an interested service; and a short life of sufferings, concluded, indeed, with a painful death, is rewarded with Divine honours, and a creature advanced thereby to the glory of the Creator; for the command is plain and express, that ‘all the angels of God’ should ‘worship him.’ And have not many saints and martyrs undergone the same sufferings without the like glorious recompense? And is not the advantage to Christ himself, by his incarnation and passion, greater on this supposition, than to men, for whose sake the sacred writers represent this scheme of mercy undertaken?

“Again: if the motions of the Holy Spirit, so frequently spoken of, are only figurative expressions, and do not necessarily imply any real person who is the author of them, or if this person be only a created being, then we are deprived of all hopes of Divine assistance in our spiritual warfare; and have nothing but our own natural abilities wherewith to contend against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And is it not amazing that this article could ever be represented as a mere abstracted speculation, when our deliverance both from the penalty and power of sin does so plainly depend upon it? In the sacred writings a true faith is made as necessary, as a right practice, and this in particular in order to that end. For Arianism, Socinianism, and all those several heresies, of what kind
or title soever, which destroy the Divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost, are, indeed, no other than different schemes of infidelity; since the authority, end, and influence of the Gospel are as effectually made void by disowning the characters in which our Redeemer and Sanctifier are there represented, as even by contesting the evidences of its Divine original. These notions plainly rob those two Divine persons of their operations and attributes, and of the honour due to them; lessen the mercy and mystery of the scheme of our salvation; degrade our notion of ourselves and our fellow creatures; alter the nature of several duties, and weaken those great motives to the observance of all that true Christianity proposes to us.” (Dodwell.)
CHAPTER 18. — FALL OF MAN — DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

The Scriptural character of God having been adduced from the inspired writings, we now proceed, in pursuance of our plan, to consider their testimony as to Man, both in the estate in which he was first created, and in that lapsed condition into which the first act of disobedience plunged the first pair and their whole posterity.

Beside that natural government of God, which is exercised over material things, over mere animals, and over rational beings, considered merely as parts of the great visible creation, which must be conserved and regulated so as to preserve its order and accomplish its natural purposes; there is evidence of the existence of an administration of another kind. This we call moral government, because it has respect to the actions of rational creatures, considered as good and evil, which qualities are necessarily determined, at least to us, by a law, and that law the will of God. Whether things are good or evil by a sort of eternal fitness or unfitness in themselves, and not made so by the will of God, is a question which has been agitated from the days of the schoolmen. Like many other similar questions, however, this is a profitless one; for as we cannot comprehend the eternal reason and fitness of things on the whole, we could have no certain means of determining the moral qualities of things, without a declaration of the will of God, who alone knows them both absolutely and relatively, possibly and really, to perfection. As for the distinctions that some things are good or evil antecedently to the will of God; some consequently upon it, and some both one and the other; it may be observed that, if by the will of God we are to understand one of his attributes, nothing can be antecedent to his will; and if we understand it to mean the declared will of God, in the form of command or law, then nothing can be rewardable or punishable antecedent to the will of God, which only in that form becomes the rule of the conduct of his creatures; and is, in all the instances with which we are acquainted, revealed, under the sanction of rewards or punishments.

“But is the will of God the cause of his law? Is his will the original of right and wrong? Is a thing therefore right because God wills it? or does he will it because it is right? I fear this celebrated question
is more curious than useful; and perhaps, in the manner in which it is usually treated of, it does not well consist with the regard that is due from a creature to the Creator and Governor of all things. Nevertheless, with awe and reverence we may speak a little.

“It seems then that the whole difficulty arises from considering God’s will as distinct from God. Otherwise it vanishes away: for none can doubt but God is the cause of the law of God. But the will of God is God himself. It is God considered as willing thus and thus; consequently to say that the will of God, or that God himself is the cause of law, is one and the same thing.

“Again: if the law, the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends on the nature and fitness of things, and on their essential relations to each other: (I do not say their eternal relations, because the eternal relations of things existing in time is little less than a contradiction:) if I say this depends on the nature and relations of things, then it must depend on God, or the will of God; because those things themselves, with all their relations, are the work of his hands. By his will, for his pleasure alone, they are and were created. And yet it may be granted, which is, probably, all that a considerate person would contend for, that in every particular case God wills thus or thus, (suppose that men should honour their parents,) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation in which they stand.” (Wesley.)

All the moral and accountable creatures with which the Scriptures make us acquainted are ANGELS, DEVILS, and MEN. The first are inhabitants of heaven, and dwell in the immediate presence of God, though often employed on services to the children of men in this world. The second are represented as being in darkness and punishment as their general and collective condition, but still having access to this world by permission of God, for purposes of temptation and mischief, and as waiting for a final judgment and a heavier doom. Whether any other rational beings exist, not included in any of the above classes, dwelling in the planets and other celestial bodies, and regions of space, visible or invisible to us, and collectively forming an immensely extended and immeasurable creation, cannot be certainly determined; and all that can be said is, that the opinion is favoured by certain natural analogies between the planet we inhabit and other planetary bodies, and between our sun and planetary system and the
fixed stars, which are deemed to be solar centres of other planetary systems. But were this established, there is nothing in the fact, as some have supposed, to interfere with any view which the Scriptures give us of the moral government of God, as to this world. (See vol. i, p. 206.) Were our race alone in the universe, we should not be greater than we are; it, on the contrary, we are associated with countless myriads of fellow rationals in different and distinct residences, we are not thereby minified. If they are under moral government, so are we; if they are not, which no one can prove, the evidences that we are accountable creatures remain the same. If they have never fallen, the fact of our redemption cannot be affected by that; and if they need a Saviour, we may well leave the method of providing for their case or the reasons of their preterition to the wisdom of God; it is a fact which we have not before us, and on which we cannot reason. No sinister use at all can be made of the mere probability of the plurality of rational worlds, except to persuade us that we are so little and insignificant as to make it a vain presumption to suppose that we are the objects of Divine love. But nothing can be even more unphilosophical than the suggestion, since it supposes that, in proportion as the common Father multiplies his offspring, he must love each individual less, or be more inattentive to his interests; and because it estimates the importance of man by the existence of beings to which he has no relation, rather than by his relation to God, and his own capacity of improvement, pleasure, pain, and immortality. According to this absurd dream of infidelity, every individual in the British empire would annually lose his weight and worth in the sight of his Maker as a moral and intellectual being, because there is a great annual increase of its population.

The LAW under which all moral agents are placed, there is reason to believe, is substantially, and in its great principles, the same, and is included in this epitome, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.” For though this is spoken to men, yet, as it is founded, in both its parts, upon the natural relation of every intelligent creature to God and to all other intelligent creatures, it may be presumed to be universal. Every creature owes obedience to God its Maker, and a benevolent Creator could only seek, in the first instance, the obedience of love. Every creature must, from a revealed character of the Creator, be concluded to have been made not only to show forth his glory, but itself to enjoy happiness. Now the love of God is that affection which unites a
created intelligent nature to God, the source of true happiness, and prevents, in all cases, obedience from being felt as a burden, or regarded under the cold convictions of mere duty. If, therefore, a cheerful obedience from the creature be required as that which would constantly promote by action the felicity of the agent, this law of love is to be considered as the law of all moral beings, whether of angels or of men. Its comprehensiveness is another presumption of its universality; for, unquestionably, it is a maxim of universal import, that “love is the fulfilling of the law,” since he who loves must choose to be obedient to every command issued by the sovereign, or the Father beloved; and when this love is supreme and uniform, the obedience must be absolute and unceasing. The second command is also “like unto it” in these respects — it founds itself on the natural relations which exist among the creatures of God, and it comprehends every possible relative duty. All intelligent creatures were intended to live in society. We read of no solitary rational being being placed in any part of the creation. Angels are many, and, from all the representations of Scripture, may be considered as forming one or more collective bodies. When man was created it was decided that it was not good for him to be alone, and when “a help meet for him” was provided, they were commanded to be fruitful and multiply, that the number might be increased and the earth “replenished.” The very precepts which oblige us to love one another are presumptive that it was the will of God, not merely that his rational creatures should live in society and do no injury to each other, but that they should be “kindly affectionate one toward another;” a principle from which all acts of relative duty would spontaneously flow, and which would guard against all hostility, envy, and injury. Thus, by these two great first principles of the Divine law, the rational creatures of God would be united to him as their common Lord and Father, and to each other as fellow subjects and brethren. This view is farther supported by the intimations which the Scriptures afford us of the moral state of the only other intelligent class of beings beside man with which we are acquainted. Angels are constantly exhibited as loving God, jealous of his glory, and cheerfully active in the execution of his will; as benevolent toward each other, and as tenderly affected toward men. Devils, on the contrary, who are “the angels that sinned,” are represented as filled with hatred and malice both toward God and every holy creature.

Indeed, if rational beings are under a law at all, it cannot be conceived that less than this could be required by the good and holy being, their Creator.
They are bound to render all love, honour, and obedience to him by a natural and absolute obligation; and, as it has been demonstrated in the experience of man, any thing less would be not only contrary to the Creator’s glory, but fatal to the creature’s happiness.

From these views it follows, that all particular precepts, whether they relate to God or to other rational creatures, arise out of one or other of those two “great” and comprehending “commandments;” and that every particular law supposes the general one. For as in the decalogue and in the writings of the prophets are many particular precepts, though in neither are these two great commandments expressly recorded, and yet our Saviour has told us that “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets;” and the Apostle Paul, that the precepts, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” we are warranted to conclude that all moral, particular precepts presuppose those two general ones, wherever they are found, and to whomsoever they are given.

We may apply this consideration to our first parents in their primitive state. When the law of Moses was given, engraven on tables of stone by the finger of God, law was not first introduced into the world. Men were accounted righteous or wicked between the giving of the law and the flood, and before the flood, and were dealt with accordingly. Noah was “a righteous man,” and the “violence and wickedness” of the antediluvian earth were the causes of its destruction by water. “Enoch walked with God;” Abel was “righteous,” and Cain “wicked.” Now as the moral quality of actions is determined by law, and the moral law is a revelation of the will of God; and as every punitive act on his part, and every bestowment of rewards and favours expressly on account of righteousness, suppose a regal administration; men were under a law up to the time of the fall, which law, in all its particular precepts, did, according to the reasoning of our Lord and St. Paul, given above, presuppose the two great commandments. That our first parents were under a law, is evident from the history of the transactions in the garden; but, though but one particular command, in the form of a prohibition, was given, we are not to conclude that this was the compass of their requirements, and the sole measure of their obedience. It was a particular command, which, like those in the decalogue, and in the writings of the prophets, presupposed a general law, of which this was but one manifestation. Thus are we conducted to a more ancient date of the
Divine law than the solemnities of Sinai, or even the creation of man, a law coeval in its declaration with the date of rational created existence, and in its principles with God himself. — “The law of God, speaking of the manner of men, is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the Divine nature; yea, it is the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High; the original idea of truth and good which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity.” (Wesley.) It is “holy, just, and good.”

Under this condition of rational existence must Adam, therefore, and every other moral agent have come into being, a condition, of course, to which he could not be a party, to which he had no right to be a party, had it been possible, but which was laid upon him, he was made under law, as all his descendants are born under law. 

But that we may more exactly understand man’s primitive state, considered morally, and the nature, extent, and consequences of his fall, it is necessary to consider briefly the history of his creation.

The manner in which this is narrated indicates something peculiar and eminent in the being to be formed. In the heavenly bodies around the earth, and among all the various productions of its surface, vegetable and animal, however perfect in their kinds, and complete, beautiful and excellent in their respective natures, not one being was found to whom the rest could minister instruction, whom they could call forth into meditation, inspire with moral delight, or lead up to the Creator himself. There was, properly speaking, no intellectual being; none to whom the whole, or even any great number of the parts, of the frame and furniture of material nature could minister knowledge; no one who could employ upon them the generalizing faculty, and make them the basis of inductive knowledge. If, then, it was not wholly for himself that the world was created by God; and angels, if they, as it is indicated in Scripture, had a prior existence, were not so immediately connected with this system, that it can be supposed to have been made immediately for them; a rational inhabitant was obviously still wanting to complete the work, and to constitute a perfect whole. The formation of such a being was marked, therefore, by a manner of proceeding which serves to impress us with a sense of the greatness of the work. Not that it could be a matter of more difficulty to Omnipotence to create man than any thing beside; but principally, it is probable, because he was to be the lord of the whole, and to be, therefore, himself accountable
to the original proprietor, and to exhibit the existence of another species of
government, a moral administration; and to be the only creature constituted
an image of the intellectual and moral perfections, and of the immortality of
the common Maker. Every thing, therefore, as to man’s creation is given in
a solemn and deliberative form, together with an intimation of a trinity of
persons in the Godhead, all Divine, because all equally possessed of
creative power, and to each of whom man was to stand in relations so
sacred and intimate. “And God said, Let US make man in our image, after
our likeness; and let them have dominion,” &c. In what, then, did this
“image” and “likeness” consist?

That human nature has two essential, constituent parts is manifest from the
history of Moses: — the BODY, formed out of pre-existent matter, the
earth; and a LIVING SOUL, breathed into the body, by an inspiration from
God. “And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and
breathed into his nostrils (or face) the breath of life, (LIVES,) and the man
became a living soul.” Whatever was thus imparted to the body of man,
already “formed,” and perfectly fashioned in all its parts, was the only
cause of life; and the whole tenor of Scripture shows that that was the
rational spirit itself, which, by a law of its Creator, was incapable of death,
even after the body had fallen under that penalty.

The “image” or likeness of God in which man was made, has, by some,
been assigned to the body; by others, to the soul; others, again, have found
it in the circumstance of his having “dominion” over the other creatures.
As to the body, it is not necessary to take up any large space to prove, that
in no sense can that bear the image of God, that is, be “like” God. Descant
ever so much or ever so poetically upon man’s upright and noble form, an
upright form has no more likeness to God than a prone or reptile one; God
is incorporeal, and has no bodily shape to be the antitype of any thing
material.

This also is fatal to the notion that the image of God in man consisted in
the “dominion” which was granted to him over this lower world. Limited
dominion may, it is true, be an image of large and absolute dominion, but
man is not said to have been made in the image of God’s dominion, which
is an accident merely, for, before any creatures existed, God himself could
have no dominion; but in the image and likeness of God himself, — of
something which constitutes his nature. Still farther, man, according to the
history, was evidently made in the image of God, in order to his having
dominion, as the Hebrew particle imports. He who was to have dominion, must, necessarily, be made before he could be invested with it, and, therefore, dominion was consequent to his existing in the “image” and “likeness” of God; and could not be that image itself.

The attempts which have been made to fix upon some ONE essential quality in which to place that “image” of God in which man was created, is not only uncalled for by any Scriptural reason, but is even contradicted by various parts of Scripture, from which, alone, we can derive our information on this subject. It is in vain to say that this “image” must be something essential to human nature, something only which cannot be lost. We shall, it is true, find that the revelation places it in what is essential to human nature; but that it should comprehend nothing else, or one quality only, has no proof or reason; and we are, in fact, taught that it comprises also what is not essential to human nature, and what may be lost and be regained. As to both, the evidence of Scripture is explicit. When God is called “the Father of spirits,” a likeness is certainly intimated between man and God in the spirituality of their nature. This is also implied in the striking argument of St. Paul with the Athenians. “Forasmuch then, as we are the OFFSPRING of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man’s device,” plainly referring to the idolatrous statues by which God was represented among heathens. If likeness to God in man consisted in bodily shape, this would not have been an argument against human representations of the Deity, but it imports, as Howe well expresses it, that “we are to understand that our resemblance to him, as we are his offspring, lies in some higher, more noble, and more excellent thing, of which there can be no figure, as who can tell how to give the figure or image of a thought, or of the mind or thinking power?” In spirituality, and, consequently, immateriality, this image of God in man, then, in the first existence, consists. Nor is it any valid objection to say that “immateriality is not peculiar to the soul of man, for we have reason to believe that the inferior animals of the earth are actuated by an immaterial principle.” (Gleig’s Stackhouse.) This is as certain as analogy can make it: but if we allow a spiritual principle to animals, its kind is obviously inferior; for the spirit which is incapable of continuous induction and moral knowledge must be of an inferior order to the spirit which possesses these capabilities; and this is the kind of spirituality which is peculiar to man.
The sentiment expressed in Wisdom 2:23, is evidence that, in the opinion of the ancient Jews, the image of God in man comprised *immortality* also. “For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity;” and though other creatures, and even the body of man were made capable of immortality, and at least the material human frame, whatever we may think of the case of animals, would have escaped death, had not sin entered the world, yet, without running into the absurdity of the “natural immortality” of the human soul, that essence must have been constituted immortal in a high and peculiar sense, which has ever retained its prerogative of eternal duration amidst the universal death, not only of animals, but of the bodies of all human beings. To me there appears a manifest allusion to man’s immortality, as being included in the image of God, in the reason which is given in Genesis for the law which inflicts death on murderers. “Whose sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the *image of God* made he man.” The essence of the crime of homicide cannot be in the putting to death the mere animal part of man; and must, therefore, lie in the peculiar value of life to an immortal being, accountable in another state for the actions done in this, and whose life ought to be specially guarded, for this very reason, that death introduces him into changeless and eternal relations, which were not to lie at the sport or mercy of human passions.

To these we are to add the *intellectual powers*, and we have what divines have called, in perfect accordance with the Scriptures, the natural image of God in his creature, which is essential and ineffaceable. He was made capable of *knowledge*, and he was endowed with liberty of *will*.

This natural image of God in which man was created, was the foundation of that *MORAL IMAGE* by which also he was distinguished. Unless he had been a spiritual, knowing, and willing being, he would have been wholly incapable of *moral* qualities. That he had such qualities eminently, and that in them consisted the image of God, as well as in the natural attributes just stated, we have also the express testimony of Scripture. “Lo this only have I found, that God made man UPRIGHT, but they have sought out many inventions.” The objections taken to this proof are thus satisfactorily answered by President Edwards: —

“It is an observation of no weight which Dr. Taylor makes on this text, that the word *man* is commonly used to signify mankind in general, or mankind collectively taken. It is true, it often signifies
the species of mankind; but then it is used to signify the species, with regard to its duration and *succession* from its beginning, as well as with regard to its *extent*. The English word *mankind* is used to signify the species: but what then? Would it be an improper way of speaking, to say, that when God first made *mankind*, he placed them in a pleasant paradise, (meaning in their first parents,) but now they live in the midst of briers and thorns? And it is certain, that to speak thus of God making mankind, — his giving the species an existence in their first parents, at the creation, — is agreeable to the Scripture use of such an expression. As in

*Deuteronomy* 4:32, *Since the day that God created man upon the earth.* *Job* 20:4, *Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth.* *Isaiah* 45:12, *I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens.* *Jeremiah* 27:5, *I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power.* All these texts speak of God making man, signifying the species of mankind; and yet they all plainly have respect to God making man *at first*, when he ‘made the earth,’ ‘and stretched out the heavens.’ In all these places the same word, Adam, is used as in Ecclesiastes, and in the last of these, used with (*HE emphaticum*) the emphatic sign, as here; though Dr. T. omits it when he tells us he gives us a catalogue of all the places in Scripture where the word is used. And it argues nothing to the doctor’s purpose, that the pronoun *they* is used, — *‘They have sought out many inventions.’* This is properly applied to the species, which God made at first upright; the species begun with more than one, and continued in a multitude. As Christ speaks of the two sexes in the relation of man and wife, continued in successive generations:

*Matthew* 19:4, *‘He that made them at the beginning, made them male and female,’* having reference to Adam and Eve.

“No less impertinent, and also very unfair, is his criticism on the word (*f v y*) translated *upright*. Because the word sometimes signifies *right*, he would from thence infer, that it does not properly signify moral rectitude, even when used to express the character of moral agents. He might as well insist, that the English word *upright*, sometimes, and in its most original meaning, signifies *right-up*, or in an erect posture, therefore it does not properly
signify any moral character, when applied to moral agents. And
indeed less unreasonably; for it is known that in the Hebrew
language, in a peculiar manner, most words used to signify moral
and spiritual things, are taken from external and natural objects.
The word (ר ו י) Jashur is used, as applied to moral agents, or to
the words and actions of such, (if I have not misreckoned,) about a
hundred and ten times in Scripture; and in about a hundred of them,
without all dispute, to signify virtue, or moral rectitude, (though
Dr. T. is pleased to say, the word does not generally signify a moral
character,) and for the most part it signifies true virtue, or virtue in
such a sense as distinguishes it from all false appearances of virtue,
or what is only virtue in some respects, but not truly so in the sight
of God. It is used at least eighty times in this sense: and scarce any
word can be found in the Hebrew language more significant of this.
It is thus used constantly in Solomon’s writings, (where it is often
found,) when used to express a character or property of moral
agents. And it is beyond all controversy that he uses it in this place,
(the seventh of Ecclesiastes) to signify moral rectitude, or a
character of real virtue and integrity. For the wise man is speaking
of persons with respect to their moral character, inquiring into the
corruption and depravity of mankind, (as is confessed by Dr. T.)
and he here declares, he had not found one among a thousand of
the right stamp, truly and thoroughly virtuous and upright; which
appeared a strange thing! But in this text he clears God, and lays
the blame on man: man was not made thus at first. He was made of
the right stamp, altogether good in his kind, (as all other things
were,) truly and thoroughly virtuous, as he ought to be; ‘but they
have sought out many inventions.’ Which last expression signifies
things sinful, or morally evil; (as is confessed p. 185.) And this
expression, used to signify those moral evils he found in man,
which he sets in opposition to the uprightness man was made in,
shows, that by uprightness he means the most true and sincere
goodness. The word rendered inventions, most naturally and aptly
signifies the subtle devices, and crooked deceitful ways of
hypocrites, wherein they are of a character contrary to men of
simplicity and godly sincerity; who, though wise in that which is
good, are simple concerning evil. Thus the same wise man, in
Proverbs 12:6, sets a truly good man in opposition to a man of
wicked devices, whom God will condemn. Solomon had occasion
to observe many who put on an artful disguise and fair show of goodness; but on searching thoroughly, he found very few truly upright. As he says, Proverbs 20:6, ‘Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man, who can find?’ so that it is exceeding plain, that by uprightness, in is place, Ecclesiastes vii, Solomon means true moral goodness.” (Original Sin.)

There is also an express allusion to the moral image of God, in which man was at first created, in Colossians 3:10, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him;” and, in Ephesians 4:24, “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” In these passages the apostle represents the change produced in true Christians by the Gospel, as a “renewal” of the image of God in man; as a new or second creation in that image; and he explicitly declares, that that image consists in “knowledge,” in “righteousness,” and in “true holiness.” The import of these terms shall be just now considered; but it is here sufficient that they contain the doctrine of a creation of man in the image of the moral perfections of his Maker.

This also may be finally argued from the satisfaction with which the historian of the creation represents the Creator as viewing the works of his hands as “very good.” This is pronounced with reference to each individually, as well as to the whole. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.” But, as to man, this goodness must necessarily imply moral as well as physical qualities. Without them he would have been imperfect as man; and had they existed in him, in their first exercises, perverted and sinful, he must have been an exception, and could not have been pronounced “very good.” The goodness of man, as a rational being, must lie in a devotedness and consecration to God; consequently, man was at first devoted to God, otherwise he was not good. A rational creature, as such, is capable of knowing, loving, serving, and living in communion with the Most Holy One. Adam, at first, did, or did not use this capacity; if he did not, he was not very good, nor good at all.

As to the degree of moral perfection in the first man, much scope has been given, in describing it, to a warm imagination, and to much rhetorical embellishment; and Adam’s perfection has sometimes been placed at an
elevation which renders it exceedingly difficult to conceive how he should fall into sin at all; and especially how he should fall so soon as seems to be represented in the narrative of Moses. On the other hand, those who either deny or hold very slightly the doctrine of our hereditary depravity, delight to represent Adam as little, if at all, superior in moral perfection and capability to his descendants. But, if we attend to the passages of Holy Writ above quoted, we shall be able, on this subject, to ascertain, if not the exact degree of his moral endowments, yet that there is a certain standard below which he could not be placed, in the perfection of his moral endowments. Generally, he was made in the image of God which we have already proved is to be understood morally as well as naturally. Now, however the image of any thing may be reduced in extent, it must still be an accurate representation as far as it goes. Every thing good in the creation must always be a miniature representation of the excellence of the Creator; but, in this case, the “goodness,” that is, the perfection of every creature, according to the part it was designed to act in the general assemblage of beings collected into our system, wholly forbids us to suppose that the image of God’s moral perfections in man was a blurred and dim representation. To whatever extent it went, it necessarily excluded all that from man which did not resemble God; it was a likeness to God in “righteousness and true holiness,” whatever the degree of each might be, which excluded all admixture of unrighteousness and unholiness. The first part of our conclusion, therefore, is, that man, in his original state, was sinless, both in act and in principle. “God made man upright,” That this signifies moral rectitude has been already established; but the import of the word is very extensive. It expresses, by an easy figure, the exactness of truth, justice, and obedience; and it comprehends the state and habit both of the heart and the life. Such, then, was the state of primitive man; there was no obliquity of his moral principles, his mind and affections; none in his conduct. He was perfectly sincere and exactly just, rendering from the heart all that was due to God and to the creature. Tried by the exactest plummet, he was upright; by the most perfect rule, he was straight.

The “knowledge” in which the Apostle Paul, in the passage quoted above from Colossians 3:10, places “the image of God” after which man was created, does not merely imply the faculty of the understanding, which is a part of the natural image of God; but that which might be lost, because it is that in which the new man is “renewed.” It is, therefore, to be understood of the faculty of knowledge in the right exercise of its original power; and
of that willing reception, and firm retaining, and hearty approval of religious truth, in which knowledge, when spoken of morally, is always understood in the Scriptures. We may not be disposed to allow, with some, that he understood the deep philosophy of nature, and could comprehend and explain the sublime mysteries of religion. The circumstance of his giving names to the animals is certainly no sufficient proof of his having attained to a philosophical acquaintance with their qualities and distinguishing habits, though we should allow the names to be still retained in the Hebrew, and to be as expressive of their peculiarities as some expositors have stated. No sufficient time appears to have been afforded him for the study of their properties, as this event took place previous to the formation of Eve; and as for the notion of his acquiring knowledge by intuition, it is contradicted by the revealed fact, that angels themselves acquire their knowledge by observation and study, though, no doubt, with greater rapidity and certainty than we. The whole of the transaction was supernatural; the beasts were “brought” to Adam, and it is probable that he named them under a Divine impulse. He has been supposed to be the inventor of language, but the history shows that he was never without language. He was from the first able to converse with God; and we may, therefore, infer that language was in him a supernatural and miraculous endowment. That his understanding was, as to its capacity, deep and large beyond any of his posterity, must follow from the perfection in which he was created, and his acquisitions of knowledge would, therefore, be rapid and easy. It was, however, in moral and religious truth, as being of the first concern to him, that we are to suppose the excellency of his knowledge to have consisted. “His reason would be clear, his judgment uncorrupted, and his conscience upright and sensible.” (Watts.) The best knowledge would, in him, be placed first, and that of every other kind be made subservient to it, according to its relation to that. The apostle adds to knowledge, “righteousness and true holiness,” terms which express not merely freedom from sin, but positive and active virtues.

“A rational creature thus made, must not only be innocent and free, but must be formed holy. His will must have an inward bias to virtue: he must have an inclination to please that God who made him; a supreme love to his Creator, a zeal to serve him, and a tender fear of offending him.

“For either the new created man loved God supremely or not. If he did not he was not innocent, since the law of nature requires a
supreme love to God. If he did he stood ready for every act of obedience: and this is *true holiness of heart*. And, indeed, without this, how could a God of holiness love the work of his own hands?

“There must be also in this creature a regular subjection of the inferior powers to the superior sense, and appetite and passion must be subject to reason. The mind must have a power to govern these lower faculties, that he might not offend against the law of his creation.

“He must also have his heart inlaid with love to the creatures, especially those of his own species, if he should be placed among them: and with a principle of honesty and truth in dealing with them. And if many of those creatures were made at once, there would be no pride, malice, or envy, no falsehood, no brawls or contentions among them, but all harmony and love.” (*Dr. Watts.*)

Sober as these views are of man’s primitive state, it is not, perhaps, possible for us fully to conceive of so exalted a condition as even this. Below this standard it could not fall; and that it implied a glory, and dignity, and moral greatness of a very exalted kind, is made sufficiently apparent from the degree of guilt charged upon Adam when he fell, for the aggravating circumstances of his offence may well be deduced from the tremendous consequences which followed.

The creation of man in the moral image of God being so clearly stated in the Scriptures, it would be difficult to conceive in what manner their testimony, in this point, could be evaded, did we not know the readiness with which some minds form objections, and how little ingenuity is required to make objections plausible. The objection to this clearly revealed truth is thus stated by Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, and it has been followed in substance, and with only some variation of phrase, by the Socinians of the present day. “Adam could not be originally created in righteousness and true holiness; because habits of holiness cannot be created without our knowledge, concurrence, or consent; for holiness in its nature implies the choice and consent of a moral agent, without which it cannot be holiness.”

If, however, it has been established that God made man *upright*; that he was created in “knowledge,” “righteousness,” and “true holiness”; and that at his creation he was pronounced *very good*; all this falls to the ground, and is the vain reasoning of man against the explicit testimony of God. The fallacy is, however, easily detected. It lies in confounding “*habits of*
holiness” with the principle of holiness. Now though habit is the result of acts, and acts of voluntary choice; yet if the choice be a right one, and right it must be in order to an act of holiness, and if this right choice, frequently exerted, produces so many acts as shall form what is called a habit, then either the principle from which that right choice arises must be good or bad, or neither. If neither, a right choice has no cause at all; if bad, a right choice could not originate from it; if good, then there may be a holy principle in man, a right nature before choice, and so that part of the argument falls to the ground. Now, in Adam, that rectitude of principle from which a right choice and right acts flowed, was either created with him or formed by his own volitions. If the latter be affirmed, then he must have willed right before he had a principle of rectitude, which is absurd; if the former then his creation in a state of moral rectitude, with an aptitude and disposition to good is established.

Mr. Wesley thus answers the objection: —

“What is holiness? Is it not essentially love? The love of God and of all mankind? Love producing ‘bowels of mercies,’ humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering? And cannot God shed abroad this love in any soul, without his concurrence? Antecedent to his knowledge or consent? And supposing this to be done, will love change its nature? Will it be no longer holiness? This argument can never be sustained; unless you would play with the word habits. Love is holiness wherever it exists. And God could create either men or angels, endued from the very first moment of their existence, with whatsoever degree of love he pleased.

“You ‘think, on the contrary, it is demonstration, that we cannot be righteous or holy, we cannot observe what is right without our own free and explicit choice.’ I suppose you mean practise what is right. But a man may be righteous before he does what is right, holy in heart before he is holy in life. The confounding these two all along, seems the ground of your strange imagination, that Adam ‘must choose to be righteous, must exercise thought and reflection before he could be righteous.’ Why so? ‘Because righteousness is the right use and application of our powers.’ Here is your capital mistake. No, it is not: it is the right state of our powers. It is the right disposition of our soul, the right temper of our mind. Take this
with you, and you will no more dream, that ‘God could not create man in righteousness and true holiness.’” (Original Sin.)

President Edwards’s answer is: —

“I think it a contradiction to the nature of things as judged of by the common sense of mankind. It is agreeable to the sense of men, in all nations and ages, not only that the fruit or effect of a good choice is virtuous, but that the good choice itself, from whence that effect proceeds, is so; yea, also the antecedent food, disposition, temper, or affection of mind, from whence proceeds that good choice is virtuous. This is the general notion — not that principles derive their goodness from actions, but — that actions derive their goodness from the principles whence they proceed; so that the act of choosing what is good, is no farther virtuous than it proceeds from a good principle or virtuous disposition of mind. Which supposes that a virtuous disposition of mind may be before a virtuous act of choice; and that, therefore, it is not necessary there should first be thought, reflection, and choice, before there can be any virtuous disposition. If the choice be first, before the existence of a good disposition of heart, what is the character of that choice? There can, according to our natural notions, be no virtue in a choice which proceeds from no virtuous principle, but from mere self-love, ambition, or some animal appetites; therefore, a virtuous temper of mind may be before a good act of choice, as a tree may be before the fruit, and the fountain before the stream which proceeds from it.” (Original Sin.)

The final cause of man’s creation was the display of the glory of God, and principally of his moral perfections. Among these, benevolence shone with eminent lustre. The creation of rational and holy creatures was the only means, as it appears to us, of accomplishing that most paternal and benevolent design, to impart to other beings a portion of the Divine felicity. The happiness of God is the result of his moral perfection, and it is complete and perfect. It is also specific; it is the felicity of knowledge, of conscious rectitude, of sufficiency, and independence. Of the two former, creatures were capable; but only rational creatures. Matter, however formed, is unconscious, and is, and must for ever remain, incapable of happiness. However disposed and adorned, it was made for another, and not at all with reference to itself. If it be curiously wrought, it is for some
other’s wonder; if it has use, it is for another’s convenience; if it has beauty, it is for another’s eye; if harmony, it is for another’s ear. Irrational animate creatures may derive advantage from mere matter; but it does not appear that they are conscious of it. They have the enjoyment of sense, but not the powers of reflection, comparison, and taste. They see without admiration, they combine nothing into relations. So to know, as to be conscious of knowing, and to feel the pleasures of knowledge; so to know, as to impart knowledge to others; so to know, as to lay the basis of future and enlarging knowledge, as to discover the efficient and the final causes of things, and to enjoy the pleasures of discovery and certainty of imagination and taste, — this is peculiar to rational beings. Above all, to know the great Creator and Lord of all; to see the distinctions of right and wrong, of good and evil in his law; to have, therefore, the consciousness of integrity and of well ordered and perfectly balanced passions; to feel the felicity of universal and Unbounded benevolence; to be conscious of the favour of God himself; to have perfect confidence in his care and constant benediction; to adore him; to be grateful; to exert hope without limit on future and unceasing blessings; all these sources of felicity were added to the pleasures of intellect and imagination in the creation of rational beings. In whatever part of the universe they were created and placed, we have sufficient reason to believe that this was the primitive condition of all; and we know, assuredly, from God’s own revelation, that it was the condition of man. In his creation and primeval condition, the “kindness and love of God” eminently appeared. He was made a rational and immortal spirit, with no limits to the constant enlargement of his powers; for, from all the evidence that our own consciousness, even in our fallen state, affords us, it appears possible to the human soul to be eternally approaching the infinite in intellectual strength and attainment. He was made holy and happy; he was admitted to intercourse with God. He was not left alone, but had the pleasure of society. He was placed in a world of grandeur, harmony, beauty, and utility; it was canopied with other distant worlds to exhibit to his very sense a manifestation of the extent of space and the vastness of the varied universe; and to call both his reason, his fancy, and his devotion, into their most vigorous and salutary exercises. He was placed in a paradise, where, probably, all that was sublime and gentle in the scenery of the whole earth was exhibited in pattern; and all that could delight the innocent sense, and excite the curious inquiries of the mind, was spread before him. He had labour to employ his attention, without wearying him; and time for his highest pursuits of knowing God, his will, and his works.
All was a manifestation of universal love, of which he was the chief visible object; and the felicity and glory of his condition must, by his and their obedience in succession, have descended to his posterity for ever. Such was our world, and its rational inhabitants, the first pair; and thus did its creation manifest not only the power and wisdom, but the benevolence of Deity. He made them like himself, and he made them capable of a happiness like his own.

The case of man is now so obviously different, that the change can not be denied. The Scriptural method of accounting for this is the disobedience of our first parents; and the visitation of their sin upon their posterity, in the altered condition of the material world, in the corrupt moral state in which men are born, and in that afflictive condition which is universally imposed upon them. The testimony of the sacred writings to what is called, in theological language, THE FALL OF MAN, is, therefore, to be next considered.

The Mosaic account of this event is, that a garden having been planted by the Creator, for the use of man, he was placed in it, “to dress it, and to keep it;” that in this garden two trees were specially distinguished, one as “the tree of life,” the other as “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil;” that, from eating of the latter Adam was restrained by positive interdict, and by the penalty, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die:” that the serpent, who was more subtle than any beast of the field, tempted the woman to eat, by denying that death would be the consequence, and by assuring her, that her eyes and her husband’s eyes “would be opened,” and that they would “be as gods, knowing good and evil:” that the woman took of the fruit, gave of it to her husband, who also ate; that for this act of disobedience they were expelled from the garden, made subject to death, and laid under other maledictions.

That this history should be the subject of much criticism, not only by infidels, whose objections to it have been noticed in the first part of this work; but by those who hold false and perverted views of the Christian system, was to be expected. Taken in its natural and obvious sense, along with the comments of the subsequent scriptures, it teaches the doctrines of the existence of an evil, tempting, invisible spirit, going about seeking whom he may deceive and devour; of the introduction of a state of moral corruptness into human nature, which has been transmitted to all men; and of a vicarious atonement for sin: and wherever the fundamental truths of
the Christian system are denied, attempts will be made so to interpret this part of the Mosaic history as to obscure the testimony which it gives to them, either explicitly, or by just induction. Interpreters of this account of the lapse of the first pair, and the origin of evil, as to the human race, have adopted various and often strange theories; but those whose opinions it seems necessary to notice may be divided into those who deny the literal sense of the relation entirely; those who take the account to be in part literal and in part allegorical; and those who, while they contend earnestly for the literal interpretation of every part of the history, consider some of the terms used, and some of the persons introduced, as conveying a meaning more extensive than the letter, and as constituting several symbols of spiritual things and of spiritual beings.

Those who have denied the literal sense entirely, and regard the whole relation as an instructive *mythos*, or fable, have, as might be expected, when all restraint of authority was thus thrown off from the imagination, adopted very different interpretations. Thus we have been taught, that this account was intended to teach the evil of yielding to the violence of appetite and to its control over reason; or the introduction of vice in conjunction with knowledge and the artificial refinements of society; or the necessity of keeping the great mass of mankind from acquiring too great a degree of knowledge, as being hurtful to society; or as another version of the story of the golden age, and its being succeeded by times more vicious and miserable; or as designed, enigmatically, to account for the origin of evil, or of mankind. This catalogue of opinions might be much enlarged: some of them have been held by mere visionaries; others by men of learning, especially by several of the semi-infidel theologians and Biblical critics of Germany; and our own country has not been exempt from this class of *free* expositors. How to fix upon the moral of “the fable” is, however, the difficulty; and this variety of opinion is a sufficient refutation of the general notion assumed by the whole class, since scarcely can two of them be found who adopt the same interpretation, after they have discarded the literal acceptance.

But that the account of Moses is to be taken as a matter of real history, and according to its literal import, is established by two considerations, against which, as being *facts*, nothing can successfully be urged. The first is, that the account of the fall of the first pair is a part of a *continuous* history. The creation of the world, of man, of woman; the planting of the garden of Eden, and the placing of man there; the duties and prohibitions laid upon
him; his disobedience; his expulsion from the garden; the subsequent birth of his children, their lives and actions, and those of their posterity, down to the flood; and, from that event, to the life of Abraham, are given in the same plain and unadorned narrative, brief, but yet simple, and with no intimation at all, either from the elevation of the style or otherwise, that a fable or allegory is in any part introduced. If this, then, be the case, and the evidence of it lies upon the very face of the history, it is clear, that if the account of the fall be excerpted from the whole narrative as allegorical, any subsequent part, from Abel to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, may be excerpted for the same reason, which is neither more nor less than this, that it does not agree with the theological opinions of the interpreter; and thus the whole of the Pentateuch may be rejected as a history, and converted into fable. One of these consequences must, therefore, follow, either that the account of the fall must be taken as history, or the historical character of the whole five books of Moses must be unsettled; and if none but infidels will go to the latter consequence, then no one who admits the Pentateuch to be a true history generally, can consistently refuse to admit the story of the fall of the first pair to be a narrative of real events, because it is written in the same style, and presents the same character of a continuous record of events. So conclusive has this argument been felt, that the anti-literal interpreters have endeavoured to evade it, by asserting that the part of the history of Moses in question bears marks of being a separate fragment, more ancient than the Pentateuch itself, and transcribed into it by Moses, the author and compiler of the whole. This point is examined and satisfactorily refuted in the learned and excellent work referred to below; but it is easy to show, that it would amount to nothing, if granted, in the mind of any who is satisfied on the previous question of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. For let it be admitted that Moses, in writing the Pentateuchal history, availed himself of the traditions of the patriarchal ages, a supposition not in the least inconsistent with his inspiration or with the absolute truth of his history, since the traditions so introduced have been authenticated by the Holy Spirit; or let it be supposed, which is wholly gratuitous, that he made use of previously existing documents; and that some differences of style in his books may be traced, which serve to point out his quotations, which also is an assumption, or rather a position, which some of the best Hebraists have denied, yet two things are to be noted: first, that the inspired character of the books of Moses is authenticated by our Lord and his apostles, so that they must necessarily be wholly true, and free from real contradictions;
and, secondly, that to make it any thing to their purpose who contend that
the account of the fall is an older document, introduced by Moses, it ought
to be shown that it is not written as truly in the narrative style, even if it
could be proved to be in some respects a different style, as that which
precedes and follows it. Now the very literal character of our translation
will enable even the unlearned reader to discover this. Whether it be an
embodied tradition or the insertion of a more ancient document, (though
there is no foundation at all for the latter supposition,) it is obviously a
narrative, and a narrative as simple as any which precedes or follows it.

The other indisputable fact to which I just now adverted, as establishing
the literal sense of the history, is that, as such, it is referred to and reasoned
upon in various parts of Scripture.

Job 20:4, 5, “Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon
earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the
hypocrite but for a moment?” The first part of the quotation “might as well
have been rendered, ‘since ADAM was placed on the earth.’ There is no
reason to doubt but that this passage refers to the fall and the first sin of
man. The date agrees, for the knowledge here taught is said to arise from
facts as old as the first placing of man upon earth, and the sudden
punishment of the iniquity corresponds to the Mosaic account, — ‘the
triumphing of the wicked is short, his joy but for a moment.’” (Sherlock on
Prophecy.)

Job 31:33, “If I covered my transgression as ADAM, by hiding my
iniquity in my bosom.” Magee renders the verse, —

“Did I cover, like Adam, my transgression,
By hiding in a lurking place mine iniquity?”

and adds, “I agree with Peters, that this contains a reference to the history
of the first man, and his endeavours to hide himself after his transgression.”
(Discourses on the Atonement.) Our margin reads, “after the manner of
men;” and also the old versions; but the Chaldee paraphrase agrees with
our translation, which is also satisfactorily defended by numerous critics.

Job 15:14, “What is man, that he should be clean; and he which is born
of a woman, that he should be righteous?” Why not clean? Did God make
woman or man unclean at the beginning? If he did, the expostulation would
have been more apposite, and much stronger, had the true cause been
assigned, and Job had said, “How canst thou expect cleanness in man,
whom thou *createdst* unclean?” But, as the case now stands, the expostulation has a plain reference to the introduction of vanity and corruption by the sin of the woman, and is an evidence that this ancient writer was sensible of the evil consequences of the fall upon the whole race of man. “Eden” and “the garden of the Lord” are also frequently referred to in the prophets. We have the “tree of life” mentioned several times in the Proverbs and in the Revelation. “God,” says Solomon, “made man upright.” The enemies of Christ and his Church are spoken of, both in the Old and New Testaments, under the names of “the serpent,” and “the dragon;” and the habit of the serpent to lick the dust is also referred to by Isaiah.

If the history of the fall, as recorded by Moses, were an allegory, or any thing but a literal history, several of the above allusions would have so meaning; but the matter is put beyond all possible doubt in the New Testament, unless the same culpable liberties be taken with the interpretation of the words of our Lord and of St. Paul as with those of the Jewish lawgiver. Our Lord says, 

Matthew 19:4, 5, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh?” This is an argument on the subject of divorces, and its foundation rests upon two of the facts recorded by Moses: 1. That God made at first but two human beings, from whom all the rest have sprung. 2. That the intimacy and indissolubility of the marriage relation rests upon the formation of the woman from the man; for our Lord quotes the words in Genesis, where the obligation of man to cleave to his wife is immediately connected with that circumstance. “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. THEREFORE shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.” This is sufficiently in proof that both our Lord and the Pharisees considered this early part of the history of Moses as a narrative, for, otherwise, it would neither have been a reason, on his part, for the doctrine which he was inculcating, nor have had any force of conviction as to them. “In Adam,” says the Apostle Paul, “all die;” “by one man sin entered into the world.” “But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” In the last passage, the instrument of the temptation is said to be a serpent, (οphis,) which is a
sufficient answer to those who would make it any other animal; and Eve is represented as being first seduced, according to the account in Genesis. This St. Paul repeats, in 1 Timothy 2:13, 14, “Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, (first, or immediately,) but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” And offers this as the reason of his injunction, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.” When, therefore, it is considered, that these passages are introduced, not for rhetorical illustration, or in the way of classical quotation, but are made the basis of grave and important reasonings, which embody some of the most important doctrines of the Christian revelation; and of important social duties and points of Christian order and decorum; it would be to charge the writers of the New Testament with the grossest absurdity, with even culpable and unworthy trifling, to suppose them to argue from the history of the fall, as a narrative, when they knew it to be an allegory; and if we are, therefore, compelled to allow that it was understood as a real history by our Lord and his inspired apostles, those speculations of modern critics, which convert it into a parable, stand branded with their true character of infidel and semi-infidel temerity.

The objections which are made to the historical character of this account are either those of open unbelievers and scoffers; or such as are founded precisely upon the same allegations of supposed absurdity and unsuitableness to which such persons resort, and which suppose that man is a competent judge of the proceedings of his Maker, and that the latter ought to regulate his conduct and requirements by what the former may think fit or unfit. If the literal interpretation of the first chapter in Genesis could be proved inconsistent with other parts of Holy Writ, then, indeed, we should be compelled to adopt the mode of explanation by allegory; but if no reason more weighty can be offered for so violent a proceeding, than that men either object to the doctrines which the literal account includes; or that the recorded account of the actual dealings of God with the first man, does not comport with their notions of what was fit in such circumstances, we should hold truth with little tenacity, were we to surrender it to the enemy upon such a summons. The fallacy of most of these objections is, however, easily pointed out. We are asked, first, whether it is reasonable to suppose, that the fruit of the tree of life could confer immortality? But what is there irrational in supposing that, though Adam was made exempt from death, yet that the fruit of a tree should be the appointed instrument of preserving his health, repairing the wastes of his animal nature, and of
maintaining him in perpetual youth? Almighty God could have accomplished this end without means, or by other means; but since he so often employs instruments, it is not more strange that he should ordain to preserve Adam permanently from death by food of a special quality, than that now he should preserve men in health and life, for three-score years and ten, by specific foods; and that, to counteract disorders, he should have given specific medicinal qualities to herbs and minerals: or if, with some, we regard the eating of the tree of life as a sacramental act, an expression of faith in the promise of continued preservation, and a means through which the conserving influence of God was bestowed, a notion, however, not so well founded as the other, it is yet not inconsistent with the literal interpretation, and involves no really unreasonable consequence, and nothing directly contrary to the analogy of faith. It has been, also, foolishly enough asked whether the fruit of the prohibited tree, or of any tree, can be supposed to have communicated “knowledge of good and evil,” or have had any effect at all upon the intellectual powers? But this is not the idea conveyed by the history, however literally taken, and the objection is groundless. That tree might surely, without the least approach to allegory, be called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” whether we understand by this, that by eating it man came to know, by sad experience, the value of the “good” he had forfeited, and the bitterness of “evil,” which he had before known only in name, or, as others have understood it, that it was appointed to be the test of Adam’s fidelity to his Creator, and, consequently, was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a tree for the purpose of knowing (or making known) whether he would cleave to the former, or make choice of the latter. The first of these interpretations is, I think, to be preferred, because it better harmonizes with the whole history; but either of them is consistent with a literal interpretation, and cannot be proved to involve any real absurdity.

To the account of the serpent, it has been objected that, taken literally, it makes the invisible tempter assume the body of an animal to carry on his designs; but we must be better acquainted with the nature and laws of disembodied spirits before we can prove this to be impossible, or even unlikely; and as for an animal being chosen as the means of approach to Eve, without exciting suspicion, it is manifest that, allowing a superior spirit to be the real tempter, it was good policy in him to address Eve through an animal which she must have noticed as one of the inhabitants of the garden, rather than in a human form, when she knew that herself and
her husband were the only human beings as yet in existence. The presence of such a stranger would have been much more likely to put her on her guard. But then, we are told that the animal was a contemptible reptile. Certainly not before he was degraded in form; but, on the contrary, one of the “beasts of the earth,” and not a “creeping thing;” and also more “subtle,” more discerning and sagacious “than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” — consequently the head of all the inferior animals in intellect, and not unlikely to have been of a corresponding noble and beautiful form; for this, indeed, his bodily degradation imports. If there was policy, then, in Satan’s choosing an animal as the instrument by which he might make his approaches, there was as much good taste in his selection as the allegorists, who seem anxious on this point, can wish for him. The *speaking* of the serpent is another stumbling-block; but as the argument is not here with an infidel, but with those who profess to receive the Mosaic record as Divine, the speaking of the serpent is no more a reason for interpreting the relation allegorically, than the speaking of the ass of Balaam can be for allegorizing the whole of that transaction. That a good or an evil spirit has no power to produce articulate sounds from the organs of an animal, no philosophy can prove, and it is a fact which is, therefore, capable of being rationally substantiated by testimony. There is a clear reason, too, for this use of the power of Satan in the story itself. By his giving speech to the serpent, and representing that, as appears from the account, as a consequence of the serpent having himself eaten of the fruit, he took the most effectual means of impressing Eve with the dangerous and fatal notion, that the prohibition of the tree of knowledge was a restraint upon her happiness and intellectual improvement, and thus to suggest hard thoughts of her Maker. The objection that Eve manifested no surprise when she heard an animal speak, whom she must have known not to have had that faculty before, has also no weight, since that circumstance might have occurred without being mentioned in so brief a history. It is still more likely that Adam should have expressed some marks of surprise and anxiety too, when his wife presented the fruit to him, though nothing of the kind is mentioned. But allowing that no surprise was indicated by the woman, the answer of the author just quoted is satisfactory.

“In such a state, reason must enjoy a calm dominion; and consequently there was no room for those sudden starts of imagination, or those sudden tumults, agitations, failures, and stagnations of the blood and spirits now incident to human nature;
and therefore Eve was incapable of fear or surprise from such accidents as would disquiet the best of her posterity. This objection then is so far from prejudicing the truth of the Mosaic history, that to me I own it a strong presumption in its favour.

“But after all, if this objection has any weight with any one, let him consider what there is in this philosophic serenity of our first parent, supposing the whole of her conduct on this occasion fully related to us, so far exceeding the serenity of Fabricius, upon the sudden appearance and cry of the elephant contrived by Pyrrhus to discompose him; or the steadiness of Brutus upon the appearance of his evil genius; and yet I believe Plutarch no way suffers in his credit as a historian by the relation of those events; at least had he related those surprising accidents without saying one word of what effects they had upon the passions of the persons concerned, his relations had certainly been liable to no imputation of incredibility or improbability upon that account.” (Revelation Examined.)

An objection is taken to the justice of the sentence pronounced on the serpent, if the transaction be accounted real, and if that animal were but the unconscious instrument of the great seducer. To this the reply is obvious, that it could be no matter of just complaint to the serpent that its form should be changed, and its species lowered in the scale of being. It had no original right to its former superior rank, but held it at the pleasure of the Creator. If special pain and sufferings had been inflicted upon the serpent, there would have been a semblance of plausibility in the objection; but the serpent suffered, as to liability to pain and death, no more than other animals, and was not therefore any more than another irrational creature, accounted a responsible offender. Its degradation was evidently intended as a memento to man, and the real punishment, as we shall show, fell upon the real transgressor who used the serpent as his instrument; while the enmity of the whole race of serpents to the human race, their cunning, and their poisonous qualities, appear to have been wisely and graciously intended as standing warnings to us to beware of that great spiritual enemy, who ever lies in wait to wound and to destroy.

These are the principal objections made to the literal interpretation of this portion of the Mosaic record, and we have seen that they are either of no weight in themselves, or that they cannot be entertained without leading to a total disregard of other parts of the inspired Scriptures. Tradition, too,
comes in to the support of the literal sense, and on such a question has
great weight. The Apocryphal writings afford a satisfactory testimony of
the sentiments of the Jews. 2 Esdras 3:4-7, “O Lord, thou barest rule, thou
spakest at the beginning, when thou didst plant the earth, and that thyself
alone, and commandest the people; and gavest a body to Adam without
soul, which was the workmanship of thy hands, and didst breathe into him
the breath of life, and he was made living before thee; and thou leddest him
into paradise, which thy right hand had planted, and unto him thou gavest
commandment to love thy way, which he transgressed, and immediately
thou appointedst death in him and in his generations, of whom came
nations, tribes, people, and kindreds out of number.” 2 Esdras 7:48, “O
thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, thou
art not fallen alone, but we are all that came of thee.” Wisdom 2:24,
“Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world.”
Wisdom 10:1, “She (wisdom) preserved the first-formed father of the
world, that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall.”
Ecclesiasticus 17:1, &c, “The Lord created man of the earth, and turned
him into it again. He gave them a few days and a short time, and also
power over all things therein — he filled them with the knowledge of
understanding, and showed them good and evil.” By these ancient Jewish
writers it is, therefore, certain, that the account of the fall was understood
as the narrative of a real transaction; and, except on this assumption, it is
impossible to account for those traditions which are embodied in the
mythology of almost all pagan nations. Of these fables the basis must have
been some fact, real or supposed; for as well might we expect the fables of
Æsop to have impressed themselves on the religious ceremonies and belief
of nations, as the Mosaic fable of man’s fall; for a mere fable it must be
accounted, if it is to lose its literal interpretation.

Popular convictions every where prevailed of the existence of some beings
of the higher order, who had revolted from their subjection to the heavenly
power which presided over the universe; and upon them were raised many
fabulous stories. It is probable, that these convictions were originally
founded on the circumstances referred to in Scripture with respect to Satan
and his angels, as powerful malevolent beings, who, having first seduced
Adam from his obedience, incessantly laboured to deceive, corrupt, and
destroy his descendants. The notion of the magi of Plutarch, and of the
Manicheans, concerning two independent principles, acting in opposition to
each other, was also founded on the real circumstances of the apostasy of
angels, and of their interference and influence in the affairs of men. The fictions of Indian mythology with regard to contending powers, and their subordinate ministers, benevolent and malignant, were erected on the same basis of truth; and the Grecian and Roman accounts of the battles of the giants against Jupiter, were, perhaps, built on the corruptions of tradition on this point.

“The original temptation, by which Satan drew our first parents from their duty, and led them to transgress the only prohibition which God had imposed, is described in the first pages of Scripture; and it is repeated, under much disguise, in many fables of classical mythology.

“Origen considers the allegorical relations furnished by Plato, with respect to Porus tempted by Penia to sin when intoxicated in the garden of Jove, as a disfigured history of the fall of man in paradise. It seems to have been blended with the story of Lot and his daughters. Plato might have acquired in Egypt the knowledge of the original circumstances of the fall, and have produced them, under the veil of allegory, that he might not offend the Greeks by a direct extract from the Jewish Scriptures. The heathen notions with respect to the Elysian fields, the garden of Adonis, and that of Hesperides, in which the fruit was watched by a serpent, were probably borrowed from the sacred accounts, or from traditional reports with respect to paradise.

“The worship established toward the evil spirit by his contrivance, sometimes under the very appearance in which he seduced our first parents, is to be found among the Phenicians and Egyptians. The general notion of the serpent as a mysterious symbol annexed to the heathen deities; and the invocation of Eve in the Bacchanalian orgies, (with the production of a serpent, consecrated as an emblem, to public view,) seems to bear some relation to the history of the first temptation, which introduced sin and death into the world. The account of discord being cast out from heaven, referred to by Agamemnon, in the nineteenth book of Homer’s Iliad, has been thought to be a corrupt tradition of the fall of the evil angels. Claudian shows an acquaintance with the circumstances of the seduction of man, and of an ejection from paradise, and his description seems to have furnished subjects of imitation to Milton.
“It has been imagined that the Indians entertained some notions, founded on traditionary accounts, of paradise: and the representations of the serpent under the female form, and styled the Mexican Eve, are said to be found in the symbolical paintings of Mexico.

“The original perfection of man, the corruption of human nature resulting from the fall, and the increasing depravity which proceeded with augmented violence from generation to generation, are to be found in various parts of profane literature. Chryalus, the Pythagorean, declared that man was made in the image of God. Cicero (as well as Ovid) speaks of man as created erect, as if God excited him to look up to his former relation and ancient abode. The loss of his resemblance to God was supposed to have resulted from disobedience, and was considered as so universal, that it was generally admitted, as it is expressed by Horace, that no man was born without vices. The conviction of a gradual deterioration from age to age — of a change from a golden period, by successive transitions, to an iron depravity — of a lapse from a state devoid of guilt and fear, to times filled with iniquity, was universally entertained.

“Descriptions to this effect are to be found in the writings of almost all the poets, and they are confirmed by the reports of philosophers and historians. Providence seems to have drawn evidence of the guilt of men from their own confessions, and to have preserved their testimonies for the conviction of subsequent times.” (Gray’s Connection.)

In the Gothic mythology, which seems to have been derived from the east, THOR is represented as the first born of the supreme God, and is styled in the Edda the eldest of sons. He was esteemed a middle divinity, a mediator between God and man. With respect to his actions, he is said to have wrestled with death, and, in the struggle, to have been brought upon one knee; to have bruised the head of the serpent with his mace; and, in his final engagement with that monster, to have beat him to the earth and slain him. This victory, however, is not obtained but at the expense of his own life; — “Recoiling back nine steps, he falls dead upon the spot, suffocated with the floods of venom which the serpent vomits forth upon him.” Much the same notion, we are informed, is prevalent in the mythology of the
Hindoos. — “Two sculptured figures are yet extant in one of their oldest pagodas, the former of which represents Creeshna, an incarnation of their mediatorial god Veeshnu, trampling on the crushed head of the serpent; while in the latter it is seen encircling the deity in its folds, and biting his heel.” An engraving of this curious sculpture is given in Moore’s Hindu Pantheon.

As to those who would interpret the account, the literal meaning of which we have endeavoured to establish, partly literally, and partly allegorically, a satisfactory answer is given in the following observations of Bishop Horsley: —

“No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in one continued narrative, without any intimation of a transition from one to the other. If, therefore, any part of this narrative be matter of fact, no part is allegorical. On the other hand, if any part be allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact: and the consequence of this will be, that every thing in every part of the whole narrative must be allegorical. If the formation of the woman out of the man be allegory, the woman must be an allegorical woman. The man therefore must be an allegorical man; for of such a man only the allegorical woman will be a meet companion. If the man is allegorical, his paradise will be an allegorical garden; the trees that grow in it, allegorical trees; the rivers, that watered it, allegorical rivers; and thus we may ascend to the very beginning of the creation; and conclude at last, that the heavens are allegorical heavens, and the earth an allegorical earth. Thus the whole history of the creation will be an allegory, of which the real subject is not disclosed; and in this absurdity the scheme of allegorizing ends.”

(Horsley’s Sermons.)

But though the literal sense of the history is thus established, yet that it has in several parts, but in perfect accordance with the literal interpretation, a mystical and higher sense than the letter, is equally to be proved from the Scriptures; and, though some writers, who have maintained the literal interpretation inviolate, have run into unauthorized fancies in their interpretation of the mystical sense, that is no reason why we ought not to go to the full length to which the light of the Scriptures, an infallible comment upon themselves, will conduct us. It is, as we have seen, matter of established history, that our first parents were prohibited from the tree
of knowledge, and, after their fall were excluded from the tree of life; that they were tempted by a serpent; and that various maledictions were passed upon them, and upon the instrument of their seduction. But, rightly to understand this history, it is necessary to recollect — that man was in a state of trial; — that the prohibition of a certain fruit was but one part of the law under which he was placed; — that the serpent was but the instrument of the real tempter; and that the curse pronounced on the instrument was symbolical of the punishment reserved for the agent.

The first of these particulars appears on the face of the history, and to a state of trial the power of moral freedom was essential. This is a subject on which we shall have occasion to speak more at large in the sequel; but, that the power of choosing good and evil was vested with our first parents is as apparent from the account as that they were placed under rule and restraint. In vain were they commanded to obey, if obedience were impossible; in vain placed under prohibition, if they had no power to resist temptation. Both would, indeed, have been unworthy the Divine legislator; and if this be allowed, then their moral freedom must also be conceded. They are contemplated throughout the whole transaction, not as instruments, but as actors, and as such, capable of reward and punishment. Commands are issued to them; which supposes a power of obedience, either original and permanent in themselves, or derived, by the use of means, from God, and, therefore, attainable; and however the question may be darkened by metaphysical subtleties, the power to obey necessarily implied the power to refuse and rebel. The promised continuance of their happiness, which is to be viewed in the light of a reward, implies the one; the actual infliction of punishment as certainly includes the other.

The power of obeying and the power of disobeying being then mutually involved, that which determines to the one or to the other, is the will. For, if it were some power, ab extra, operating necessarily, man would no longer be an actor, but be reduced to the mere condition of a patient, the mere instrument of another. This does not, however, shut out solicitation and strong influence from without, provided it be allowed to be resistible, either by man’s own strength, or by strength from a higher source, to which he may have access, and by which he may fortify himself. But as no absolute control can be externally exerted over man’s actions, and he remain accountable; and, on the other hand, as his actions are in fact controllable in a manner consistent with his free agency, we must look for this power in his own mind; and the only faculty which he possesses, to
which any such property can be attributed, is called, for that very reason, and because of that very quality, his will or choice; a power by which, in that state of completeness and excellence in which Adam was created, he must be supposed to be able to command his thoughts, his desires, his words, and his conduct, however excited, with an absolute sovereignty.  

This faculty of willing, indeed, appears essential to a rational being, in whatever rank he may be placed. “Every rational being,” says Dr. Jenkins, very justly, (Reasonableness of Christian Religion,) “must naturally have a liberty of choice, that is, it must have a will to choose as well as an understanding to reason; because, a faculty of understanding, if left to itself without a will to determine it, must always think of the same objects, or proceed in a continued series and connection of thoughts, without any end or design, which would be labor in vain, and tedious thoughtfulness to no purpose.” But, though will be essential to rational existence, and freedom of will to a creature placed in a state of trial, yet the degree of external influence upon its determinations, through whatever means it may operate, may be very different both in kind and degree; which is only saying, in other words, that the circumstances of trial may be varied, and made more easy or more difficult and dangerous, at the pleasure of the great Governor and Lord of all. Some who have written on this subject, seem to have carried their views of the circumstances of the paradisiacal probation too high; others have not placed them high enough. The first have represented our first parents to have been so exclusively intellectual and devotional, as to be almost out of the reach of temptation from sense and passion; others, as approximating too nearly to their mortal and corrupt descendants. This, however, is plain, from the Scriptures, the guide we ought scrupulously to follow, that they were subject to temptation, or solicitation of the will, from intellectual pride, from sense, and from passion. — The two first operated on Eve, and probably also on Adam; to which was added, in him, a passionate subjection to the wishes of his wife.  

If, then, these are the facts of their temptation, the circumstances of their trial are apparent. “The soul of man,” observes Stillingfleet, (Origines Sacrae,) “is seated in the middle, as it were, between those more excellent beings which live perpetually above, with which it partakes in the sublimity of its nature and understanding; and those inferior terrestrial beings with which it communicates through the vital union which it has with the body, and that by reason of its natural freedom, it is sometimes assimilated to the one and sometimes to the other of these extremes. We must observe,
farther, that, in this compound nature of ours, there are several powers and faculties, several passions and affections, differing in their nature and tendency, according as they result from the soul or body; that each of these has its proper object, in a due application to which it is easy and satisfied; that they are none of them sinful in themselves, but may be instruments of much good, when rightly applied, as well as occasion great mischief by a misapplication: whereupon a considerable part of virtue will consist in regulating them, and in keeping our sensitive part subject to the rational. This is the original constitution of our nature; and, since the first man was endowed with the powers and faculties of the mind, and had the same dispositions and inclinations of body, it cannot be but that he must have been liable to the same sort of temptations, and consequently, capable of complying with the dictates of sense and appetite, contrary to the direction of reason and the conviction of his own mind: and to this cause the Scripture seems to ascribe the commission of the first sin, when it tells us, that the woman saw the tree, that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise, i.e. it had several qualities that were adapted to her natural appetites; was beautiful to the sight, and delightful to the taste, and improving to the understanding, which both answered the desire of knowledge implanted in her spiritual, and the love of sensual pleasure, resulting from her animal part; and these, heightened by the suggestions of the tempter, abated the horror of God’s prohibition, and induced her to act contrary to his express command.”

It is, therefore, manifest, that the state of trial in which our first parents were placed was one which required, in order to the preservation of virtue, vigilance, prayer, resistance, and the active exercise of the dominion of the will over solicitation. No creature can be absolutely perfect because it is finite; and it would appear, from the example of our first parents, that an innocent, and, in its kind, a perfect rational being, is kept from falling only by “taking hold” on God; and as this is an act, there must be a determination of the will to it, and so when the least carelessness, the least tampering with the desire of forbidden gratifications is induced, there is always an enemy at hand to make use of the opportunity to darken the judgment and to accelerate the progress of evil. Thus “when desire is conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” This is the only account we can obtain of the origin of evil, and it resolves itself into three principles:
1. The necessary finiteness, and, therefore, imperfection in *degree* of created natures.

2. The liberty of choice, which is essential to rational, accountable beings.

3. The influence of temptation on the will. That Adam was so endowed as to have resisted the temptation, is a sufficient proof of the *justice* of his Maker throughout this transaction: that his circumstances of trial were made precisely what they were, is to be resolved into a *wisdom*, the full manifestation of which is, probably, left to another state, and will, doubtless, there have its full declaration.

The following acute observations of Bishop Butler may assist us to conceive how possible it is for a perfectly innocent being to fall under the power of evil, whenever a vigilant and resisting habit is not perfectly and absolutely persevered in: —

“This seems distinctly conceivable, from the very nature of particular affections and propensions. For, suppose creatures intended for such a particular state of life, for which such propensions were necessary: suppose them endowed with such propensions, together with moral understanding, as well including a practical sense of virtue, as a speculative perception of it; and that all these several principles, both natural and moral, forming an inward constitution of mind, were in the most exact proportion possible, i.e. in a proportion the most exactly adapted to their intended state of life: such creatures would be made upright, or finitely perfect. Now particular propensions, from their very nature, must be felt, the objects of them being present; though they cannot be gratified at all, or not with the allowance of the moral principle. But, if they can be gratified without its allowance, or by contradicting it; then they must be conceived to have some tendency, in how low a degree soever, yet some tendency, to induce persons to such forbidden gratifications. This tendency, in some one particular propension, may be increased by the greater frequency of occasions naturally exciting it, than of occasions exciting others. The least voluntary indulgence in forbidden circumstances, though but in thought, will increase this wrong tendency; and may increase it farther, till, peculiar conjunctions
perhaps conspiring, it becomes effect; and danger from deviating from right, ends in actual deviation from it; a danger necessarily arising from the very nature of propension; and which, therefore, could not have been prevented, though it might have been escaped, or got innocently through. The case would be, as if we were to suppose a straight path marked out for a person, in which such a degree of attention would keep him steady: but if he would not attend in this degree, any one of a thousand objects, catching his eye, might lead him out of it. Now it is impossible to say, how much even the first full overt act of irregularity might disorder the constitution; unsettle the adjustments, and alter the proportions, which formed it, and in which the uprightness of its make consisted: but repetition of irregularities would produce habits, and thus the constitution would be spoiled, and creatures made upright, become corrupt, and depraved in their settled character, proportionably to their repeated irregularities in occasional acts.” (Analogy.)

These observations are general, and are introduced only to illustrate the point, that we may conceive of a creature being made innocent, and yet still dependent upon the exercise of caution for its preservation from moral corruption and offence. It was not, in fact, by the slow and almost imperceptible formation of evil habits, described in the extract just given, by which Adam fell; that is but one way in which we may conceive it possible for sin to enter a holy soul. He was exposed to the wiles of a tempter, and his fall was sudden. But this exposure to a particular danger was only a circumstance in his condition of probation. It was a varied mode of subjecting the will to solicitation; but no necessity of yielding was laid upon man in consequence of this circumstance. From the history we learn that the devil used not force but persuasion, which involves no necessity; and that the devil cannot force men to sin is sufficiently plain from this, that, such is his malevolence, that if he could render sin inevitable, he would not resort to persuasion and the sophistry of error to accomplish an end more directly within his reach.

The prohibition under which our first parents were placed has been the subject of many “a fool-born jest,” and the threatened punishment has been argued to be disproportioned to the offence. Such objections are easily dissipated. We have already seen, that all rational creatures are under a law which requires supreme love to God and entire obedience to his commands; and that, consequently, our first parents were placed under this
equitable obligation. We have also seen that all specific laws emanate from this general law; that they are manifestations of it, and always suppose it. The decalogue was such a manifestation of it to the Jews, and the prohibition of the tree of knowledge is to be considered in the same light. Certainly this restraint presupposed a right in God to command, a duty in the creatures to obey; and the particular precept was but the exercise of that previous right which was vested in him, and the enforcement of that previous obligation upon them. To suppose it to be the only rule under which our first parents were placed would be absurd; for then it would follow, that if they had become sensual in the use of any other food than that of the prohibited tree; or if they had refused worship and honour to God, their Creator; or if they had become “hateful, and hating one another,” these would not have been sins. This precept was, however, made prominent by special injunction; and it is enough to say that it was, as the event showed, a sufficient test of their obedience.

The objection that it was a positive, and not a moral precept, deserves to be for a moment considered. The difference between the two is that “moral precepts are those the reasons of which we see; positive precepts those, the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command: positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command received from him whose creatures and subjects we are.” (Butler’s Analogy.) It has, however, been justly observed that, since positive precepts have somewhat of a moral nature, we may see the reasons of them considered in this view, and, so far as we discern the reasons of both, moral and positive precepts are alike. In the case in question no just objection, certainly, can be made against the making a positive precept the special test of the obedience of our first parents. In point of obligation, positive precepts rest upon the same ground as moral ones, namely, the will of God. Granting, even, that we see no reason for them, this does not alter the case; we are bound to obey our Creator, both as matter of right and matter of gratitude; and the very essence of sin consists in resisting the will of God. Even the reason of moral precepts, their fitness, suitableness, and influence upon society, do not constitute them absolutely obligatory upon us. The obligation rests upon their being made law by the authority of God. Their fitness, &c, may be the reasons why he has made them parts of his law; but it is the promulgation of his will which makes the law and brings us under
obligation. In this respect, then, moral and positive laws are of equal authority when enjoined with equal explicitness. To see or not to see the reasons of the Divine enactments, whether moral or positive, is a circumstance which affects not the question of duty. There is, nevertheless, a distinction to be made between *positive* precepts and *arbitrary* ones, which have no reason but the will of him who enacts them, though, were such enjoined by almighty God, our obligation to obey would be absolute. It is, however, proper to suppose, that when the reasons of positive precepts are not seen by us, they do, in reality, exist in those relations, and qualities, and habitudes of things which are only known to God; for, that he has a sufficient reason for all that he requires of us, is a conclusion as rational as it is pious; and to slight *positive* precepts, therefore, is in fact to refuse obedience to the Lawgiver only on the proud and presumptuous ground, that he has not made us acquainted with his own reasons for enacting them. Nor is the institution of such precepts without an obvious general moral reason, though the reason for the injunction of particular positive injunctions should not be explained. Humility, which is the root of all virtue, may, in some circumstances, be more effectually promoted when we are required to obey under the authority of God, than when we are prompted also by the conviction of the fitness and excellence of his commands. It is true, that when the observance of a moral command and a positive precept come into such opposition to one another that both cannot be observed, we have examples in Scripture which authorize us to prefer the former to the latter, as when our Lord healed on the Sabbath day, and justified his disciples for plucking the ears of corn when they were hungry; yet, in point of fact, the rigidness which forbade the doing good on the Sabbath day, in these cases of necessity, we have our Lord’s authority to say, was the result of a misinterpretation of the moral precept itself, and no direct infringement of it was implied in either case. Should an actual impossibility occur of observing two precepts, one a moral and the other a positive one, it can be but a rare case, and our conduct must certainly be regulated, not on our own views merely, but on such general principles as our now perfect revelation furnishes us with, and it is at our risk that we misapply them. In the case of our first parents, the positive command neither did, nor, apparently in their circumstances, could stand in opposition to any moral injunction contained in that universal law under which they were placed. It harmonized perfectly with its two great principles, love to God and love to our neighbour, for both would be
violated by disobedience; — one, by rebellion against the Creator; the other, by disregard of each other’s welfare, and that of their posterity.

Nor, indeed, was this positive injunction without some obvious moral reason, the case with probably all positive precepts of Divine authority, when carefully considered. The ordinances of public worship, baptism in the name of Christ, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and the observance of the Sabbath, have numerous and very plain reasons both of subjection, recognition, and gratitude; and so had the prohibition of the fruit of one of the trees of the garden. The moral precepts of the decalogue would, for the most part, have been inappropriate to the peculiar condition of the first pair; — such as the prohibitions of polytheism; of the use of idolatrous images; of taking the name of God in vain; of theft and adultery; of murder and covetousness. Thus even if objectors were left at liberty to attempt to point out a better test of obedience than that which was actually appointed, they would find, as in most such cases, how much easier it is to object than to suggest. The law was, in the first place, simple and explicit; it was not difficult of observation; and it accorded with the circumstances of those on whom it was enjoined. They were placed amidst abundance of pleasant and exhilarating fruits, and of those one kind only was reserved. This reservation implied also great principles. It may be turned into ridicule: — so, by an ignorant person, might the reserve in our customs of a pepper corn, or other quit rent, which yet are acknowledgments of subjection and sovereignty. This is given as an illustration, not, indeed, as a parallel; for there is a very natural view of this transaction in paradise, which gives to it an aspect so noble and dignified, that we may well shudder at the impiety of that poor wit by which it has been sometimes ignorantly assailed. The dominion of this lower world had been given to man, but it is equally required by the Divine glory, and by the benefit of creatures themselves, that all should acknowledge their subjection to him. Man was required to do this, as it were, openly, and in the presence of the whole creation, by a public token, and to give proof of it by a continued abstinence from the prohibited fruit. He was required to do it also in a way suitable to his excellent nature and to his character as lord of all other creatures, by a tree and voluntary obedience, thus acknowledging the common Creator to be his supreme Lord, and himself to be dependent upon his bounty and favour. In this view we can conceive nothing more fitting, as a test of obedience, and nothing more important than the moral lesson continually taught by the obligation thus openly and publicly to
acknowledge the rights and authority of him who was, naturally, the Lord of all. 199

The immediate, visible agent in the seduction of man to sin was the serpent; but the whole testimony of Scripture is in proof that the real tempter was that subtle and powerful evil spirit, whose general appellatives are the DEVIL and SATAN. 100 This shows that ridicule, as to the serpent, is quite misplaced, and that one of the most serious doctrines is involved in the whole account, — the doctrine of diabolical influence. We have already observed, that we have no means of ascertaining the pristine form and qualities of this animal, except that it was distinguished from all the beasts of the field, which the Lord God had made, by his “subtlety” or intelligence, for the word does not necessarily imply a bad sense; and we might, indeed, be content to give credit to Satan for a wily choice of the most fitting instrument for his purpose. These are questions which, however, sink into nothing before the important doctrine of the liability of man, both in his primitive and in his fallen state, to temptations marshalled and directed by a superior, malignant intelligence. Of this, the fact cannot be doubted, if we admit the Scriptures to be interpreted by any rules which will admit them to be written for explicit instruction and the use of popular readers; and, although we have but general intimations of the existence of an order of apostate spirits, and know nothing of the date of their creation, or the circumstances of their probation and fall; yet this is clear, that they are permitted, for their “time,” to have influence on earth; to war against the virtue and the peace of man, though under constant control and government; and that this entered into the circumstances of the trial of our first parents, and that it enters into ours. In this part of the history of the fall, therefore, without giving up any portion of the literal sense, we must, on the authority of other passages of Scripture, look beyond the letter, and regard the serpent but as the instrument of a super-human tempter, who then commenced his first act of warfare against the rule of God in this lower world; and began a contest, which, for purposes of wisdom, to be hereafter more fully disclosed, he has been allowed to carry on for ages, and will still be permitted to maintain till the result shall make his fall more marked, and bring into view moral truths and principles in which the whole universe of innocent or redeemed creatures are, probably, to be instructed to their eternal advantage.

In like manner, the malediction pronounced upon the serpent, while it is to be understood literally as to that animal, must be considered as teaching
more than the letter simply expresses; and the terms of it are, therefore, for
the reason given above, (the comment found in other parts of Scripture,) to
be regarded as symbolical. “As the literal sense does not exclude the
mystical, the cursing of the serpent is a symbol to us, and a visible pledge
of the malediction with which the devil is struck by God, and whereby he is
become the most abominable and miserable of all creatures. But man, by
the help of the seed of the woman, that is, by our Saviour, shall bruise his
head, wound him in the place that is most mortal, and destroy him with
eternal ruin. In the meantime, the enmity and abhorrence we have of the
serpent is a continual warning to us of the danger we are in of the devil,
and how heartily we ought to abhor him and all his works.” (Archbishop
King.) To this view, indeed, strenuous objections have been made; and in
order to get quit of the doctrine of so early and significant a promise of a
Redeemer, — a promise so expressed as necessarily to imply redemption
through the temporary suffering of the Redeemer, the bruising of his heel,
— many of those who are willing to give up the latter entirely, in other
parts of the narrative, and to resolve the whole into fable, resist this
addition of the parabolical meaning to the literal, and contend for that
alone. In answer to this, we may observe, —

1. That, on the merely literal interpretation of these words, the main
instrument of the transgression would remain unsentenced and unpunished.
That instrument was the devil, as already shown, and who, in evident
allusion to this circumstance, is called in Scripture, “a murderer from the
beginning,” “a liar and the father of lies;” “that old serpent, called the devil
and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world;” he “who sinneth from the
beginning;” so that whosoever “committeth sin is of the devil,” and
consequently our first parents. It is also in plain allusion to this history and
the bruising of the head of the serpent that the apostle takes the phrase of
“bruising” Satan under the feet of believers. These passages can only be
disposed of by resolving the whole account of diabolical agency in
Scripture into figures of speech; (the theory adopted by Socinians, and
which will be subsequently refuted;) but if the agency of Satan be allowed
in this transaction, then to confine ourselves to the merely literal sense
leaves the prime mover of the offence without any share of the malediction;
and the curse of the serpent must, therefore, in justice, be concluded to fall
with the least weight upon the animal instrument, the serpent itself, and
with its highest emphasis upon the intelligent and accountable seducer.
2. We are compelled to this interpretation by the reason of the case. That a higher power was identified with the serpent in the transaction, is apparent, from the intelligent and rational powers ascribed to the serpent, which it is utterly inconsistent with the distinction between man and the inferior animals to attribute to a mere brute. He was the most “subtle” of the beasts, made such near approaches to rationality as to be a fit instrument by which to deceive; but, assuredly, the use of speech, of reasoning powers, a knowledge of the Divine law, and the power of seductive artifice to entrap human beings in their state of perfection into sin against God, are not the faculties of an irrational animal. The solemn manner, too, in which the Almighty addresses the serpent in pronouncing the curse, shows that an intelligent and free agent was arraigned before him, and it would, indeed, be ridiculous to suppose to the contrary.

3. The circumstances of our first parents also confirm the symbolical interpretation, in conjunction with the literal one. This is shown by Bishop Sherlock with much acuteness: —

“They were now in a state of sin, standing before God to receive sentence for their disobedience, and had reason to expect a full execution of the penalty threatened. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. But God came in mercy as well as judgment, purposing not only to punish, but to restore man. The judgment is awful and severe: the woman is doomed to sorrow in conception; the man to sorrow and travail all the days of his life; the ground is cursed for his sake; and the end of the judgment is, dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. Had they been left thus, they might have continued in their labour and sorrow for their appointed time, and at last have returned to dust, without any well-grounded hope or confidence in God: they must have looked upon themselves as rejected by their Maker, delivered up to trouble and sorrow in this world, and as having no hope in any other. Upon this ground I conceive there could have been no religion left in the world; for a sense of religion without hope is a state of phrenzy and distraction, void of all inducements to love and obedience or anything else that is praiseworthy. If, therefore, God intended to preserve them as objects of mercy, it was absolutely necessary to communicate so much hope to them, as might be a rational foundation for their future endeavours to be reconciled to him. This seems to be the primary intention of this first Divine prophecy; and it was necessary
to the state of the world, and the condition of religion, which could not possibly have been supported without the communication of such hopes. The prophecy is excellently adapted to this purpose, and manifestly conveyed such hopes to our first parents. For let us consider in what sense we may suppose them to understand the prophecy. Now they must necessarily understand the prophecy, either according to the literal meaning of the words, or according to such meaning as the whole circumstance of the transaction, of which they are part, does require. If we suppose them to understand the words literally only, and that God meant them to be so understood, this passage must appear ridiculous. Do but imagine that you see God coming to judge the offenders; Adam and Eve before him in the utmost distress; that you hear God inflicting pains, and sorrows, and misery, and death, upon the first of human race; and that in the midst of all this scene of we and great calamity, you hear him foretelling, with great solemnity, a very trivial accident that should sometimes happen in the world, that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and that men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on the head. What has this trifle to do with the loss of mankind, with the corruption of the natural and moral world, and the ruin of all the glory and happiness of the creation? Great comfort it was to Adam, doubtless, after telling him that his days would be short and full of misery, and his end without hope, to let him know that he should now and then knock a snake on the head, but not even that, without paying dear for his poor victory, for the snake should often bite him by the heel. Adam surely could not understand the prophecy in this sense, though some of his sons have so understood it. Leaving this, therefore, as absolutely absurd and ridiculous, let us consider what meaning the circumstances of the transaction do necessarily fix to the words of this prophecy. Adam tempted by his wife, and she by the serpent, had fallen from their obedience, and were now in the presence of God expecting judgment. They knew full well at this juncture, that their fall was the victory of the serpent, whom by experience they found to be an enemy to God and to man; to man, whom he had ruined by seducing him to sin; to God, the noblest work of whose creation he had defaced. It could not, therefore, but be some comfort to them to hear the serpent first condemned, and to see that, however he had prevailed against them, he had gained no
victory over their Maker, who was able to assert his own honour, and to punish this great author of iniquity. By this method of God’s proceeding they were secured from thinking that there was any evil being equal to the Creator in power and dominion: an opinion which gained ground in after times through the prevalence of evil, and is, where it does prevail, destructive of an true religion. The belief of God’s supreme dominion, which is the foundation of all religion, being thus preserved, it was still necessary to give them such hopes as they could not but conceive, when they heard from the mouth of God, that the serpent’s victory was not a complete victory, over even themselves; that they and their posterity should be enabled to contest his empire; and though they were to suffer much in the struggle, yet finally they should prevail and bruise the serpent’s head, and be delivered from his power and dominion over them. What now could they conceive this conquest over the serpent to mean? Is it not natural to expect that we shall recover that by victory which we lost by being defeated? They knew that the enemy had subdued them by sin, could they then conceive hopes of victory otherwise than by righteousness? They lost through sin the happiness of their creation, could they expect less from the return of righteousness than the recovery of the blessings forfeited? What else but this could they expect? For the certain knowledge they had of their loss when the serpent prevailed, could not but lead them to a clear knowledge of what they should regain by prevailing against the serpent. The language of this prophecy is indeed in part metaphorical, but it is a great mistake to think that all metaphors are of uncertain signification; for the design and scope of the speaker, with the circumstances attending, create a final and determinate sense.”

The import of this prediction appears, from various allusions of Scripture, to have been, that the Messiah, who was, in an eminent and peculiar sense, the seed of the woman, should, though himself bruised in the conflict, obtain a complete victory over the malice and power of Satan, and so restore those benefits to man which by sin he had lost. From this time hope looked forward to the GREAT RESTORER, and sacrifices, which are no otherwise to be accounted for, began to be offered, in pre-figuration of the fact and efficacy of his sufferings. From that first promise, that light of salvation broke forth, which, by the increased illumination of revelation,
through following ages, shone brighter and brighter to the perfect day. To what extent our first parents understood this promise it is not possible for us to say. Sufficiently, there is no doubt, for hope and faith; and that it might be the ground of a new dispensation of religion, in which salvation was to be of grace, not of works, and in which prayer was to be offered for all necessary blessings, on the ground of pure mercy, and through the intercession of an infinitely worthy Mediator. The Scriptures cannot be explained, unless this be admitted, for these are the very principles which are assumed in God’s government of man from the period of his fall; and it is, therefore, probable, that in those earliest patriarchal ages, of which we have so brief and rapid an account in the writings of Moses, and which we may, nevertheless, collect, were ages distinguished by the frequent and visible intercourse of God and superior beings with men, there were revelations made and instructions given which are not specifically recorded, but which formed that body of theology which is, unquestionably, presupposed by the whole Mosaic institute. But if we allow that this first promise, as interpreted by us, contains more than our first parents can be supposed to have discovered in it, we may say, with the prelate just quoted, “Since this prophecy has been plainly fulfilled in Christ, and by the event appropriated to him only, I would fain know how it comes to be conceived to be so ridiculous a thing in us to suppose that God, to whom the whole event was known from the beginning, should make choice of such expressions as naturally conveyed so much knowledge to our first parents as he intended, and yet should appear, in the fulness of time, to have been peculiarly adapted to the event which he, from the beginning, saw, and which he intended the world should one day see, and which, when they should see, they might the more easily acknowledge to be the work of his hand, by the secret evidence which he had enclosed from the days of old in the words of prophecy.”

From these remarks on the history of the fall, we are called to consider the state into which that event reduced the first man and his posterity.

As to Adam, it is clear that he became liable to inevitable death, and that, during his temporary life, he was doomed to severe labour, expressed in Scripture by eating his bread in, or “by the sweat of his brow.” These are incontrovertible points; but that the threatening of death, as the penalty of disobedience, included spiritual and eternal death, as to himself and his posterity, has been, and continues to be, largely and resolutely debated, and will require our consideration. On this subject the following are the leading
opinions: — The view stated by Pelagius, who lived in the fifth century, is
(if he has not been misrepresented) that which is held by the modern
Socinians. It is, that though Adam, by his transgression, exposed himself to
the displeasure of his Maker, yet that neither were the powers of his own
nature at all impaired, nor have his posterity, in any sense, sustained the
smallest hurt by his disobedience; that he was created mortal, and would,
therefore, have died, had he not sinned; and that the only evil he suffered
was his being expelled from paradise, and subjected to the discipline of
labour. That his posterity, like himself, are placed in a state of trial; that
death to them, as to him, is a natural event; and that the prospect of certain
dissolution, joined to the common calamities of life, is favourable to the
cultivation of virtue. By a proper attention we may maintain our innocence
amidst surrounding temptations, and may also daily improve in moral
excellence, by the proper use of reason and other natural powers.

A second opinion has been attributed to the followers of Arminius, on
which a remark shall just now be offered. It has been thus epitomized by
Dr. Hill: —

“According to this opinion, although the first man had a body
naturally frail and mortal, his life would have been for ever
preserved by the bounty of his Creator, had he continued obedient;
and the instrument employed by God, to preserve his mortal body
from decay, was the fruit of life. Death was declared to be the
penalty of transgression and, therefore, as soon as he transgressed,
he was removed at a distance from the tree of life; and his posterity,
inherting his natural mortality, and not having access to the tree of
life, are subjected to death. It is therefore said by St. Paul, ‘By one
man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death
passed upon all men. In Adam all die. By one man’s offence death
reigned by one;’ These expressions clearly point out death to be the
consequence of Adam’s transgression, an evil brought upon his
posterity by his fault; and this the Arminians understand to be the
whole meaning of its being said, ‘Adam begat a son in his own
likeness, after his image,’ Genesis 5:3, and of Paul saying, ‘We
have borne the image of the earthly.’

“It is admitted, however, by those who hold the opinion, that this
change upon the condition of mankind, from a life preserved
without end, to mortality, was most unfavourable to their moral
character. The fear of death enfeebles and enslaves the mind; the pursuit of those things which are necessary to support a frail perishing life, engrosses and contracts the soul; and the desires of sensual pleasure are rendered more eager and ungovernable, by the knowledge that the time of enjoying them soon passes away. Hence arise envying of those who have a larger share of the good things of this life — strife with those who interfere in our enjoyments — impatience under restraint — and morrow and repining when pleasure is abridged. And to this variety of turbulent passions, the natural fruits of the punishment of Adam’s transgression, there are also to be added, all the fretfulness and disquietude occasioned by the diseases and pains which are inseparable from the condition of a mortal being. In this way the Arminians explain such expressions as these, ‘by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners;’ ‘all are under sin;’ ‘behold I was shapen in iniquity;’ i.e. all men, in consequence of Adam’s sin, are born in these circumstances, — under that disposition of events which subjects them to the dominion of passion, and exposes them to so many temptations, that it is impossible for any man to maintain his integrity. And hence, they say, arises the necessity of a Saviour, who, restoring to man the immortality which he had forfeited, may be said to have abolished death; who effectually delivers his followers from that bondage of mind, and that corruption of character, which are connected with the fear of death; who, by his perfect obedience, obtains pardon for those sins into which they have been betrayed by their condition, and by his Spirit enables them to overcome the temptations which human nature of itself cannot withstand.

“According to this opinion, then, the human race has suffered universally in a very high degree by the sin of their first parent. At the same time, the manner of their suffering is analogous to many circumstances in the ordinary dispensations of Providence; for we often see children, by the negligence or fault of their parents, placed in situations very unfavourable both to their prosperity and to their improvement; and we can trace the profligacy of their character to the defects of their education, to the example set before them in their youth, and to the multiplied temptations in which, from a want of due attention on the part of others, they find themselves early entangled.” (Lectures.)
That this is a very defective view of the effects of the original offence upon
Adam and his descendants must be acknowledged. Whether Adam, as to
his body, became mortal by positive infliction, or by being excluded from
the means of warding off disease and mortality, which were provided in the
tree of life, is a speculative point, which has no important theological
bearing; but that the corruption of our nature, and not merely its greater
liability to be corrupted, is the doctrine of Scripture, will presently be
shown. This [semi-Pelagian sentiment] was not the opinion of Arminius,
nor of his immediate followers. Nor is it the opinion of that large body of
Christians, often called Arminians, who follow the theological opinions of
Mr. Wesley. It was the opinion of Dr. Whitby and several divines of the
English Church, who, though called Arminians, were semi-Pelagians, or at
least made great approaches to that error; and the writer just quoted has no
authority for giving this as the Arminian opinion, except the work of
Whitby’s, entitled, Tractatus de Imputatione Peccati Adami. In this,
however, he has followed others, who, on Whitby’s authority, attribute this
notion not only to Arminius singly, but to the body of the remonstrants,
and to all those who, to this day, advocate the doctrine of general
redemption. This is one proof how little pains many divines of the
Calvinistic school have taken to understand the opinions they have hastily
condemned in mass.

The following passages from the writings of Arminius will do justice to the
character of that eminent divine on this important subject.

In the 15th and 16th propositions of his 7th public lecture on the first sin of
the first man, he says, —

“The immediate and proper effect of this sin was, that God was
offended by it. For since the form of sin is the transgression of the
law, 1 John 3:4, such transgression primarily and immediately
impinges against the Legislator himself, Genesis 3:2; and it
impinges against him, Genesis 3:16, 19, 23, 24, with offence, it
having been his will that his law should not be infringed,
Genesis 3:17: from which he conceives a just wrath, which is
the second effect of sin. But this wrath is followed by the infliction
of punishment, which here is twofold: 1. A liability to both deaths,
Romans 6:23. 2. A privation of that primeval holiness and
righteousness, Luke 19:26, which, because they were the
effects of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man, ought not to remain in
man who had fallen from the favour of God, and had incurred his anger. For that Spirit is a seal and token of the Divine favour and benevolence, Romans 8:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 2:12.

“But the whole of this sin is not peculiar to our first parents, but is common to the whole race, and to all their posterity, who, at the time when the first sin was committed, were in their loins, and who afterward descended from them in the natural mode of propagation, according to the primitive benediction. For, in Adam all have sinned, Romans 5:12. Whatever punishment, therefore, was inflicted on our first parents, has also pervaded all their posterity, and still oppresses them: so that all are by nature children of wrath, Ephesians 2:31, obnoxious to condemnation and to death, temporal and eternal, Romans 5:12, and are, lastly, devoid of that [primeval] righteousness and holiness: with which evils they would continue oppressed for ever, unless they were delivered from them by Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever! Romans 5:18, 19.”

In the epistle which Arminius addressed to Hippolytus, describing grace and free will, his views on this subject are still more clearly expressed: —

“It is impossible for free will without grace to begin or perfect any true or spiritual good. I say, the grace of Christ, which pertains to regeneration, is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good. It is that which operates on the mind, the affections, and the will; which infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and leads the will to execute good thoughts and good desires. It prevents, (goes before,) accompanies, and follows. It excites, assists, works in us to will, and works with us, that we may not will in vain. It averts temptations, stands by and aids us in temptations, supports us against the flesh, the world, and Satan; and, in the conflict, it grants us to enjoy the victory. It raises up again those who are conquered and fallen, it establishes them, and endues them with new strength, and renders them more cautious. It begins, promotes, perfects, and consummates salvation. I confess, that the mind of the natural (animalis) and carnal man is darkened, his affections are depraved
and disordered, his will is refractory, and that the man is *dead in sins.*”

And, in his 11th Public Disputation on the Free will of Man, and its powers, he says, “that the will of man, with respect to true good, is not only wounded, bruised, inferior, crooked, and attenuated; but it is likewise captivated, destroyed, and lost; and has no powers whatever, except such as are excited by grace.”

The doctrine of the remonstrants is, “That God, to the glory of his abundant goodness, having decreed to make man after his own image, and to give him an easy and most equal law, and add thereunto a threatening of death to the transgressors thereof, and foreseeing that Adam would wilfully transgress the same, and thereby make himself and his posterity liable to condemnation; though God was, notwithstanding, mercifully affected toward man, yet, out of respect to his justice and truth, he would not give way to his mercy to save man till his justice should be satisfied, and his serious hatred of sin and love of righteousness should be made known.”

The *condemnation* here spoken of, as affecting Adam and his posterity, is to be understood of more than the death of the body, as being opposed to the *salvation* procured by the sacrifice of Christ; and, with respect to the moral state of human nature since the fall, the third of their articles, exhibited, at the synod of Dort, states, that the remonstrants “hold that a man hath not saving faith of himself, nor from the power of his own free will, seeing that, while he is in the state of sin, he cannot of himself, nor by himself, think, will, or do any saving good.”

The doctrine of the Church of England, though often claimed as exclusively Calvinistic on this point, accords perfectly with true Arminianism. “Original sin standeth not in the following or imitation of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk; but it is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature only inclined to evil,” &c. Some of the divines of this Church have, on the other hand, endeavoured to soften this article, by availing themselves of the phrase “very far gone,” as though it did not express a total defection from original righteousness. The articles were, however, subscribed by the two houses of convocation, in 1571, in Latin and English also, and therefore both copies are equally authentic. The Latin copy expresses this phrase by “quam longissimo distet;” which is as strong an
expression as that language can furnish, fixes the sense of the compilers on this point, and takes away the argument which rests on the alleged equivocalness of the English version. Nor does there appear any material discrepancy between this statement of the fallen condition of man and the Augsburg Confession, the doctrine of the French Churches, that of the Calvinistic Church of Scotland, and, so far as the moral state of man only is concerned, the views of Calvin himself. There are, it is true, such expressions as “contagion,” “infection,” and the like, in some of these formularies, which are somewhat equivocal, as bearing upon a point from which some divines, both Arminians and Calvinists, have dissented, — the direct corruption of human nature by a sort of judicial act; but, this point excepted, to which we shall subsequently turn our attention, the true Arminian, as fully as the Calvinist, admits the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall of our first parents; and is indeed enabled to carry it through his system with greater consistency than the Calvinist himself. For, while the latter is obliged, in order to account for certain good dispositions and occasional religious inclinations in those who never give any evidence of their actual conversion to God, to refer them to nature, and not to grace, which, according to them, is not given to the reprobate, the believer in general redemption maintains the total incapacity of unassisted nature to produce such effects, and attributes them to that Divine gracious influence which, if not resisted, would lead on to conversion. Some of the doctrines joined by Calvinists with the corruption of our common nature are, indeed, very disputable, and such as we shall, in the proper place, attempt to prove unscriptural; but in this Arminians and they so well agree, that it is an entire delusion to represent this doctrine, as it is often done, as exclusively Calvinistic. “The Calvinists,” says Bishop Tomline, “contend that the sin of Adam introduced into his nature such a radical impotence and depravity, that it is impossible for his descendants to make any voluntary effort [of themselves] toward piety and virtue, or in any respect to correct and improve their moral and religious character; and that faith and all the Christian graces are communicated by the sole and irresistible operation of the Spirit of God, without any endeavour or concurrence on the part of man.” (Refutation of Calvinism.) The latter part only of this statement gives the Calvinistic peculiarity; the former is not exclusively theirs. We have seen the sentiment of Arminius on the natural state of man, and it perfectly harmonizes with that of Calvin where he says, in his own forcible manner, “that man is so
totally overwhelmed, as with a deluge, that no part is free from sin, and therefore whatever proceeds from him is accounted sin.” (Institutes.)

But in bringing all these opinions to the test of Scriptural testimony, we must first inquire into the import of the penalty of death, threatened upon the offences of the first man.

The Pelagian and Socinian notion, that Adam would have died had he not sinned, requires no other refutation than the words of the Apostle Paul, who declares expressly that death entered the world “by sin,” and so it inevitably follows that, as to man at least, but for sin there would have been no death.

The notion of others, that the death threatened extended to the annihilation of the soul as well as the body, and was only arrested by the interposition of a Redeemer, assumes a doctrine which has no countenance at all in Scripture, namely, that the penalty of transgressing the Divine law, when it extends to the soul, is death in the sense of annihilation. On the contrary, whenever the threat of death, in Scripture, refers to the soul, it unquestionably means future and conscious punishment. Beside, the term “death,” which conveys the threatening, does not properly express annihilation. There is no adequate opposition between life and annihilation. If there were such an opposition between them, then life and non-annihilation must be equivalent terms. But they are not; for many things exist which do not live; and thus both the sense attached to the term death, in Scripture, when applied to the soul, as well as the proper sense of that term itself, and the reason of the thing, forbid that interpretation.

The death threatened to Adam, we conclude, therefore, to have extended to the soul of man as well as to his body, though not in the tense of annihilation; but, for the confirmation of this, it is necessary to refer more particularly to the language of Scripture, which is its own best interpreter, and it will be seen, that the opinion of those divines who include in the penalty attached to the first offence, the very “fulness of death,” as it has been justly termed, death bodily, spiritual, and eternal, is not to be puffed away by sarcasm, but stands firm on inspired testimony.

Beside death, as it is opposed to animal life, and which consists in the separation of the rational soul from the body, the Scriptures speak of the life and death of the soul in a moral sense. The first consists in the union of the soul to God, and is manifested by those vigorous, grateful, and holy
affections, which are, by this union, produced. The second consists in a separation of the soul from communion with God, and is manifested by the dominion of earthly and corrupt dispositions and habits, and an entire indifference or aversion to spiritual and heavenly things. This, too, is represented as the state of all who are not quickened by the instrumentality of the Gospel, employed for this purpose by the power and agency of its Divine Author. “And you hath he quickened who were DEAD in trespasses and sins.” The state of a regenerate mind is, in accordance with this view, represented as a resurrection, and a passing “from death unto life;” and both to Christ and to the Holy Spirit is this work of quickening the souls of men and preserving them in moral or spiritual life attributed. To interpret, then, the death pronounced upon Adam as including moral death, seeing that he, by his transgression, fell actually into the same moral state as a sinner against God, in which all those persons now are who are dead in trespasses and sins, is in entire accordance with the language of Scripture. For, if a state of sin in them is a state of spiritual death, then a state of sin in him was a state of spiritual death; and that both by natural consequence, the same cause, producing the same effect, and also by the appointment of God, who departs from sinful men, and, withdrawing himself from all communion with the guilty, withdraws thereby the only source of moral or spiritual life.

But the highest sense of the term “death” in Scripture, is the punishment of the soul in a future state, both by a loss of happiness and separation from God, and also by a positive infliction of Divine wrath. Now this is stated, not as peculiar to any dispensation of religion, but as common to all; as the penalty of the transgression of the law of God in every degree. “Sin is the transgression of the law,” this is its definition; “the wages of sin is death,” this is its penalty. Here we have no mention made of any particular sin, as rendering the transgressor liable to this penalty, nor of any particular circumstance under which sin may be committed, as calling forth that fatal expression of the Divine displeasure; but of sin itself generally: — of transgression of the Divine law, in every form and degree, it is affirmed, “the wages of sin is DEATH.” This is, therefore, to be considered as an axiom in the jurisprudence of Heaven. “Sin,” says St. James, with like absolute and unqualified manner, “when it is finished, bringeth forth DEATH;” nor have we the least intimation given in Scripture, that any sin whatever is exempted from this penalty; that some sins are punished in this life only, and others in the life to come. The degree of punishment will be
varied by the offence; but death is the penalty attached to all sin, unless it is averted by pardon, which itself supposes that in law the penalty has been incurred. What was there, then, in the case of Adam to take him out of this rule? His act was a *transgression* of the law, and therefore *sin*; as sin, its wages was “death,” which, in Scripture, we have seen, means, in its highest sense, future punishment.

To this Dr. Taylor, whom most modern writers who deny the doctrine of original sin have followed, objects: “Death was to be the consequence of his disobedience, and the death here threatened can be opposed only to that life God gave Adam when he created him.”

To this it has been replied: —

“True: but how are you assured, that God, when he created him did not give him *spiritual*, as well as *animal*, life? Now *spiritual death* is opposed to *spiritual life*. And this is more than the *death* of the body.

“But this, you say, is pure conjecture, without a solid foundation. For no other life is spoken of before. Yes there is. *The image of God* is spoken of before. This is not therefore pure conjecture; but is grounded upon a solid foundation, upon the plain word of God. Allowing then that ‘Adam could understand it of no other life than that which he had newly received;’ yet would he naturally understand it of the *life of God in his soul, as well as of the life of his body*. In this light therefore the sense of the threatening will stand thus: ‘Thou shalt surely die;’ as if he had said, I have formed thee of the dust of the ground, and ‘breathed into thy nostrils the breath of lives,’ both of animal and spiritual life; and in both respects thou art become a living soul. ‘But if thou eatest of the forbidden tree, thou shalt cease to be a living soul. For I will take from thee, the lives I have given, and thou shalt die spiritually, temporally, eternally.” (Wesley on Original Sin.) The answer of President Edwards is more at large.

“To this I would say; it is true, *death is opposed to life, and must be understood according to the nature of that life, to which it is opposed*. But does it therefore follow, that nothing can be meant by it but the loss of life? Misery is opposed to happiness, and sorrow is in Scripture often opposed to joy; but can we conclude from
thence, that nothing is meant in Scripture by sorrow, but the *loss of joy*? Or that there is no more in misery, than the *loss* or absence of happiness? And if the death threatened to Adam can, with certainty, be opposed only to the life *given to Adam, when God created him*; I think a state of perfect, perpetual, and hopeless misery is properly opposed to that state *Adam was in when God created him*. For I suppose it will not be denied, that the life Adam had, was truly a *happy* life; happy in perfect innocency, in the favour of his Maker, surrounded with the happy fruits and testimonies of his love. And I think it has been proved, that he also was happy in a state of perfect righteousness. Nothing is more manifest than that it is agreeable to a very common acceptation of the word *life* in Scripture, that it be understood as signifying a state of excellent and happy existence. Now that which is most opposite to *that life* and state *in which Adam was created*, is a state of total, confirmed wickedness, and perfect hopeless misery, under the Divine displeasure and curse; not excluding temporal death, or the destruction of the body, as an introduction to it.

“Beside, that which is much more evident than any thing Dr. T. says on this head, is, that the *death* which was to come on Adam, as the *punishment of his disobedience*, was opposed to that *life*, which he would have had as the *reward* of his *obedience* in case he had not sinned. *Obedience* and *disobedience* are contraries; the *threatenings* and *promises* which are sanctions of a law, are set in direct opposition, and the *promises, rewards, and threatened punishments*, are most properly taken as each other’s opposites. But none will deny, that the life which would have been *Adam’s reward*, if he had persisted in obedience, was *eternal life*. And therefore we argue justly that the death which *stands opposed to that life*, (Dr. T. himself being judge,) is manifestly *eternal death, a death widely different from the death we now die* — to use his own words. If Adam for his persevering *obedience*, was to have had everlasting life and happiness, in perfect holiness, union with his Maker, and enjoyment of his favour, and this was the life which was to be confirmed by the tree of life; then, doubtless, the death threatened in case of disobedience, which stands in direct opposition to this, was an exposure to *everlasting wickedness and*
misery, in separation from God, and in enduring his wrath.”

(Original Sin.)

The next question is, whether Adam is to be considered as a mere individual, the consequences of whose misconduct terminated in himself, or no otherwise affected his posterity than incidentally, as the misconduct of an ordinary parent may affect the circumstances of his children; or whether he is to be regarded as a public man, the head and representative of the human race, who, in consequence of his fall, have fallen with him, and received direct hurt and injury in the very constitution of their bodies, and the moral state of their minds.

The testimony of Scripture is so explicit on this point, that all the attempts to evade it have been in vain. In Romans v, Adam and Christ are contrasted in their public or federal character, and the hurt which mankind have derived from the one, and the healing they have received from the other, are also contrasted in various particulars, which are equally represented as the effects of the “offence” of Adam, and of the “obedience” of Christ. Adam, indeed, in verse 14, is called, with evident allusion to this public representative character, the figure, (τυπος,) type, or model “of him that was to come.” The same apostle also adopts the phrases, “the first Adam,” and “the second Adam,” which, mode of speaking can only be explained on the ground, that as sin and death descended from one, so righteousness and life flow from the other; and that what Christ is to all his spiritual seed, that Adam is to all his natural descendants. On this, indeed, the parallel is founded, 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” words which on any other hypothesis can have no natural signification. Nor is there any weight in the observation, that this relation of Adam to his descendants is not expressly stated in the history of the fall; since, if it were not indicated in that account, the comment of an inspired apostle is, doubtless, a sufficient authority. But the fact is, that the threatenings pronounced upon the first pair have all respect to their posterity as well as to themselves. The death threatened affects all. — “In Adam all die,” “death entered by sin,” that is, by his sin, and then “passed upon all men.” The painful childbearing threatened upon Eve has passed on to her daughters. The ground was cursed, but that affected Adam’s posterity also, who, to this hour, are doomed to eat their bread by “the sweat of their brow.” Even the first blessing, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” was clearly pronounced upon them as public persons, and both by its very terms and the nature of the thing, since
they alone could neither replenish the earth nor subject it to their use and
dominion, comprehended their posterity. In all these cases they are
addressed in such a form of speech as is appropriated to individuals; but
the circumstances of the case infallibly show, that, in the whole transaction,
they stood before their Maker as public persons, and as the legal
representatives of their descendants, though in so many words they are not
invested with these titles.

The condition in which this federal connection between Adam and his
descendants placed the latter, remains to be exhibited. The imputation of
Adam’s sin to his posterity has been a point greatly debated. In the
language of theologians it is considered as mediate or immediate. Our
mortality of body and the corruption of our moral nature, in virtue of our
derivation from him, is what is meant by the mediate imputation of his sin
to us; by immediate imputation is meant that Adam’s sin is accounted ours
in the sight of God, by virtue of our federal relation. To support the latter
notion, various illustrative phrases have been used: as, that Adam and his
posterity constitute one moral person, and that the whole human race was
in him, its head, consenting to his act, &c. This is so little agreeable to that
distinct agency which enters into the very notion of an accountable being,
that it cannot be maintained, and it destroys the sound distinction between
original and actual sin. It asserts, indeed, the imputation of the actual
commission of Adam’s sin to his descendants, which is false in fact; makes
us stand chargeable with the full latitude of his transgression, and all its
attendant circumstances; and constitutes us, separate from all actual
voluntary offence, equally guilty with him, all which are repugnant equally
to our consciousness and to the equity of the case.

The other opinion does not, however, appear to go the length of Scripture,
which must not be warped by the reasonings of erring man. There is
another view of the imputation of the offence of Adam to us which is more
consistent with its testimony. This is very clearly stated by Dr. Watts in his
answer to Dr. Taylor.

“When a man has broken the law of his country, and is punished for
so doing, it is plain that sin is imputed to him: his wickedness is
upon him; he bears his iniquity; that is, he is reputed or accounted
guilty: he is condemned and dealt with as an offender.
“But if a man, having committed treason, his estate is taken from him and his children, then they bear the iniquity of their father, and his sin is imputed to them also.

“If a man lose his life and estate for murder, and his children thereby become vagabonds, then the blood of the person murdered is said to be upon the murderer and upon his children also. So the Jews: His blood be on us and on our children; let us and our children be punished for it.

“But it may be asked, How can the acts of the parent’s treason be imputed to his little child? Since those acts were quite out of the reach of an infant, nor was it possible for him to commit them? — I answer,

“Those acts of treason or acts of service are, by a common figure, said to be imputed to the children, when they suffer or enjoy the consequences of their father’s treason or eminent service: though the particular actions of treason or service, could not be practised by the children. This would easily be understood should it occur in human history. And why not when it occurs in the sacred writings?

“Sin is taken either for an act of disobedience to a law, or for the legal result of such an act; that is, the guilt, or liableness to punishment. Now when we say, the sin of a traitor is imputed to his children, we do not mean, that the act of the father is charged upon the child; but that the guilt or liableness to punishment is so transferred to him that he suffers banishment or poverty on account of it.

“Thus the sin of Achan was so imputed to his children, that they were all stoned on account of it, Joshua 7:24. In like manner the covetousness of Gehazi was imputed to his posterity, 2 Kings 5:27; when God by his prophet pronounced, that the leprosy should cleave unto him and to his seed for ever.

“The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, use the words sin and iniquity, (both in Hebrew and Greek,) to signify not only the criminal actions themselves, but also the result and consequences of those actions, that is, the guilt or liableness to punishment: and sometimes the punishment itself, whether it fall upon the original criminal, or upon others on his account.
“Indeed, when sin or righteousness is said to be imputed to any man, on account of what himself hath done, the words usually denote both the good or evil actions themselves, and the legal result of them. But when the sin or righteousness of one person is said to be imputed to another, then generally those words mean only the result thereof; that is, a liableness to punishment on the one hand, and to reward on the other.

“But let us say what we will, in order to confine the sense of the imputation of sin and righteousness to the legal result, the reward or punishment of good or evil actions; let us ever so explicitly deny the imputation of the actions themselves to others, still Dr. Taylor will level almost all his arguments against the imputation of the actions themselves, and then triumph in having demolished what we never built, and in refuting what we never asserted.”

In the sense then above given, we may safely contend for the imputation of Adam’s sin; and this agrees precisely with the Apostle Paul, who speaks of the imputation of sin to those who “had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” that is, to all who lived between Adam and Moses, and, consequently, to infants who personally had not offended; and also declares, that, “by one man’s disobedience many were made, constituted, accounted, and dealt with as sinners,” and treated as though they themselves had actually sinned: for, that this is his sense, is clear from what follows, “so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” — constituted, accounted, and dealt with as such, though not actually righteous, but, in fact, pardoned criminals. The first consequence, then, of this imputation is the death of the body, to which all the descendants of Adam are made liable, and that on account of the sin of Adam — “through the offence of one many are dead.” But though this is the first, it is far from being the only consequence. For, as throughout the apostle’s reasoning in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, to which reference has been made, “the gift,” “the free gift,” “the gift by grace,” mean one and the same thing, even the whole benefit given by the abounding grace of God, through the obedience of Christ; and as these verses are evidently parallel to 1st Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” “it follows that dying and being made alive, in the latter passage, do not refer to the body only, but that dying implies all the evils temporal and spiritual which are derived from Adam’s sin, and being made
alive, all the blessings which are derived from Christ in time and in eternity.” (Wesley on Original Sin.)

The second consequence is, therefore, death spiritual, that moral state which arises from the withdrawment of that intercourse of God with the human soul, in consequence of its becoming polluted, and of that influence upon it which is the only source and spring of the right and vigorous direction and employment of its powers in which its rectitude consists; a deprivation, from which a depravation consequently and necessarily follows. This, we have before seen, was included in the original threatening, and if Adam was a public person, a representative, it has passed on to his descendants, who, in their natural state, are therefore said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.” Thus it is that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and that all evils naturally “proceed from it,” as corrupt streams from a corrupt fountain.

The third consequence is eternal death, separation from God, and endless banishment from his glory in a future state. This follows from both the above premises, — from the federal character of Adam; and from the eternal life given by Christ being opposed by the apostle to the death derived from Adam. The justice of this is objected to, a point which will be immediately considered; but it is now sufficient to say, that if the making the descendants of Adam liable to eternal death, because of his offence, be unjust, the infliction of temporal death is so also; the duration of the punishment making no difference in the simple question of justice. If punishment, whether of loss or of pain, be unjust, its measure and duration may be a greater or a less injustice; but it is unjust in every degree. If, then, we only confine the hurt we have received from Adam to bodily death; if this legal result of his transgression only be imputed to us, and we are so constituted sinners as to become liable to it, we are in precisely the same difficulty, as to the equity of the proceeding, as when that legal result is extended farther. The only way out of this dilemma is that adopted by Dr. Taylor, to consider death not as a punishment, but as a blessing, which involves the absurdity of making Deity threaten a benefit as a penalty for an offence, which sufficiently refutes the notion.

The objections which have been raised against the imputation of Adam’s offence, in the extent we have stated it, on the ground of the justice of the proceeding, are of two kinds. The former are levelled not against that Scriptural view of the case which has just been exhibited, but against that
repulsive and shocking perversion of it which is found in the high Calvinistic creed, which consigns infants, not elect, to a conscious and endless punishment, and that not of loss only, but of pain, for this first offence of another. The latter springs from regarding the legal part of the whole transaction which affected our first parents and their posterity, separately from the evangelical provision of mercy which was concurrent with it, and which included, in like manner, both them and their whole race. With the high Calvinistic view we have now nothing to do. It will stand or fall with the doctrines of election and reprobation, as held by that school, and these will be examined in their place. The latter class of objections now claim our attention; and as to them we observe, that, as the question relates to the moral government of God, if one part of the transaction before us is intimately and inseparably connected with another and collateral procedure, it cannot certainly be viewed in its true light but in that connection. The redemption of man by Christ was not certainly an after thought brought in upon man’s apostasy; it was a provision, and when man fell, he found justice hand in hand with mercy. What are, then, the facts of the whole case? For greater clearness, let us take Adam and the case of his adult descendants first. All become liable to bodily death; here was justice, the end of which is to support law, as that supports government. By means of the anticipated sacrifice of the Redeemer’s atonement, which, as we shall in its place show, is an effectual means of declaring the justice of God, the sentence is reversed, not by exemption from bodily death, but by a happy and glorious resurrection. For, as this was an act of grace, almighty God was free to choose, speaking humanly, the circumstances under which it should be administered, in ordering which the unerring wisdom of God had its natural influence. The evil of sin was still to be kept visible before the universe, for its admonition, by the actual infliction of death upon all men; the grace was to be manifested in reparation of the loss by restoration to immortality. Again, God, the fountain of spiritual life, forsook the soul of Adam, now polluted by sin, and unfit for his residence. He became morally dead and corrupt, and, as “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” this is the natural state of his descendants. Here was justice, a display of the evil of sin, and of the penalty which it ever immediately induces — man forsaken by God, and thus forsaken, a picture to the whole universe of corruption and misery, resulting from that departure from him which is implied in one sinful act. But that spiritual, quickening influence visits him from another quarter and through other means. The second Adam “is a quickening Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the purchase of his redemption, to be
given to man, that he may again infuse into his corrupted nature the heavenly life, and sanctify and regenerate it. Here is the mercy. As to a future state, eternal life is promised to all men believing in Christ, which reverses the sentence of eternal death. Here again is the manifestation of mercy. Should this be rejected, he stands liable to the whole penalty, to the punishment of loss as the natural consequence of his corrupted nature which renders him unfit for heaven: to the punishment of even pain for the original offence, we may also, without injustice, say, as to an adult, whose actual transgressions, when the means of deliverance have been afforded him by Christ, is a consenting to all rebellion against God, and to that of Adam himself and to the penalty of his own actual transgressions, aggravated by his having made light of the Gospel. Here is the collateral display of justice. In all this, it is impossible to impeach the equity of the Divine procedure, since no man suffers any loss or injury ultimately by the sin of Adam, but by his own wilful obstinacy — the “abounding of grace,” by Christ, having placed before all men, upon their believing, not merely compensation for the loss and injury sustained by Adam, but infinitely higher blessings, both in kind or degree, than were forfeited in him. As to adults, then, the objection taken from Divine justice is unsupported.

We now come to the case of persons dying in infancy. The great consideration which leads to a solution of this case is found in Romans 5:18, “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.” In these words, the sin of Adam and the merits of Christ are pronounced to be co-extensive; the words applied to both are precisely the same, “judgment came upon ALL MEN,” “the FREE GIFT came upon ALL MEN.” If the whole human race be meant in the former clause, the whole human race is meant in the latter also; and it follows that as all are injured by the offence of Adam, so all are benefited by the obedience of Christ. Whatever, therefore, that benefit may be, all children dying in infancy must partake of it, or there would be a large portion of the human race upon whom the “free gift,” the effects of “the righteousness of one,” did not “come,” which is contrary to the apostle’s words.

This benefit, whatever it might be, did not so “come upon all men” as to relieve them immediately from the sentence of death. This is obvious, from men being still liable to die, and from the existence of a corrupt nature or spiritual death in all mankind. As this is the case with adults, who grow up from a state of childhood, and who can both trace the corruptness of their
nature to their earliest years, and were always liable to bodily death; so, for this reason, it did not come immediately upon children, whether they die in infancy or not. — For there is no more reason to conclude that those children who die in infancy were born with a pure nature, than they who live to manhood; and the fact of their being born liable to death, a part of the penalty, is sufficient to show that they were born under the whole malediction.

The “free gift,” however, which has come upon all men, by the righteousness of one, is said to be “unto justification of life,” the full reversal of the penalty of death; and, by “the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness,” the benefit extends to the “reigning in life by one, Jesus Christ.” If the “free gift” is so given to all men that this is the end for which it is given, then is this “justification of life,” and this “reigning in life by Jesus Christ,” as truly within the reach of infants, dying in infancy, as within the reach of adults living to years of choice. This “free gift” is bestowed upon “all men,” in order to justification of life; it follows, then, that, in the case of infants, this gift may be connected with the end for which it was given, as well as in the case of adults, or it would be given in vain, and in fact be, in no sense whatever, a gift or benefit, standing opposed, in its result, to condemnation and death.

Now we know clearly by what means the “free gift,” which is bestowed in order to justification of life, (that is, that act of God by which a sinner, under sentence of death, is adjudged to life,) is connected with that end in the case of adults. The gift “comes upon them,” in its effects, very largely, independent of any thing they do — in the long suffering of God; in the instructions of the Gospel; the warnings of ministers; the corrective dispensations of Providence; above all, in preventing grace, and the influences of the Holy Spirit removing so much of their spiritual death as to excite in them various degrees of religious feeling, and enabling them to seek the face of God, to turn at his rebuke, and, by improving that grace, to repent and believe the Gospel. In a word, “justification of life” is offered them; nay, more, it is pressed upon them, and they fail of it only by rejecting it. If they yield and embrace the offer, then the end for which “the free gift came” upon them is attained — “justification of life.”

As to infants, they are not, indeed, born justified and regenerate; so that to say that original sin is taken away, as to infants, by Christ, is not the correct view of the case, for the reasons before given, but they are all born
under the “free gift,” the effects of the “righteousness” of one, which extended to “all men;” and this free gift is bestowed on them in order to justification of life, the adjudging of the condemned to live. All the mystery, therefore, in the case arises from this, that in adults we see the free gift connected with its end, actual justification, by acts of their own, repentance and faith; but as to infants, we are not informed by what process justification, with its attendant blessings, is actually bestowed, though the words of the apostle are express, that through “the righteousness of one” they are entitled to it. Nor is it surprising that this process should be hidden from us, since the Gospel was written for adults, though the benefit of it is designed for all; and the knowledge of this work of God, in the spirit of an infant, must presuppose an acquaintance with the properties of the human soul, which is, in fact, out of our reach. If, however, an infant is not capable of a voluntary acceptance of the benefit of the “free gift;” neither, on the other hand, is it capable of a voluntary rejection of it; and it is by rejecting it that adults perish. If much of the benefit of this “free gift” comes upon us as adults, independent of our seeking it; and if, indeed, the very power and inclination to seek justification of life is thus prevenient, and in the highest sense free; it follows, by the same rule of the Divine conduct, that the Holy Spirit may be given to children; that a Divine and an effectual influence may be exerted on them, which, meeting with no voluntary resistance, shall cure the spiritual death and corrupt tendency of their nature; and all this without supposing any great difference in the principle of the administration of this grace in their case and that of adults. But the different circumstances of children dying in their infancy, and adults, proves also that a different administration of the same grace, which is freely bestowed upon all, must take place. Adults are personal offenders, infants are not; for the former, confession of sin, repentance, and the trust of persons consciously perishing for their transgressions, are appropriate to their circumstances, but not to those of the latter; and the very wisdom of God may assure us that, in prescribing the terms of salvation, that is, the means by which the “free gift” shall pass to its issue, justification of life, the circumstances of the persons must be taken into account. The reason of pardon, in every case, is not repentance, not faith, not any thing done by man, but the merit of the sacrifice of Christ. Repentance and faith are, It is true, in the case of adults, a sine qua non, but in no sense the meritorious cause. The reasons of their being attached to the promise, as conditions, are nowhere given, but they are nowhere enforced as such, except on adults. If, in adults, we
see the meritorious cause working in conjunction with instrumental causes, they are capable of what is required; but when we see, even in adults, that, independent of their own acts, the meritorious cause is not inert, but fruitful in vital influence and gracious dealing, we see such a separation of the operation of the grand meritorious cause, and the subordinate instrumental causes, as to prove that the benefits of the death of Christ are not, in every degree, and consequently, on the same principle, not in every case, conferred under the restraints of conditions. So certainly is infant salvation attested by the Scriptures; so explicitly are we told that the free gift is come upon all men to justification of life, and that none can come short of this blessing but those who reject it.

But there is another class of instrumental causes to be taken into the account in the case of children; though they arise not out of their personal acts. The first and greatest, and general one, is the intercession of Christ himself, which can never be fruitless; and that children are the objects of his intercession is certain, both from his office as the intercessor of all mankind, the “mediator between God and man,” that is, all men; and from his actually praying for children in the days of his abode on earth. “He took them up in his arms and blessed them;” which benediction was either in the form of prayer, or it was authoritative, which makes the case still stronger. As to their future state, he seems also to open a sufficiently encouraging view, when he declares that, “of such is the kingdom of heaven;” for, whether we understand this of future felicity, or of the Church, the case is settled; in neither case can they be under wrath, and liable to condemnation.

Other instrumental causes of the communication of this benefit to infants, wherever the ordinances of the Christian Church are established, and used in faith, are the prayers of parents, and baptism in the name of Christ; means which cannot be without their effect, both as to infants who die, and those who live; and which, as God’s own ordinances, he cannot but honour, in different degrees, it may be, as to those who live and those whom he intends to call to himself; but which are still means of grace, and channels of saving influence; or they are dead forms, ill becoming that which is so eminently a dispensation, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

The injustice, then, alleged as implicated in the doctrine of original sin, when considered in this its whole and Scriptural view entirely vanishes; and, at the same time, the evil of sin is manifested, and the justice also of
the Lawgiver, for mercy comes not by relaxing the hold of justice. That still has its full manifestation in the exaction of vicarious obedience to death, even the death of the cross, from the second Adam, who made himself the federal head of fallen men, and gave a justification unto life” only by his submission to “judgment unto condemnation.”

Having thus established the import of the death threatened as the penalty of Adam’s transgression, to include corporal, moral, or spiritual and eternal death; and showed that the sentence included also the whole of his posterity, our next step is to ascertain that moral condition in which men are actually born into the world, notwithstanding that gracious provision which is made in Christ for human redemption. On this the testimony of Scripture is so explicit and ample, and its humbling representations are so borne out by consciousness and by experience, that it may well be matter of surprise, that the natural innocence of human nature should ever have had its advocates, at least among those who profess to receive the Bible as the word of God. In entering upon the subject of this corruption of human nature, it must first be stated, that there are several facts of history and experience to be accounted for; and that they must all be taken into account in the different theories which are advocated.

1. That in all ages great, and even general wickedness has prevailed among those large masses of men which are called nations.

So far as it relates to the immediate descendants of Adam before the flood; to all the nations of the highest antiquity; to the Jews throughout every period of their history, down to their final dispersion; and to the empires and other states whose history is involved in theirs; we have the historical evidence of Scripture, and much collateral evidence also from their own historians.

To what does this evidence go, but, to say the least, the actual depravity of the majority of mankind in all these ages, and among all these nations? As to the race before the flood, a murderer sprang up in the first family, and the world became increasingly corrupt, until “God saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;” “that all flesh had corrupted their way upon earth;” and that “the earth was filled with violence through them.” Only Noah was found righteous before God; and because of the universal wickedness, a wickedness which spurned all warning, and resisted all
correction, the flood was brought upon the world of the ungodly, as a testimony of Divine anger.

The same course of increasing wickedness is exhibited in the sacred records as taking place after the flood. The building of the tower of Babel was a wicked act, done by general concert, before the division of nations; this we know from its having excited the Divine displeasure, though we know not in what the particular crime consisted. After the division of nations, the history of the times of Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses, sufficiently show that idolatry, injustice, oppression, and gross sensualities characterized the people of Canaan, Egypt, and every other country mentioned in the Mosaic narrative.

The obstinate inclination of the Israelites to idolatry, through all ages to the Babylonish captivity, and the general prevalence of vice among men, is acknowledged in every part of the Old Testament. Their moral wickedness, after their return from Babylon, when they no longer practised idolatry, and were, therefore, delivered from that most fruitful source of crime, may be collected from the writers of the Old Testament who lived after that event; and their general corruption in the time of our Lord and his apostles stands forth with disgusting prominence in their writings and in the writings of Josephus, their own historian.

As to all other ancient nations, of whom we have any history, the accounts agree in stating the general prevalence of practical immorality and of malignant and destructive passions; and if we had no such acknowledgments from themselves; if no such reproaches were mutually cast upon each other; if history were not, as indeed it is, a record of crimes, in action and in detail; and if poets, moralists, and satirists did not all give their evidence, by assuming that men were influenced by general principles of vice, expressing themselves in particular modes in different ages, the following great facts would prove the case: —

The fact of general religious error, and that in the very fundamental principles of religion, such as the existence of one only God; which universal corruption of doctrine among all the ancient nations mentioned above, shows both indifference to truth and hostility against it, and therefore proves, at least, the general corruption of men’s hearts, of which even indifference to religious truth is a sufficient indication.
The universal prevalence of idolatry, which not only argues great debasement of intellect, but deep wickedness of heart, because, in all ages, idolatry has been more or less immoral in its influence, and generally grossly so, by leading directly to sanguinary and impure practices.

The prevalence of superstition wherever idolatry has prevailed, and often when that has not existed, is another proof. The essence of this evil is the transfer of fear and hope from God to real or imaginary creatures and things, and so is a renunciation of allegiance to God: as the Governor of the world, and a practical denial either of his being or his providence.

Aggressive wars, in the guilt of which all nations and all uncivilized tribes have been, in all ages, involved, and which necessarily suppose hatred, revenge, cruelty, injustice, and ambition.

The accounts formerly given of the innocence and harmlessness of the Hindoos, Chinese, the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, and other parts of the world, are now found to be total mistakes or wilful falsehoods.

In all heathen nations, idolatry, superstition, fraud, oppression, and vices of almost every description, show the general state of society to be exceedingly and even destructively corrupt; and though Mohammedan nations escape the charge of idolatry, yet pride, avarice, oppression, injustice, cruelty, sensuality, and gross superstition, are all prevalent among them.

The case of Christian nations, though in them immorality is more powerfully checked than in any other, and many bright and influential examples of the highest virtue are found among their inhabitants, sufficiently proves that the majority are corrupt and vicious in their habits. The impiety and profaneness; the neglect of the fear and worship of God; the fraud and villainy continually taking place in the commerce of mankind; the intemperance of various kinds which is found among all classes; the oppression of the poor; and many other evils, are in proof of this; and, indeed, we may confidently conclude, that no advocate of the natural innocence of man will contend that the majority of men, even in this country, are actually virtuous in their external conduct, and much less that the fear and love of God, and habitual respect to his will, which are, indeed, the only principles which can be deemed to constitute a person righteous, influence the people at large or even any very large proportion of them.
The fact, then, is established, which was before laid down, that men in all ages and in all places have, at least, been generally wicked.

2. The second fact to be accounted for is, the strength of that tendency to the wickedness which we have seen to be general.

The strength of the corrupting principle, whatever it may be, is marked by two circumstances.

The first is, the greatness of the crimes to which men have abandoned themselves.

If the effects of the corrupt principle had only been manifested in trifling errors, and practical infirmities, a softer view of the moral condition in which man is born into the world might, probably, have been admitted; but in the catalogue of human crimes, in all ages, and among great numbers of all nations, but more especially among those nations where there has been the least control of religion, and, therefore, where the natural dispositions of men have exhibited themselves under the simplest and most convincing evidence, we find frauds, oppressions, faithlessness, barbarous cruelties and murders, unfeeling oppressions, falsehoods, every kind of uncleanness, uncontrolled anger, deadly hatred and revenge, as to their fellow creatures, and proud and scornful rebellion against God.

The second is, the number and influence of the checks and restraints against which this tide of wickedness has urged on its almost resistless and universal course.

It has opposed itself against the law of God, in some degree found among all men; consequently, against the checks and remorse of conscience; against a settled conviction of the evil of most of the actions indulged in, which is shown by their having been blamed in others (at least whenever any have suffered by them) by those who themselves have been in the habit of committing them.

Against the restraints of human laws, and the authority of magistrates; for, in all ancient states, the moral corruption continued to spread until they were politically dissolved, society not being able to hold itself together, in consequence of the excessive height to which long indulgence had raised passion and appetite.
Against the provision made to check human vices by that judicial act of the Governor of the world, by which he shortened the life of man, and rendered it uncertain, and, at the longest, brief.

Against another provision made by the Governor of the world, in part with the same view, i.e. the dooming of man to earn his sustenance by labour, and thus providing for the occupation of the greater portion of time in what was innocent, and rendering the means of sensual indulgences more scanty, and the opportunities of actual immorality more limited.

Against the restraints put upon vice, by rendering it, by the constitution and the very nature of things, the source of misery of all kinds and degrees, national, domestic, personal, mental, and bodily.

Against the terrible judgments which God has, in all ages, brought upon wicked nations and notorious individuals, many of which visitations were known and acknowledged to be the signal manifestations of his displeasure against their vices.

Against those counteractive and reforming influences of the revelations of the will and mercy of God, which at different times have been vouchsafed to the world: as, against the light and influence of the patriarchal religion before the giving of the law; against the Mosaic institute, and the warnings of prophets among the Jews; against the religious knowledge which was transmitted from them among heathen nations connected with their history, at different periods; against the influence of Christianity when introduced into the Roman empire, and when transmitted to the Gothic nations, by all of whom it was grossly corrupted; and against the control of the same Divine religion in our own country, where it is exhibited in its purity, and in which the most active endeavours are adopted to enlighten and correct society.

It is impossible to consider the number and power of these checks without acknowledging, that those principles in human nature which give rise to the mass of moral evil which actually exists, and has always existed since men began to multiply upon the earth, are most powerful and formidable in their tendency.

3. The third fact is, that the seeds of the vices which exist in society may be discovered in children in their earliest years; selfishness, envy, pride, resentment, deceit, lying, and often cruelty; and so much as this the case, so explicitly is this acknowledged by all, that it is the principal object of the
moral branch of education to restrain and correct those evils, both by coercion, and by diligently impressing upon children, as their faculties open, the evil and mischief of all such affections and tendencies.

4. The fourth fact is, that every man is conscious of a natural tendency to many evils.

These tendencies are different in degree and in kind. In some they move to ambition, and pride, and excessive love of honour; in others, to anger, revenge, and implacableness; in others, to cowardice, meanness, and fear; in others, to avarice, care, and distrust; in others, to sensuality and prodigality. But where is the man who has not his peculiar constitutional tendency to some evil in one of these classes? But there are, also, evil tendencies common to all. These are, to love creatures more than God; to forget God; to be indifferent to our obligations to him; to regard the opinions of men more than the approbation of God; to be more influenced by the visible things which surround us than by the invisible God, whose eye is ever upon us, and by that invisible state to which we are all hastening.

It is the constant practice of those who advocate the natural innocence of man, to lower the standard of the Divine law under which man is placed; and to this they are necessarily driven, in order to give some plausibility to their opinions. They must palliate the conduct of men; and this can only be done by turning moral evils into natural ones, or into innocent infirmities, and by so stating the requisitions made upon our obedience by our Maker, as to make them consistent with many irregularities. But we have already shown, that the love of God requires our supreme love and our entire obedience; and it will, therefore, follow, that whatever is contrary to love and to entire subjection, whether in principle, in thought, in word, and in action, is sinful; and if so, then the tendency to evil, in every man, must, and on these premises will, be allowed. Nor will it serve any purpose to say, that man’s weakness and infirmity is such that he cannot yield this perfect obedience; for means of sanctification and supernatural aid are provided for him in the Gospel; and what is it that renders him indifferent to them but the corruptness of his heart?

Beside, this very plea allows all we contend for. It allows that the law is lowered, because of human inability to observe it and to resist temptation; but this itself proves, (were we even to admit the fiction of this lowering of the requisitions of the law,) that man is not now in the state in which he
was created, or it would not have been necessary to bring the standard of obedience down to his impaired condition.

5. The fifth fact is, that, even after a serious wish and intention has been formed in men to renounce these views, and “to live righteously, soberly, and godly,” as becomes creatures made to glorify God, and on their trial for eternity, strong and constant resistance is made by the passions, appetites, and inclinations of the heart at every step of the attempt.

This is so clearly a matter of universal experience, that, in the moral writings of every age and country, and in the very phrases and turns of all languages, virtue is associated with difficulty, and represented under the notion of a warfare. Virtue has always, therefore, been represented as the subject of acquirement; and resistance of evil as being necessary to its preservation. It has been made to consist in self rule, which is, of course, restraint upon opposite tendencies; the mind is said to be subject to diseases, and the remedy for these diseases is placed in something outward to itself — in religion, among inspired men; in philosophy, among the heathen.

This constant struggle against the rules and resolves of virtue has been acknowledged in all ages, and among Christian nations more especially, where, just as the knowledge of what the Divine law requires is diffused, the sense of the difficulty of approaching to its requisitions is felt; and in proportion as the efforts made to conform to it are sincere, is the despair which arises from repeated and constant defeats, when the aid of Divine grace is not called in. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

These five facts of universal history and experience, as they cannot be denied, and as it would be most absurd to discuss the moral condition of human nature without any reference to them, must be accounted for; and it shall now be our business to inquire, whether they can be best explained on the hypothesis drawn from the Scripture, that man is by nature totally corrupt and degenerate, and of himself incapable of any good thing; or on the hypothesis of man’s natural goodness, or, at worst, his natural indifference equally to good and to evil; notions which come to us ab initio with this disadvantage, that they have no text of Scripture to adduce to afford them any plausible support whatever.

The testimony of Scripture is decidedly in favour of the first hypothesis.
It has already been established, that the full penalty of Adam’s offence passed upon his posterity; and, consequently, that part of it which consists in the spiritual death which has been before explained. A full provision to meet this case is, indeed, as we have seen, made in the Gospel; but that does not affect the state in which men are born. It is a cure for an actually existing disease brought by us into the world; for, were not this the case, the evangelical institution would be one of prevention, not of remedy, under which light it is always represented.

If, then, we are all born in a state of spiritual death; that is, without that vital influence of God upon our faculties, which we have seen to be necessary to give them a right, a holy tendency, and to maintain them in it; and if that is restored to man by a dispensation of grace and favour, it follows that, in his natural state, he is born with sinful propensities, and that, by nature, he is capable, in his own strength, of “no good thing.”

With this the Scriptural account agrees.

It is probable, though great stress need not be laid upon it, that when it is said, Genesis 5:3, that “Adam begat a son in his own likeness,” that there is an implied opposition between the likeness of God, in which Adam was made, and the likeness of Adam, in which his son was begotten. It is not said, that he begat a son in the likeness of God; a very appropriate expression if Adam had not fallen, and if human nature had sustained, in consequence, no injury; and such a declaration was apparently called for, had this been the case, to show what would have been a very important fact, that, notwithstanding the personal delinquency of Adam, yet human nature itself had sustained no deterioration, but was propagated without corruption. On the contrary, it is said, that he begat a son in his own likeness; which, probably, was mentioned on purpose to exclude the idea, that the image of God was hereditary in man.

In Genesis 6:5, it is stated, as the cause of the flood, that “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Here, it is true, that the actual moral state of the antediluvians may only be spoken of, and that the text does not directly prove the doctrine of hereditary depravity: yet is the actual wickedness of man traced up to the heart, as its natural source, in a manner which seems to intimate, that the doctrine of the natural corruption of man was held by the writer, and by that his mode of expression was influenced. “The heart of man is here put for his soul.
This God had formed with a marvellous thinking power. But so is his soul debased, that every imagination, figment, formation of the thoughts of it, is evil, only evil, continually evil. Whatever it forms within itself as a thinking power, is an evil formation. If all men’s actual wickedness sprung from the evil formation of their corrupt heart, and if, consequently, they were sinners from the birth, so are all others likewise.” (Hebden.)

That this was the theological sentiment held and taught by Moses, and implied even in this passage, is made very clear by Genesis 8:21, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake: for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing.” The sense of which plainly is, that, notwithstanding the wickedness of mankind, though they sin from their childhood, yet would he not, on that account, again destroy “every living thing.” Here it is to be observed,

1. That the words are spoken as soon as Noah came forth from the ark, and, therefore, after the antediluvian race of actual and flagrant transgressors had perished, and before the family of Noah had begun to multiply upon the earth; when, in fact, there were no human beings upon earth but righteous Noah and his family.

2. That they are spoken of “man” as MAN; that is, of human nature, and, consequently, of Noah himself and the persons saved with him in the ark.

3. That it is affirmed of MAN, that is, of mankind, that the imagination of the heart “is evil from his youth.” Now the term “imagination” includes the thoughts, affections, and inclinations; and the word “youth” the whole time from the birth, the earliest age of man. This passage, therefore, affirms the natural and hereditary tendency of man to evil.

The book of Job, which embodies the patriarchal theology, gives ample testimony to this as the faith of those ancient times. Job 11:12, “Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt;” fierce, untractable, and scarcely to be subjected. This is the case from his birth; it is affirmed of man, and is equally applicable to every age; it is his natural condition, he is “born,” literally, “the colt of a wild ass.”

“Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,” Job 5:7; that is, he is inevitably subjected to trouble; this is the law of his state in this world, as
fixed and certain as one of the laws of nature. The proof from this passage is inferential; but very decisive. Unless man is born a sinner, it is not to be accounted for, that he should be born to trouble. Pain and death are the consequences only of sin, and absolutely innocent beings must be exempt from them.

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” <Job 14:4> The word thing is supplied by our translators, but person is evidently understood. Cleanness and uncleanness, in the language of Scripture, signify sin and holiness; and the text clearly asserts the natural impossibility of any man being born sinless, because he is produced by guilty and defiled parents.

“What is man, that he should be clean; and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” <Job 15:14> The same doctrine is here affirmed as in the preceding text, only more fully, and it may be taken as an explanation of the former, which was, perhaps, a proverbial expression. The rendering of the LXX. is here worthy of notice, for, though it does not agree with the present Hebrew text, it strongly marks the sentiments of the ancient Jews on the point in question. “Who shall be clean from filth? Not one; even though his life on earth be a single day.”

Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” What possible sense can be given to this passage on the hypothesis of man’s natural innocence? It is in vain to render the first clause, “I was brought forth in iniquity;” for nothing is gained by it. David charges nothing upon his mother, of whom he is not speaking, but of himself: he was conceived, or, if it please better, was born a sinner. And if the rendering of the latter clause were allowed, which yet has no authority, “in sin did my mother nurse me;” still no progress is made in getting quit of its testimony to the moral corruption of children, for it is the child only which is nursed, and, if that be allowed, natural depravity is allowed, depravity before reasonable choice, which is the point in question.

Psalm 58:3, 4, “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” They are alienated from the womb; “alienated from the life of God, from the time of their coming into the world.” (Wesley.) “Speaking lies:” they show a tendency to speak lies as soon as they are capable of it, which shows the existence of a natural principle of falsehood.
Proverbs 22:15, and 29:15, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” “These passages put together are a plain testimony of the inbred corruption of young children. ‘Foolishness,’ in the former, is not barely ‘appetite,’ or a want of the knowledge attainable by instruction, as some have said. Neither of these deserve that sharp correction recommended. But it is an indisposedness to what is good, and a strong propensity to evil. This foolishness ‘is bound up in the heart of a child;’ it is rooted in his inmost nature. It is, as it were, fastened to him by strong cords; so the original word signifies. From this corruption of the heart in every child, it is that ‘the rod of correction’ is necessary to give him wisdom; hence it is that a child left to himself, without correction, ‘brings his mother to shame.’ If a child were born equally inclined to virtue and vice, why should the wise man speak of foolishness, or wickedness as fastened in closely to his heart? And why should the rod and reproof be in necessary for him? These texts, therefore, are another clear proof of the corruption of human nature.” (Hebden.)

The quotation of Psalm 14:2, 3, by the Apostle Paul, in Romans 3:10, &c, is also an important Scriptural proof of the universal moral corruption of mankind. “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” When the psalmist affirms this of the children of men, it is fair to conclude that he is speaking of all men, and of human nature as originating actual depravity; and it is, indeed, obvious, from the context, that he is thus accounting for Atheism and other evils, the prevalence of which he laments. But, as the apostle quotes this passage and the parallel one in the 53d Psalm as Scriptural proofs of the universal corruption of mankind, the sense of the psalmist is fixed by his authority, and cannot be questioned. All, indeed, that the opponents of this interpretation can say, is, that, in the same psalm the psalmist speaks also of righteous persons, “God is in the generation of the righteous;” but that is nothing to the purpose, seeing that those who contend for the universal corruption of mankind, allow also that a remedy has been provided for the evil; and that by its application some, in every age, have been made righteous, who were originally and naturally sinful. In fact, it could not be said, with respect to men’s actual moral conduct in that, or probably in any
age, that “not one” was “righteous;” but in every age it may be said, that not one is so originally, or by nature; so that the passage is not to be explained on the assumption that the inspired writer is speaking only of the practice of mankind in his own times.

Of the same kind are all those passages which speak of what is morally evil as the characteristic and distinguishing mark, not of any individual, not of any particular people, living in some one age or part of the world; but of man, of human nature; and especially those which make sinfulness the natural state of that part of the human race who have not undergone that moral renovation which is the fruit of a Divine operation in the heart, a work ascribed particularly to the Holy Spirit. Of these texts the number is very great, and it adds also to the strength of their evidence, that the subject is often mentioned incidentally, and by way of illustration and argument in support of something else, and must, therefore, be taken to be an acknowledged and settled opinion among the sacred writers, both of the Old and New Testament, and one which neither they nor those to whom they spoke or wrote questioned or disputed.

“Cursed,” says the Prophet Jeremiah, “is he that trusteth in MAN.” Why in man, if he were not by nature unworthy of trust? On the scheme of man’s natural innocence, it would surely have been more appropriate to say, Cursed be he that trusteth indiscriminately in men, some of whom may have become corrupt; but here human nature itself, man, in the abstract, is held up to suspicion and caution. “The heart,” proceeds the same prophet, “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” which is the reason adduced for the caution preceding against trusting in man. It is precisely in the same way that our Lord designates human nature, when he affirms, that “from within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, &c; all these things come from within, and defile the man.” This representation would not be true, on the scheme of natural innocence. All these things would come from without, not from within, as their original source. The heart must first be corrupted by outward circumstances, before it could be the corrupter.

But to proceed with instances of the more incidental references to the fault and disease of man’s very nature, with which the Scriptures abound. “How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?” Job 15:16. “Madness is in the heart of the sons of men, while they live,” Ecclesiastes 9:3. “But they like men have transgressed the

The above texts are to be considered as specimens of the manner in which the sacred writers speak of the subject rather than as approaching to an enumeration of the passages in which the same sentiments are found in great variety of expression, and which are adduced on various occasions. They are, however, sufficient to show, that man, and the heart of man, and the moral nature of man, as spoken of by them in a way not to be reconciled to the notion of their purity, or even their indifference to good and evil. On two parts of the New Testament, however, which irresistibly fix the whole of this evidence in favour of the opinion of the universal Church of Christ, in all ages, our remarks may be somewhat more extended. The first is our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus, John 3, in which he declares the necessity of a new birth, in contradistinction to our natural birth, in order to our entrance into the kingdom of God; and lays it down, that the Spirit of God is the sole author of this change, and that what is born of the flesh cannot alter its nature; it is flesh still, and must always remain so, and in that state is unfit for heaven. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Throughout the New Testament, it will be found, that when flesh and spirit are, in a moral sense, opposed to each other, the one means the corrupt nature and habits of men, not sanctified by the Gospel; the other, either the principle and habit of holiness in good men, or the Holy Spirit himself, who imparts, and constantly nurtures them. “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” Romans 7:18. “I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin,” Romans 7:25. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” Romans 8:1. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of
the flesh but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you,” Romans 8:5-9.

These passages from St. Paul serve to fix the meaning of the terms, flesh and Spirit, as used by the Jews, and as they occur in the discourse of our Lord with Nicodemus; and they are so exactly parallel to it, that they fully confirm the opinion of those who understand our Lord as expressly asserting, that man is by nature corrupt and sinful, and unfit, in consequence, for the kingdom of heaven; and that all amendment of his case must result, not from himself, so totally is he gone from original righteousness; but from that special operation of the Holy Spirit which produces a new birth or regeneration. Both assert the natural state of man to be fleshly, that is, morally corrupt; both assert, that in man himself there is no remedy; and both attribute principles of holiness to a supernatural agency, the agency of the Spirit of God himself.

No criticism can make this language consistent with the theory of natural innocence. St. Paul describes the state of man, before he comes under the quickening and renewing influence of the Spirit, as being “in the flesh;” in which state “he cannot please God;” as having a “carnal mind” which “is not, and cannot be, subject to the law of God.” Our Lord, in like manner, describes the state of “the flesh,” this condition of entire unfitness for the kingdom of heaven as our natural state; and to make this the stronger, he refers this unfitness for heaven not to our acquired habits, but to the state in which we are born; for the very reason which he gives for the necessity of a new birth is, that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and therefore we “must be born again.” To interpret, therefore, the phrase, “to be flesh, as being born of the flesh.” merely to signify that we are, by natural birth, endowed with the physical powers of human nature, is utterly absurd; for what, then, is it to be born of the Spirit? Is it to receive physical powers which do not belong to human nature? Or, if they go a step farther, and admit, that “to be flesh as being born of the flesh,” means to be frail and mortal like our parents; still the interpretation is a physical and not a moral one, and leads to this absurdity, that we must interpret the being born of the Spirit physically and not morally, likewise. Now since the being born of the Spirit refers to a change which is effected in time, and not at
the resurrection, because our Lord speaks of being “born of water,” as well as the Spirit, by which he means baptism; and, as St. Paul says to the Romans, in the passage above quoted, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit;” and therefore speaks of their present experience in this world, it may be asked, what physical change did, in reality, take place in them in consequence of being “born of the Spirit?” On all hands it is allowed, that none took place; that they remained “frail and mortal” still; and it follows, therefore, that it is a moral and not a physical change which is spoken of, both by our Lord and by the apostle; and, if a moral change from sin to holiness, then is the natural state of man from his birth, and in consequence of his birth, sinful and corrupt.

The other passage is the argument in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which the apostle “proves both Jews and Gentiles under sin, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;” and then proposes the means of salvation by faith in Christ, on the express ground that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Whoever reads that argument, and considers the universality of the terms used, ALL, EVERY, ALL THE WORLD, BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES, must conclude, in all fairness of interpretation, that the whole human race, of every age, is intended. But, if any will construe his words partially, then he is placed in the following dilemma: — The apostle grounds the wisdom and mercy of that provision which is made for man’s salvation in the Gospel upon man’s sinfulness, danger, and helplessness. Now the Gospel as a remedy for disease, as salvation from danger is designed for all men, or but for a part; if for all, then all are diseased and in danger; if but for a part then the undiseased part of the human race, those who are in no danger, have no interest in the Gospel, it is not adapted to their case; and not only is the argument of the apostle lost, but those who advocate this notion must explain how it is, that our Lord himself commanded the Gospel to be preached “to every creature,” if but a part of mankind needs its salvation.

The doctrine, then, of Scripture is. I think, clearly established to be, that of the natural and universal corruption of man’s nature; and we now consider, whether on this ground, or on the hypothesis of man’s natural innocence or indifference to good or to evil, the facts above enumerated can be best explained. They are,
1. The, at least, general corruption of manners in all times and countries.

2. The strength of the tendency in man to evil.

3. The early appearance of the principles of various vices in children.

4. Every man’s consciousness of a natural tendency in his mind to one or more evils.

5. That general resistance to virtue in the heart, which renders education, influence watchfulness, and conflict necessary to counteract the force of evil. These points have been already explained more at large; and they are facts which, it is presumed, cannot be denied, and such as have the confirmation of history and experience.

That they are easily and fully accounted for by the Scriptural doctrine is obvious. The fountain is bitter, and the tree is corrupt; the bitter stream and the bad fruit are, therefore, the natural consequences. But the advocates of the latter hypothesis have no means of accounting for these moral phenomena, except by referring them to bad example and a vicious education.

Let us take the first. To account for general wickedness, they refer to general example.

But

1. This does not account for the introduction of moral wickedness. The children of Adam were not born until after the repentance of our first parents and their restoration to the Divine favour. They appear to have been his devout worshippers, and to have had access to his “presence,” the visible glory of the Shechinah. From what example, then, did Cain learn malice, hatred, and finally, murder? Example will not account, also, for the too common fact of the children of highly virtuous parents becoming immoral; for, since the examples nearest to them and constantly present with them are good examples, if the natural disposition were as good as this hypothesis assumes, the good example always present ought to be more influential than bad examples at a distance, and only occasionally seen or heard of.
2. If men are naturally disposed to good, or only not indisposed to it, it is not accounted for, on this hypothesis, how bad example should have become general, that is, how men should generally have become wicked.

If the natural disposition be more in favour of good than evil, then there ought to have been more good than evil in the world, which is contradicted by fact; if there had been only an indifference in our minds to good and evil, then at least, the quantum of vice and virtue in society ought to have been pretty equally divided, which is also contrary to fact; and also it ought to have followed from this, that at least all the children of virtuous persons would have been virtuous, that, for instance, the descendants of Seth would have followed in succession the steps of their righteous forefathers, though the children of Cain (passing by the difficulty of his own lapse) should have become vicious, On neither supposition can the existence of a general evil example in the world be accounted for. It ought not to have existed, and if so, the general corruption of mankind cannot be explained by it.

3. This very method of explaining the general viciousness of society does itself suppose the power of bad example; and, indeed, in this it agrees with universal opinion. All the moralists of public and domestic life, all professed teachers, all friends of youth, all parents have repeated their cautions against evil society to those whom they wished to preserve from vice. The writings of moralists, heathen and inspired, are full of these admonitions, and they are embodied in the proverbs and wise traditional sayings of all civilized nations. But the very force of evil example can only be accounted for, by supposing a proneness in youth to be corrupted by it. Why should it be more influential than good example, a fact universally acknowledged, and so strongly felt, that, for one person preserved by the sole influence of a good example, every body expects that a great number would he corrupted by an evil one? But if the hypothesis of man’s natural innocence were true, this ought not to be expected as a probable, much less as a certain result. Bad example would meet with resistance from a good nature; and it would be much more difficult to influence by bad examples than by good ones.

4. Nor does example account for the other facts in the above enumeration. It does not account for that strong bias to evil in men, which, in all ages, has borne down the most powerful restraints; for from this tendency that corrupt general example has sprung, which is alleged as the cause of it; and
it must, therefore, have existed previously, because the general example, that is, the general corrupt practice of men is its effect. We cannot, in this way, account for the early manifestation of wrong principles, tempers, and affections in children; since they appear at an age when example can have little influence, and even when the surrounding examples are good, as well as when they are evil. Why, too, should virtue always be found more or less a conflict? so that self-government and self-resistance are, in all cases, necessary for its preservation. The example of others will not account for this; for mere example can only influence when it is approved by the judgment; but here is a case in which evil is not approved, in which “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure,” are approved, desired, and cultivated; and yet the resistance of the heart to the judgment is so powerful, that a constant warfare and a strict command are necessary to perseverance.

Let us, then, see whether a bad education, the other cause, usually alleged to account for these facts, will be more successful.

1. This cause will no more account for the introduction of passions so hateful as those of Cain, issuing in a fratricide so odious into the family of Adam, than will example. As there was no example of these evils in the primeval family, so certainly there was no education which could incite and encourage them. We are, also, left still without a reason why, in well-ordered and religious families, where education and the example, too, is good, so many instances of their inefficacy should occur. If bad education corrupts a naturally well-disposed mind, then a good education ought still more powerfully to affect it, and give it a right tendency. It is allowed, that good example and good education are, in many instances, effectual; but we can account for them, without giving up the doctrine of the natural corruption of the heart. It is, however, impossible for those to account for those failures of both example and instruction which often take place, since, on the hypothesis of man’s natural innocence and good disposition, they ought never to occur, or, at least, but in very rare cases, and when some singular counteracting external causes happen to come into operation.

2. We may also ask, how it came to pass, unless there were a predisposing cause to it, that education, as well as example, should have been generally bad? Of education, indeed, men are usually more careful than of example. The lips are often right when the life is wrong; and many practise evil who
will not go so far as to teach it. If human nature, then, be born pure, or, at worst, equally disposed to good and evil, then the existence of a generally corrupting system of education, in all countries and among all people, cannot be accounted for. We have an effect either contrary to the assigned cause, or one to which the cause is not adequate — it is the case of a pure fountain sending forth corrupt streams; or that of a stream which, if turbid, has a constant tendency to defecation, and yet becomes still more muddy as it flows along its course.

3. It is not, however, the fact, that education is directly and universally so corrupting a cause as to account for the depravity of mankind. In many instances it has been defective; it has often inculcated false views of interest and honour; it has fostered prejudices and even national, though not social, hatreds; but it has only in few cases been employed to teach those vices into which men have commonly fallen. In fact, education, in all countries, has been, in no small degree, opposed to vice; and, as the majority of the worst people among us would shudder to have their children instructed in the vices which they themselves practise, so in the worst nations of antiquity, the characters of schoolmasters were required to be correct, and many principles and maxims of a virtuous kind were, doubtless, taught to children. When Horace says of youth, “Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,” he acknowledges its natural tendency to receive vicious impressions, but shows, too, that it was not left without contrary admonition. Precisely in those vices which all education, even the most defective, is designed to guard against, the world has displayed its depravity most obviously, and thus, so far from education being sufficient to account for the evils which have stained society in all ages, its influence has been, in no small degree, opposed to them.

4. To come to the other facts which must be accounted for, education is placed upon the same ground in the argument as example. The early evil dispositions in children cannot thus be explained, for they appear before education commences; nor does any man refer to education his propensity to constitutional sins; the resistance he often feels to good in his heart; his proneness to forget God, and to be indifferent to spiritual and eternal objects; all these he feels to be opposed to those very principles which his judgment approves, and with which it was furnished by education.

It is only, then, by the Scriptural account of the natural and hereditary corruption of the human race, commonly called original sin, \(^{105}\) that these
facts are fully accounted for; and as the facts themselves cannot be denied, such an interpretation of the Scripture as we have given above is, therefore, abundantly confirmed.

As the fact of a natural inclination to evil cannot be successfully combated, some have taken a milder view of the case; and, allowing these tendencies to various excesses, account for them by their being natural tendencies to what is pleasing, and so, for this reason, they deny them to be sinful, until they are complied with and approved by the will. This appears to be the view of Limborch, and some of the later divines of the Arminian school, who on this and other points very materially departed from the tenets of their master. (See Limborch’s Theologia Christiana, liber iii, caput 4.) Nothing, however, is gained by this notion, when strictly examined; for, let it be granted that these propensities are to things naturally pleasing, and that, in excess, they are out of their proper order; yet as it happens that, as soon as every person comes to years to know that they are wrong, as being contrary to the Divine law, he yet chooses them, and thus, without dispute, makes them sins; this universal compliance of the will with what is known to be evil is also to be accounted for, as well as the natural tendency to sinful gratifications. Now, as we have proved the universality of sin, this universal tendency of the will to choose and sanction the natural propensity to unlawful gratification is the proof of a natural state of mind, not only defective, but corrupt, which is what we contend for. If it be said, that these natural propensities to various evils in children are not sinful before they have the consent of the will, all that can be maintained is, that they are not actual sins, which no one asserts; but as a universal choice of evil, when accountableness takes place, proves a universal pravity of the will, previous to the actual choice, then it inevitably follows, that, though infants do not commit actual sin, yet that theirs is a sinful nature.

Finally, the death and sufferings to which children are subject is a proof that all men, from their birth, are “constituted,” as the apostle has it, and treated as “sinners.” An innocent creature may die: no one disputes that; but to die was not the original law of our species, and the Scriptures refer death solely to sin as its cause. Throughout the sacred writings, too, it is represented as a penalty, as an evil of the highest kind; and it is in vain to find out ingenious reasons to prove it a blessing to mankind. They prove nothing against the directly opposite character which has been stamped upon death and the suffering of moral disease, by the testimony of GOD. On the hypothesis of man’s natural innocence, the death of the innocent is
not to be reconciled to any known attribute of God, to any manifested principle of his moral government: but on that of his natural corruptness and federal relation to Adam it is explained: it is a declaration of God’s hatred of sin; a proclamation of the purity and inflexibility of his law; while the connection of this state, with the provisions of the covenant of grace, present “mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other.”

As to that in which original sin consists, some divines and some public formularies have so expressed themselves, that it might be inferred that a positive evil, infection, and taint had been judicially infused into man’s nature by God, which has been transmitted to all his posterity. Others, and those the greater number, both of the Calvinist and Arminian schools, have resolved it into privation. This distinction is well stated in the Private Disputations of Arminius.

“But since the tenor of the covenant into which God entered with our first parents was this, that if they continued in the favour and grace of God, by the observance of that precept and others, the gifts which had been conferred upon them should be transmitted to their posterity, by the like Divine grace which they had received; but if they should render themselves unworthy of those favours, through disobedience, that their posterity should likewise be deprived of them, and should be liable to the contrary evils: hence it followed, that all men, who were to be naturally propagated from them, have become obnoxious to death temporal and eternal, and have been destitute of that gift of the Holy Spirit, or of original righteousness. This punishment is usually called a privation of the image of God, and original sin.

“But we allow this point to be made the subject of discussion — beside the want or absence of original righteousness, may not some other contrary quality be constituted, as another part of original sin? We think it is more probable, that this absence alone of original righteousness is original sin itself, since it alone is sufficient for the commission and production of every actual sin whatever.”

This is by some divines called, with great aptness, “a depravation arising from a deprivation,” and is certainly much more consonant with the Scriptures than the opinion of the infusion of evil qualities into the nature of man by a positive cause, or direct tainting of the heart. This has been,
indeed, probably an opinion, in the proper sense, with few and has rather been collected from the strong and rhetorical expressions under which the moral state of man is often exhibited, and, on this account, has been attacked as a part of the doctrine of original sin, by the advocates of original innocence, and as making God directly the author of sin. No such difficulty, however, accompanies the accurate and guarded statement of that doctrine in the sense of Scripture. The depravation, the perversion, the defect of our nature is to be traced to our birth, so that in our flesh is no good thing, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God; but this state arises not from the infusion of evil into the nature of man by God, but from that separation of man from God, that extinction of spiritual life which was effected by sin, and the consequent and necessary corruption of man’s moral nature. For that positive evil and corruption may flow from a mere privation may be illustrated by that which supplies the figure of speech, “death,” under which the Scriptures represent the state of mankind. For, as in the death of the body, the mere privation of the principle of life produces inflexibility of the muscles, the extinction of heat, and sense, and motion, and surrenders the body to the operation of an agency which life, as long as it continued, resisted, namely, that of chymical decomposition; so, from the loss of spiritual life, followed estrangement from God, moral inability, the dominion of irregular passions, and the rule of appetite; aversion, in consequence, to restraint; and enmity to God.

This connection of positive evil, as the effect, with privation of the life and image of God, as the cause, is, however, to be well understood and carefully maintained, or otherwise we should fall into a great error on the other side, as, indeed, some have done, who did not perceive that the corruption of man’s nature necessarily followed upon the privation referred to. It is, therefore, a just remark of Calvin, that “those who have defined original sin as a privation of the original righteousness, though they comprise the whole of the subject, yet have not used language sufficiently expressive of its operation and influence. For our nature is not only destitute of all good, but is so fertile in all evils, that it cannot remain inactive.” (Institutes.) Indeed, this privation is not fully expressed by the phrase “the loss of original righteousness,” unless that be meant to include in it the only source of righteousness in even the first man, the life which is imparted and supplied by the Holy Spirit. A similar want of explicitness we observe also in Calvin’s own statement in his generally very able chapter on this subject, that Adam lost “the ornaments” he received from his Maker.
for us as well as for himself; unless we understand by these original “ornaments” and “endowments” of human nature in him, the *principle* also, as above stated, from which they all flowed; and which, being forfeited, could no longer be imparted *in the way of nature*. For when the Spirit was restored to Adam, being pardoned, it was by grace and favour; and he could not impart it by natural descent to his posterity, though born of him when in a state of acceptance with God, since these influences are the gifts of God, which are imparted not by the first but by the second Adam; not by nature, but by a free gift, to sinful and guilty man, the law being irreversible, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.”

Arminius, in the above quotation, has more forcibly and explicitly expressed that privation of which we speak, by the forfeiture “of the gift of the Holy Spirit” by Adam, for himself and his descendants, and the loss of original righteousness as the consequence.

This I take to be at once a simple and a Scriptural view of the case. President Edwards, who well argues against the notion of the infusion of evil, perplexes his subject by his theory of “natural and supernatural principles,” which the notes of Dr. Williams, his editor, who has introduced the peculiarities of his system of passive power, have not relieved. So far, certainly, both are right; the latter, that the creature cannot uphold itself, either physically or morally, without God; the former, that our natural passions and appetites can only be controlled by the higher principles, which are “summarily comprehended in Divine love.” But the power which upholds the rational creature in spiritual life is the Holy Spirit; and the source of these controlling supernatural powers, comprehended in “Divine,” is also the Holy Spirit; from the loss of which all the depravation of man’s nature proceeded.

This point may be briefly elucidated. The infliction of spiritual death, which we have already shown to be included in the original sentence, consisted, of course, in the loss of spiritual life, which was that principle from which all right direction and control of the various powers and faculties of man flowed. But this spiritual life in the first man was not a natural effect, that is, an effect which would follow from his mere creation, independent of the vouchsafed, influence of the Holy Spirit. This may be inferred from the “new creation,” which is the renewal of man after the image of Him who at first created him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit; but even after this change, this being “born again,” man is not able to preserve himself in the
renewed condition into which he is brought, but by the continuance of the same quickening and aiding influence. No future growth in knowledge and experience; no power of habit, long persevered in, render him independent of the help of the Holy Spirit; he has rather, in proportion to his growth, a deeper consciousness of his need of the indwelling of God, and of what the apostle calls his “mighty working.” The strongest aspirations of this new life is after communion and constant intercourse with God; and as that is the source of new strength, so this renewed strength expresses itself in a “cleaving unto the Lord,” with a still more vigorous “purpose of heart.” In a word, the sanctity of a Christian is dependent wholly upon the presence of the Sanctifier. We can only work out our own salvation as “God worketh in us to will and to do.”

This is the constant language of the New Testament; but if we are restored to what was lost by Adam, through the benefit brought to us by the second Adam; if there be any correspondency between the moral state of the regenerate man, and that of man before his fall, we do not speak of degree, but of substantial sameness of kind and quality; it love to God be in us what it was in him; if holiness, in its various branches, as it flows from love, be in us what it was in him; we have sufficient reason to infer, that as they are supported in us by the influence of the Divine Spirit, they were so supported in him. Certain it is, that before we are thus quickened by the Spirit, we are “dead in trespasses and sins;” and if we are made alive by that Spirit, it is a strong presumption that the withdrawing of that Spirit from Adam, when he wilfully sinned, and from all his posterity, that is, from human nature itself, was the cause of the death and the depravation which followed.

But this is not left to mere inference. For, as Mr. Howe justly observes, when speaking of “the retraction of God’s Spirit from Adam,” “This we do not say gratuitously; for do but consider that plain text, Galatians 3:13, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ If the remission of the curse carry with it the conferring of the grace of the Spirit, then the curse, while it did continue, could not but include and carry in it the privation of the Spirit. This was part of the curse upon apostate Adam, the loss of God’s Spirit. As soon as the law was broken, man was cursed, so as that thereby this Spirit should be withheld, should be kept off, otherwise than as upon the Redeemer’s
account, and according to his methods it should be restored. Hereupon it
could not but ensue that the Holy image of God must he erased and
vanished.” (Posthumous Works.)

This accounts for the whole case of man’s corruption. The Spirit’s
influence in him did not prevent the possibility of his sinning, though it
afforded sufficient security to him, as long as he looked up to that source
of strength. He did sin, and the Spirit retired; and, the tide of sin once
turned in, the mound of resistance being removed, it overflowed his whole
nature. In this state of alienation from God men are born, with all these
tendencies to evil, because the only controlling and sanctifying power, the
presence of the Spirit, is wanting, and is now given to man, not as when
first brought into being, as a creature; but is secured to him by the mercy
and grace of a new and different dispensation, under which the Spirit is
administered in different degrees, times, and modes, according to the
wisdom of God, never on the ground of our being creatures, but as
redeemed from the curse of the law by him who became a curse for us.

A question, as to the transmission of this corruption of nature from parents
to children, has been debated among those who, nevertheless, admit the
fact; some contending that the soul is ex traduce; others that it is by
immediate creation. It is certain that, as to the metaphysical part of this
question, we can come to no satisfactory conclusion. The Scriptures,
however, appear to be more in favour of the doctrine of traduction. “Adam
begat a son in his own likeness.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,”
which refers certainly to the soul as well as to the body. The fact also of
certain dispositions and eminent faculties of the mind being often found in
families appears to favour this notion; though it may be plausibly said, that,
as the mind operates by bodily instruments, there may be a family
constitution of the body, as there is of likeness, which may be more
favourable to the excitement and exertion of certain faculties than others.

The usual argument against this traduction of the human spirit is, that the
document of its generation tends to materialism. But this arises from a
mistaken view of that in which the procreation of a human being lies, which
does not consist in the production out of nothing of either of the parts of
which the compounded being, man, is constituted, but in the uniting them
substantially with one another. The matter of the body is not, then, first
made, but disposed, nor can it be supposed that the soul is by that act first
produced. That belongs to a higher power; and then the only question is,
whether all souls were created in Adam, and are transmitted by a law peculiar to themselves, which is always under the control of the will of that same watchful Providence, of whose constant agency in the production and ordering of the kinds, sexes, and circumstances of the animal creation, we have abundant proof; or whether they are immediately created. The usual objection to the last notion is, that God cannot create an evil nature; but if our corruption is the result of privation, not of positive infection, the notion of the immediate creation of the soul is cleared of a great difficulty, though it is not wholly disentangled. But the tenet of the souls descent appears to have most countenance from the language of Scripture, and it is no small confirmation of it, that when God designed to incarnate his own Son, he stepped out of the ordinary course, and formed a sinless human nature immediately by the power of the Holy Ghost. The philosophical difficulties which have presented themselves to this opinion appear chiefly to have arisen from supposing that consciousness is an essential attribute of spirit; and that the soul is naturally immortal; the former of which cannot be proved, while the latter is contradicted by Scripture, which makes our immortality a gift dependent on the will of the giver. Other difficulties have arisen for want of considering the constant agency of God in regulating the production of all things, and of rational accountable creatures especially.

But whichever of these views is adopted, the soul and the body are united before birth, and man is born under that curse of the law which has deprived fallen human nature of the Spirit of God, who can only be restored by Christ. It is, therefore, well and forcibly said by Calvin, — “to enable us to understand this subject, (man’s birth in sin,) we have no need to enter on that tedious dispute, with which the fathers were not a little perplexed, whether the soul proceeds by derivation. We ought to be satisfied with this, that the Lord deposited with Adam the endowments he chose to confer upon human nature; and, therefore, that when he lost the favours he had received, he lost them not only for himself, but for us all. Who will be solicitous about a transmission of the soul, when he hears, that Adam received the ornaments that he lost no less for us than for himself? that they were given, not to one man only, but to the whole human nature? There is nothing absurd, therefore, if, in consequence of his being spoiled of his dignities, that nature be now destitute and poor.” (Institutes.)

From this view of the total alienation of the nature of man from GOD, it does not, however, follow that there should be nothing virtuous and praiseworthy among men, until, in the proper sense, they become the
subjects of the regeneration insisted upon in the Gospel as necessary to qualify men for the kingdom of heaven. From the virtues which have existed among heathens, and from men being called upon to repent and believe the Gospel, it has been argued that human nature is not so entirely corrupt and disabled as the above representation would suppose; and, indeed, on the Calvinistic theory, which denies that all men are interested in the benefits procured by the death of Christ, it would be extremely difficult for any to meet this objection, and to maintain their own views of the corruption of man with consistency. On the contrary theory of God’s universal love nothing is more easy; because, in consequence of the atonement offered for all, the Holy Spirit is administered to all, and to his secret operations all that is really spiritual and good, in its principle, is to be ascribed.

Independent of this influence, indeed, it may be conceived that there may be much restraint of evil, and many acts of external goodness in the world, without at all impugning the doctrine of an entire estrangement of the heart from God, and a moral death in trespasses and sins.

1. The understanding of man is, by its nature, adapted to perceive the evidence of demonstrated truth, and has no means of avoiding the conviction but by turning away the attention. — Wherever, then, revelations of the Divine law, or traditional remembrances of it are found, notions of right and wrong have been and must be found also.

2. So much of what is right and wrong is connected with the interests of men, that they have been led publicly to approve what is right in all instances, in all instances where it is obviously beneficial to society, and to disapprove of wrong. They do this by public laws, by their writings, and by their censures of offenders. A moral standard of judging of vice and virtue has, therefore, been found every where, though varying in degree; which men have generally honestly applied to others in passing a judgment on their characters, though they have not used the same fidelity to themselves. More or less, therefore, the practice of what is condemned as vice or approved as virtue is shameful or creditable, and the interests and reputation of men require that they obtain what is called a character, and preserve it; a circumstance which often serves to restrain vicious practices, and to produce a negative virtue, or an affectation of real and active virtue.

3. Though the seeds of sin lie hid in the heart of all, yet their full developement and manifestation in action can only take place slowly and
by the operation of exciting circumstances. Much of the evil in the world, also, lies in the irregularities of those natural appetites and the excesses of those passions which are not in themselves evil, and such corrupt habits cannot be formed until after opportunities of frequent indulgence have been given. This will account for the comparative innocence of infancy, of youth, and of those around whom many guards have been thrown by providential arrangement.

4. We may notice, also, that it is not possible, were all men equally constituted as to their moral nature, that all sins should show themselves in all men; and that although there is nothing in the proper sense, good in any, that society should present an unvarying mass of corruption, which some appear to think a necessary corollary from the doctrine of the universal corruption of human nature. Avarice, the strong desire of getting and of hoarding wealth, necessarily restrains from expensive vices. An obsequious and a tyrannical temper cannot co-exist in the same circumstances, and yet, in other circumstances, the obsequious man is often found to be tyrannical, and the latter obsequious. Certain events excite a latent passion, such as ambition, and it becomes a master passion, to which all others are subordinated, and even vicious dispositions and habits controlled in order to success: just on the same principle that the ancient athletæ and our modern prize-fighters abstain from sensual indulgences, in order to qualify themselves for the combat; but who show, by the habits in which they usually live, that particular vices are suspended only under the influence of a stronger passion. Perhaps, too, that love of country, that passion for its glory and aggrandizement, which produced so many splendid actions and characters among the Greeks and Romans, a circumstance which has been urged against the doctrine of man’s depravity, may come under this rule. That it was not itself the result of a virtuous state of mind in, at least, the majority of cases, is clear from the frauds, injustice, oppressions, cruelties, and avarice with which it was generally connected.

5. It is a fact, too, which cannot be denied, that men have constitutional evil tendencies, some more powerfully bent to one vice, some to another. Whether it results from a different constitution of the mind that the general corruption should act more powerfully in one direction in this man, and in another in that; or from the temperament of the body; or from some law impressed by God upon a sinful nature, (which it involves no difficulty to admit, inasmuch as society could scarcely have existed without that balance of evils and that check of one vice upon another which this circumstance
produces,) — such is the fact; and it gives a reason for the existence of much negative virtue in society.

From all these causes, appearances of good among unregenerate men will present themselves, without affording any ground to deduct any thing from those statements as to man’s fallen state which have been just made; but these negative virtues, and these imitations of actions really good from interest, ambition, or honour, have no foundation in the fear of God, in a love to virtue as such, in a right will, or in spiritual affections; and they afford, therefore, no evidence of spiritual life, or, in other words, of religious principle. To other vices, to which there is any temptation, and to those now avoided, whenever the temptation comes, men uniformly yield; and this shows, that though the common corruption varies its aspects, it is, nevertheless, unrelieved by a real virtuous principle in any, so far as they are left to themselves.

But virtues grounded on principle, though an imperfect one, and therefore neither negative nor simulated, may also be found among the unregenerate, and have existed, doubtless, in all ages. These, however, are not from man, but from God, whose Holy Spirit has been vouchsafed to “the world,” through the atonement. This great truth has often been lost sight of in this controversy. Some Calvinists seem to acknowledge it substantially, under the name of “common grace;” others choose rather to refer all appearances of virtue to nature, and thus, by attempting to avoid the doctrine of the gift of the Spirit to all mankind, attribute to nature what is inconsistent with their opinion of its entire corruption. But there is, doubtless, to be sometimes found in men not yet regenerate in the Scripture sense, not even decided in their choice, something of moral excellence, which cannot be referred to any of the causes above adduced; and of a much higher character than is to be attributed to a nature which, when left to itself, is wholly destitute of spiritual life. Compunction for sin, strong desires to be freed from its tyranny, such a fear of God as preserves them from many evils, charity, kindness, good neighbourhood, general respect for goodness and good men, a lofty sense of honour and justice, and, indeed, as the very command issued to them to repent and believe the Gospel in order to their salvation implies, a power of consideration, prayer, and turning to God, so as to commence that course which, persevered in, would lead on to forgiveness and regeneration. To say that all these are to be attributed to mere nature, is to surrender the argument to the semi-Pelagian, who contends that these are proofs that man is not wholly degenerate. They are
to be attributed to the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit; to his incipient workings in the hearts of men; to the warfare which he there maintains, and which has sometimes a partial victory, before the final triumph comes, or when, through the fault of man, through “resisting,” “grieving,” “vexing,” “quenching” that Holy Spirit, that final triumph may never come. It is thus that one part of Scripture is reconciled to another, and both to fact; the declaration of man’s total corruption, with the presumption of his power to return to God, to repent, to break off his sins, which all the commands and invitations to him from the Gospel imply: and thus it is that we understand how, especially in Christian countries, where the Spirit is more largely effused, there is so much more general virtue than in others; and in those circles especially, in which Christian education, and the prayers of the pious, and the power of example are applied and exhibited.

The Scriptural proof that the Spirit is given to “the world” is obvious and decisive. We have seen that the curse of the law implied a denial of the Spirit; the removal of that curse implies, therefore, the gift of the Spirit, and the benefit must be as large and extensive as the atonement. Hence we find the Spirit’s operations spoken of, not only as to the good, but the wicked, in all the three dispensations. In the patriarchal, “the Spirit strove with men;” with the antediluvian race, before and all the time the ark was preparing. The Jews in the wilderness are said to have “vexed his Holy Spirit;” Christ promises to send the Spirit to convince the world of sin; and the book of God’s Revelations concludes by representing the Spirit as well as the Bride, the Holy Ghost as well as the Church in her ordinances, inviting all to come and take of the water of life freely. All this is the fruit of our redemption and the new relation in which man is placed to God; as a sinner, it is true, still; but a sinner for whom atonement has been made, and who is to be wooed and won to an acceptance of the heavenly mercy. Christ having been made a curse for us, the curse of the law no longer shuts out that Spirit from us; nor can justice exclaim against this going forth of the Spirit, as it has been beautifully expressed, “to make gentle trials upon the spirits of men;” to inject some beams of light, to inspire contrite emotions, which, if they comply with, may lead on to those more powerful and effectual. If, however, they rebel against them, and oppose their sensual imaginations and desires to the secret promptings of God’s Spirit, they ultimately provoke him to withdraw his aid, and they relapse into a state more guilty and dangerous. Again and again they are visited in
various ways, in honour of the Redeemer’s atonement, and for the manifestation of the long suffering of God. In some the issue is life; in others, an aggravated death; but in most cases this struggle, this “striving with man,” this debating with him, this standing between him and death, cannot fail to correct and prevent much evil, to bring into existence some “goodness,” though it may be as the morning cloud and the early dew, and to produce civil and social virtues, none of which however, are to be placed to the account of nature, nor used to soften our views of its entire alienation from God; but are to be acknowledged as magnifying that grace which regards the whole of the sinning race with compassion, and is ever employed in seeking and saving that which is lost.
CHAPTER 19. — REDEMPTION. — PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S MORAL GOVERNMENT.

We have established it as the doctrine of Holy Scripture, that all men are born with a corrupted nature, that from this nature rebellion against the Divine authority universally flows, and that, in consequence, the whole world is, as St. Paul forcibly expresses it, “guilty before GOD.”

Before any issue proceeded from the first pair, they were restored to the Divine favour. Had no method of forgiveness and restoration been established with respect to human offenders, the penalty of death must have been forthwith executed upon them, there being no doubt of the fact of their delinquency, and no reason, in that case, for delaying their punishment; and with, and in them, the human race must have utterly perished. The covenant of pardon and salvation which was made with Adam, did not, however, terminate upon him; but comprehended all his race. This is a point made indubitable by those passages we have already quoted from the Apostle Paul, in which he contrasts the injury which the human race have received from the disobedience of Adam, with the benefit brought to them by the obedience of Jesus Christ. “For if, through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of GOD, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” “Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; ever so by the righteousness of one the free gift Came upon all men unto justification of life.”

Since, then, the penalty of death was not immediately executed in all its extent upon the first sinning pair, and is not immediately executed upon their sinning descendants; since they were actually restored to the Divine favour, and the same blessing is offered to us, our inquiries must next be directed to the nature and reason of that change in the conduct of the Divine Being, in which he lays aside, in so great a measure, the sternness and inflexibility of his office of Judge, and becomes the dispenser of grace and favour to the guilty themselves.

The existence of a Divine law, obligatory upon man, is not doubted by any who admit the existence and government of GOD. We have already seen its requirements, its extent, and its sanctions, and have proved that its penalty
consists not merely of severe sufferings in this life; but in death, that is, the separation of the body and the soul, — the former being left under the power of corruption, the other being separated from God, and made liable to punishment in another state of being.

It is important to keep in view the fact of the extent and severity of the punishment denounced against all transgressions of the law of God, because this is illustrative of the character of God; both with reference to his essential holiness and to his proceedings as Governor of the world. The miseries connected with sin, as consequences affecting the transgressor himself and society, and the afflictions, personal and national, which are the results of Divine visitation, must all be regarded as punitive. Corrective effects may be secondarily connected with them, but primarily, they must all be punitive. It would be abhorrent to all our notions of the Divine character, to suppose perfectly innocent beings subject to such miseries; and they are only, therefore, to be accounted for on the ground of their being the results of a supreme judicial administration, which bears a strict, and often a very terrible character. If, to the sufferings and death which result from offences in the present life, we add the future punishment of the wicked, we shall be the more impressed with the depth and breadth of that impress of justice which marks the character and the government of God. Say that this punishment is that of loss, loss of the friendship and presence of God, and all the advantages which must result from that immediate intercourse with him which is promised to righteous persons; and that this loss, which, confessedly, must be unspeakably great, is eternal: even then it must follow that the turpitude of moral delinquency is regarded by our Divine Legislator and Judge as exceedingly mighty and aggravated. But when to the punishment of loss in a future life, we add that of pain, which all the representations of this subject in Scripture certainly establish, whether they are held to be expressed in literal or in figurative phrase; to which pain also the all-impressive circumstance of eternity is to be added; then is our sense of the guilt and deserving of human offence against God, according to the principles of the Divine law, raised, if not to a full conception of the evil of sin, (for as we cannot measure the punishment, we cannot measure the quality of the offence,) yet to a standard of judging, which may well warrant the Scriptural exclamation, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

These premises are unquestionable, if any respect is paid to the authority of Scripture, and, indeed, God’s severity against moral offence is manifested,
as to this present life, by facts of universal observation and uninterrupted history, quite independent of Scripture. But it is to the testimony of God himself, in his own word, that we must resort for the most important illustrations of the Divine character, and especially of its HOLINESS and JUSTICE.

With respect to the former, they show us that HOLINESS in God is more than a mere absence of moral evil; more than approval, and even delight in moral goodness; more than simple aversion and displeasure at what is contrary to it. They prove, that the holiness of God is so intense, that whatever is opposed to it is the object of an active displacence, of hatred, of opposition, and resistance, and that this sentiment is inflexible and eternal. Agreeably to this, GOD is, in Scripture, said to be “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity” — and we are taught that “the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination” to him.

With respect to the JUSTICE of God, it is necessary that we should enter into a larger view, since a right conception of that attribute of the Divine nature lies at the foundation of the Christian doctrine of atonement.

Justice is usually considered as universal or particular. Universal justice, or righteousness, includes holiness, and, indeed, comprehends all the moral attributes of God, all the Divine virtues of every kind. — Particular justice is either commutative, which respects equals; or distributive, which is the dispensing of rewards and punishments, and is exercised only by governors. It is the justice of God in this last view, but still in connection with universal justice, with which we are now concerned; that rectoral sovereign justice by which he maintains his own rights, and the rights of others, and gives to every one his due according to that legal constitution which he has himself established. And as this legal constitution under which he has placed his creatures, is the result of universal justice or righteousness, the holiness, goodness, truth, and wisdom of God united; so his distributive justice, or his respect to the laws which he has himself established, is, in every respect and degree, faultless and perfect. In this legal constitution, no rights are mistaken or misstated; and nothing is enjoined or prohibited, nothing promised or threatened but what is exactly conformable to the universal righteousness or absolute moral perfection of God. This is the constant doctrine of Scripture; this the uniform praise bestowed upon the Divine law, that it is, in every respect, conformable to abstract truth, purity, holiness, and justice, and is itself truth, purity,
holiness, and justice. “The statutes of the Lord are RIGHT, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is PURE, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is CLEAN, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are TRUE and RIGHTEOUS altogether,” Psalm 19:8, 9. “The law is holy, and the commandment HOLY, JUST, and GOOD,” Romans 7:12.

Of the strictness and severity of the punitive justice of God, the sentence of death, which we have already seen to be pronounced upon “SIN,” and, therefore, upon all transgressions of God’s law, for “sin is the transgression of the law,” is sufficient evidence; and the actual infliction of death, as to the body, is the standing proof to the world, that the threatening is not a dead letter, and that in the Divine administration continual and strict regard is had to the claims and dispensations of distributive justice. On the other hand, as this distributive justice emanates from the entire holiness and moral rectitude of the Divine nature, it is established, by this circumstance, that the severity does not go beyond the equity of the case; and that, to the full extent of that punishment which may be inflicted in another life, and which is, therefore, eternal, there is nothing which is contrary to the full and complete moral perfection of God, to his goodness, holiness, truth, and justice united; but that it is fully agreeable to them all, and is, indeed, the result of the perfect existence of such attributes in the Divine nature.

The Scriptures, therefore, are frequently exceedingly emphatic in ascribing a perfect righteousness to the judicial and penal visitations of sinful individuals and nations; and that not merely with reference to such visitations being conformable to the penalties threatened in the Divine law itself, in which case the righteousness would consist in their not exceeding the penalty threatened; but, more abstractedly considered, in their very nature, and with reference to even the highest standard of righteousness and holiness. “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do RIGHT?” “It is a RIGHTEOUS THING with God to RECOMPENSE tribulation to them that trouble you,” 2 Thessalonians 1:6. — “The day of wrath and revelation of the RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT of GOD;” Romans 2:5. “Even so, Lord God Almighty, TRUE and RIGHTEOUS are thy judgments,” Revelation 16:7.

The legal constitution then, which we are under, secures life to the obedient, but dooms offenders to die. It is the office of distributive justice to execute this penalty, as well as to bestow the reward of obedience; and
the appointment of the penalty and the execution of it, are both the results of the essential rectitude of God.

This is most obvious as the doctrine of Scripture; but have we any means of discerning the connection between the essential justice or universal righteousness of God, and such a constitution of law and government as, in the first instance, ordains so severe a penalty against sin as death, maintains it unchangeably through all the generations of time, and carries it into eternity? This is an important question, not without its difficulties, and yet it may not altogether elude our inquiries. Whether we succeed or not in discovering this connection, the fact remains the same, firmly grounded on the most explicit testimony of God in his own word. It is, however, an inquiry worthy our attention.

The creation of beings capable of choice, and endowed with affections, seems necessarily to have involved the possibility of volitions and acts contrary to the will of the Creator, and, consequently, it involved a liability to misery. To prevent this, both justice and benevolence were concerned. Justice, seeing that the Creator has an absolute right to the entire obedience of the creatures he has made, and all opposition to that will is the violation of a right, and the practice of a wrong which justice is bound to prevent. Benevolence, because this opposition to the will of God, which will is the natural law of a creature, must be the source of misery to the offender, and that independent of direct punishment. This is manifest. Some end was proposed in creation, or it could not have been a work of wisdom; the felicity of the creature must also have been proposed as an end, either principal or subordinate, or creation could not have been a display of goodness; a capacity and power of holiness must also have been imparted to moral agents, or, in a moral nature, every act would have been morally corrupt, and, therefore, the creature must have been constantly displeasing to the holy God, and not “very good,” as all his works, including man, were pronounced to be at the beginning. The end proposed in the forming of intelligent creatures could only be answered by their continual compliance with the will of God. This implied both the power and the exercise of holiness, and with that the felicity of the creature was necessarily connected. It was adapted to a certain end, and in attaining that its happiness was secured. To be disobedient was to set itself in opposition to God, to exist and act for ends contrary to the wisdom and holiness of God, and was, therefore, to frustrate his benevolent intentions also as to its happiness, and to become miserable from its very hostility to God, and the
disorder arising from the misapplication of the powers with which it had been endowed. To prevent all these evils, and to secure the purposes for which creative power was exerted, were the ends, therefore, of that administration which arose out of the existence of moral agents. This rule takes date from their earliest being. No sooner did they exist, than a Divine government was established over them; and to the ends just mentioned all its acts must have been directed.

The first act was the publication of the will or law of God, for where there is no declared law there is no rational government. The second act was to give motives to obedience, for to creatures liable to evil, though created good, these were necessary; but as they were made free, and designed to yield a willing service, more than motives, that is rational inducements, operating through the judgment and affections, could not be applied to induce obedience; — external force or necessary, impulse could have no place in the government of such creatures. The promise of the continuance of a happy and still improving life comprehended one class of motives to obedience; the real justice of yielding obedience another. But was no motive arising from fear also to be applied? There was much to be feared from the very nature of things; from the misery which, in the way of natural and necessary consequence alone, must follow from opposition to the will of God, and the wilful corrupting of a nature created upright. Now, since this was what the creature was liable to, the administration of the Divine government would have been obviously defective, had this been concealed by Him, who had himself established that natural order, by which disobedience to the will of God, in a moral being, should be followed by certain misery, and he would apparently have been chargeable with not having used every means, consistent with free agency, to prevent so fatal a result. So far we conceive that this is indubitable.

But now let us suppose that nothing less than a positive penalty, of the most tremendous kind, could be a sufficient motive to deter these free and rational beings from transgression; that, even that threatened penalty itself, though the greatest possible evil, would not, in all cases, be sufficient; but that, in none a less powerful motive would prove sufficiently cautionary; then, in such circumstances, the moral perfection of the Divine nature, his universal rectitude and benevolence, would undoubtedly require the ordination of that penalty, however tremendous. The case might be a choice between the universal disobedience of all, and their being left to the miseries which follow from sin by natural consequence; and the
preservation of some, perhaps the majority, though the guilty remainder
should not only be punished by the misery which is the natural result of
vice; but, in addition, should be subject to that positive penalty of death,
which, as to the soul, runs on with immortality, and is, therefore, eternal.

On such an alternative as this, which may surely be conceived possible, and
which contradicts no attribute of God, does the essential justice or
rectitude of the Divine nature demand that such a penalty should be
adopted? The affirmative of this question will be supported, I think, by the
following considerations: —

1. The holiness of God, which, as we have seen, is so intense as to abhor
and detest every kind and degree of moral evil, would, from its very nature,
its active and irreconcilable opposition to evil, determine to the adoption of
the most effectual means of preventing its introduction among the rational
beings which should be created, and, when introduced, of checking and
limiting its progress. So that, in proportion to that aversion, must be his
propension to adopt the most effectual means to deter his creatures from it;
and if nothing less than such a penalty could be effectual, even in the
majority of cases, then it resulted necessarily, from the holiness of GOD,
that the penalty of death, in all its Scriptural extent, should be attached to
transgression.

2. The consideration of the essential justice or rectitude of God, that
principle which leads to an unchangeable respect to what is right and
equitably fit, leads to the same conclusion. God has his own rights as
maker, and, therefore, proprietor and Lord of all creatures, and it is fit they
should be maintained and vindicated. To surrender them, or unsteadily and
uncertainly to assert them, would be an encouragement to evil, and his very
regard to mere abstract right and moral fitness must, therefore, be
considered as determining God to a steady and unchangeable assertion of
his rights, since their surrender could present no end worthy of his
character, or consistent with his holiness. But wherever more created
beings exist than one, the rights of others also come into consideration;
both the indirect right of a dependent creature under government, to be
protected, as far as may be, from the contagion of bad example, and the
more direct right of protection from those injuries which many sins do, in
their own nature, imply. For no man can be ambitious, unjust, &c, without
inflicting injury upon others. The essential rectitude of God was concerned,
therefore, to regard these rights in the creatures dependent upon him, and
to adopt such a legal constitution and mode of government, under which to
place them, as should respect the maintenance of his own rights of
sovereignty, and the righteous claims which his creatures, that is the
general society of created beings, had upon him. All this, it may be said,
only proves that the essential rectitude of God required that such a
government should be adopted as should inflict some marked penalty on
offences. It proves this, but it proves more, namely, that the Divine
rectitude required that the most effectual means should be adopted to
uphold these rights, both as they existed primarily in God, and secondarily
in his creatures. This must follow: for if there was any obligation to uphold
them at all, it was an obligation to uphold them in the most effectual
manner, since, if ineffectual means only had been adopted, when more
effectual means were at hand, a wilful abandonment of those rights would
have been implied. If, therefore, there were no means equally effectual for
these purposes as the issuing of a law, accompanied by a sanction of death
as its penalty, the essential rectitude of God required its adoption.

3. The same may be said of the Divine goodness and wisdom, for, as the
former is tenderly disposed to preserve all sentient creatures from misery,
so the latter would, of necessity, adopt the most effectual means of
counteracting moral evil, which is the only source of misery in the creation
of God.

The whole question, then, depends on this, whether the penalty of death, as
the punishment of sin, be the most effectual means of accomplishing this
end; the answer to which is, to all who believe the Bible, that this has
actually been adopted as the universal penalty of transgressing the Divine
law, (see chapter 18,) and as this is confessedly the highest possible
penalty, nothing less than this could be effectual to the purpose of
government, and to the manifestation of the Divine holiness and rectitude.
If it could, then a superfluous and excessive means has been adopted, for
which no reason can be given, and which impeaches the wisdom of God,
the office of which attribute it is to adapt means to ends by an exact
adjustment; if not, then it was required by all the moral attributes of the
Divine nature to which we have referred.

The next question will be whether, since, as the result of the moral
perfection of God, a legal constitution has been established among rational
creatures which accords life to obedience, and denounces death against
transgression, the justice of God obliges to the execution of the penalty; or
whether we have any reason to conclude, that the rights of God are in many, or in all cases, relaxed, and punishment remitted. All the opponents of the doctrine of atonement strenuously insist upon this; and argue, first, that God has an unquestionable power of giving up his own rights, and pardoning sin on prerogative, without any compensation whatever; second, that when repentance succeeds to offence, there is a moral fitness in forgiveness, since the person offending presents an altered and reformed character: and finally, that the very affections of goodness and mercy, so eminent in the Divine character, require us to conclude that he is always ready, upon repentance, to forgive the delinquencies of all his creatures, or, at most, to make their punishments light and temporary.

In the first of these arguments, it is contended that God may give up his own rights. This must mean either his right to obedience from his creatures, or his right to punish disobedience, when that occurs. With respect to God’s right to be obeyed, nothing can be more obvious than that the perfect rectitude of his nature forbids him to give up or to relax that right at all. No king can morally give up his right to be obeyed in the full degree which may be enjoined by the laws of his kingdom. No parent can give up his right to obedience, in things lawful, from his children, and be blameless. In both cases, if this be done voluntarily, it argues an indifference to that principle of rectitude on which such duties depend, and, therefore, a moral imperfection. Now this cannot be attributed to God, and, therefore, he never can yield up his right to be obeyed, which is both agreeable to abstract rectitude, and is, moreover, for the benefit of the creature himself, as the contrary would be necessarily injurious to him. But may he not give up his right to punish, when disobedience has actually taken place? Only, it is manifest, where he would not appear by this to give up his claim to obedience, which would be a winking at offence; and where he has not absolutely bound himself to punish. But neither of these can occur here. It is only by punitive acts that the Supreme Governor makes it manifest that he stands upon his right to be obeyed, and that he will not relax it. If no punishment ensue, then it must follow, that that right is given up. From the same principle that past offences are regarded with impunity, it would also follow, that all future ones might be overlooked in like manner, and thus government would be abrogated, and the obligation of subjection to God be, in effect, cancelled. If, again, impunity were confined to a few offenders, then would there be partiality in God; if it were extended to all, then would he renounce his sovereignty, and show himself
indifferent to that love of rectitude which is the characteristic of a holy being, and to that moral order, which is the character of a righteous governor. But, in addition to this, we have already seen that, by a formal law, punishment is actually threatened, and that in the extreme, and in all cases of transgression whatever. Now, from this, it follows, that nothing less than the attachment of such a penalty to transgression was determined by the wisdom of God to be sufficient to uphold the authority of his laws among his creatures; that even this security, in all instances, would not deter them from sin; and, therefore, that a less awful sanction would have been wholly inadequate to the case. If so, then not to exact the penalty is to repeal the law, to reduce its sanction to an empty threat, unworthy the veracity of God, and to render it altogether inert, inasmuch as it would be soon discovered whether sin were followed by punishment or not. This is a principle so fully recognized in human governments, that their laws have generally defined the measure of punishment, and the fact being proved, the punishment follows as a thing of course in the regular order of administration. It is true, that a power of pardon is generally lodged with the prince; but the reason of this is, the imperfection which must necessarily cleave to all human institutions, so that there may be circumstances in the offence which the law could not provide against; or there may be an expediency or reason of state which supposes some compromise of strict principle, some weakness on the part of the sovereign power, some desire to disarm resentment, or to obtain popularity, or to gratify some powerful interest. But these are the exceptions, not the rule; for, in general, the supreme power proceeds calmly and firmly in the exercise of punitive justice, in order to maintain the authority of the laws, and to deter others from offending. Now none of those imperfections, or sinister interests, which interfere to produce these exceptions, can have any place in the Divine government; and, even if it could be proved, that in some special cases, exceptions might occur in the administration of God, yet this would not meet the case of those who would establish the hope of pardon in behalf of offending men, upon the prerogative of God to relax his own rights and to remit punishment, since what is required is to prove that there is a general rule of pardon, not a few special cases of exemption from the denounced penalty. It may, therefore, be confidently concluded, that there is no relaxation of right in the Divine administration, and no forgiveness of sin by the exercise of mere prerogative.
The notion which has been added to this, that repentance, on the part of the offender, places him in a new relation, and renders him a fit object of pardon, will be found equally fallacious.

This argument assumes that, in a case of impenitence, the moral fitness which is supposed to present itself, in the case of penitents, to claim the exercise of forgiveness, does not exist, and, therefore, that it would be *morally unfit*, that is, *wrong*, to exercise it. This is, indeed, expressly conceded by Socinus, who says, that not to give pardon, in case of impenitence, is due to the rectitude and equity of God. It follows, then, that the principle before stated, that the prerogative of God enables him to forgive sin, must be given up by all who hold that it is only when repentance takes place, that a moral fitness is created for the exercise of this act of grace. Upon their own showing, sin is not, and cannot, consistently with rectitude, be forgiven by a voluntary surrender of right, or from mere compassion; but, in order to make this an act of moral fitness, that is, a right and proper proceeding, some consideration must be presented, independent of the misery to which the offender has exposed himself, and which misery is the object of pity; something which shall make it *right*, as well as *merciful* in God to forgive. Those who urge that repentance is this *consideration*, do thus, unwittingly, give up their own principle, and tacitly adopt that of the satisfactionists differing only as to what does actually constitute it *right* in God to forgive. But the sufficiency of mere repentance to constitute a moral fitness in forgiveness, all who consider the death of Christ as a necessary atonement for sin, do, of course, deny; and there are, indeed, many considerations suggested to us by turning to our true guide, the Scriptures, wholly unfavourable to this opinion.

In the first place, we find no intimation in them that the penalty of the law is not to be executed in case of repentance: — certainly there was none given in the promulgation of the law to Adam; there is none in the decalogue; none in any of those passages in the Old and New Testament which speak of the legal consequences of sin, as “that the wages of sin is death;” “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” &c. Repentance is enjoined, both in the Old and New Testaments, it is true, but then it is in connection with a system of atonement and satisfaction, independent of repentance; with sacrifices under the Mosaic institution, and with the death and redemption of Christ under the new covenant. In both, something more is referred to, as the means of human recovery, beside repentance, and of which, indeed,
repentance itself is represented as an *effect* and fruit. Wherever the Divine Being and his creatures are regarded simply in their *legal* relation, one as governor, the other as subjects, there is certainly no such qualification of the threatenings of his violated law, as to warrant any one to expect remission of punishment upon repentance.

2. It is not true, that repentance changes, as they urge, the legal relation of the guilty to God whom they have offended. They are offenders still, though penitent. The sentence of the law is directed against transgression, and repentance does not annihilate, but, on the contrary, *acknowledges* the fact of that transgression. The charge lies against the offender; he may be an obdurate or a penitent criminal; but, in either case, he is equally criminal of all for which he stands truly charged, and how then can his relation to the lawgiver be changed by repentance? In the nature of the thing, nothing but pardon can change that relation; for nothing but pardon can cancel crime, and it is clear that repentance is not pardon.

3. So far from repentance producing this change of relation, and placing men in the same situation as though they had never offended, we have proofs to the contrary, both from the Scriptures and from the established course of providence. For the first, though men are now under a dispensation of grace, yet, after long-continued obstinacy and refusal of grace, the Scriptures represent repentance as incapable of turning away the coming vengeance. “Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; — When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” Here, to call upon GOD, and to seek him early, that is, earnestly and carefully, are acts of repentance and reformation too, and yet they have no effect in changing the relation of the guilty to God, their judge, and they are proceeded against for their past offences, which, according to the theory of the Socinians, they ought not to be. The course of providence in this life, is, also, in opposition to the notion of the efficacy of mere repentance to arrest punishment. For, as Bishop Butler has so well shown, *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.*) the sufferings which follow sin in this present life by natural consequence and the established constitution of things, are as much the effect of GOD’S appointment as the direct penalties attached by him to the violation of his laws; and though they may differ in degree, that does not affect the question. Whether the punishment be of long or of short
duration, inflicted in the present state or in the next, if the justice or benevolence of God requires that punishment should not be inflicted, when repentance has taken place, it cannot be inflicted consistently with those attributes in any degree whatever. But repentance does not prevent these penal consequences — repentance does not restore health injured by intemperance, property wasted by profusion, or character dishonoured by an evil practice. The moral administration under which we are, therefore, shows that indemnity is not necessarily the effect of repentance in the present life, and we have, consequently, no reason to conclude that it will be so in another.

4. The true nature of repentance, as it is stated in the Scriptures, seems entirely to have been overlooked or disregarded by those who contend that repentance is a reason for the non-execution of the penalty of the law. It is either a sorrow for sin, merely because of the painful consequences to which it has exposed the offender, unless forgiven, or it arises from a perception also of the evil of sin, and a dislike to it as such, with real remorse and sorrow, that the authority of God has been slighted, and his goodness abused. Now if, by repentance, is meant repentance in the former sense, then to give pardon on such a condition would be tantamount to the entire and absolute repeal of all law, and the annihilation of all government, since every criminal, when convicted, and finding himself in immediate danger of punishment, would as necessarily repent as he would necessarily be sorry to be liable to pain; and this sorrow being, in that case, repentance, it would in all cases, according to this doctrine, render it morally fit and right that forgiveness should be exercised, and, consequently, wrong that it should be refused. In no case, therefore, could the penalty of the law be, in any degree, enforced.

But if repentance be taken in the second sense, and this is certainly the light in which true repentance is exhibited in the Scriptures, then it is forgotten that such is the corrupt state of man, that he is incapable of penitence of this kind. This follows from that view of human depravity which we have already established from the Scriptures, and which we need not repeat. In conformity with this view of the entire corruptness of man’s nature, therefore, repentance is said to be the gift of Christ, who, in consequence of being exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, “gives repentance,” as well as “remission of sins,” a gift quite superfluous, if to repent truly were in the power of man, and independent of Christ. To suppose man to be capable of a repentance, which is the result of genuine principle, is to assume human
nature to be what it is not. The whole rests on this question: for, if man be totally corrupt, the only principles from which that repentance and correction of manners, which are supposed in the argument, can flow, do not exist in his nature; and if we allow no more than that the propensity to evil in him is stronger than the propensity to good, it would be absurd to suppose that in opposing propensities, the weaker should ever resist the more powerful.

But take it that repentance, in the best interpretation, is possible to fallen, unassisted man, and that it is actually exercised and followed even by a better conduct, still in no good sense can it be shown, that this would make it morally right and fit in the Supreme Being to forgive offences against his government. Socinus, we have seen in the above quotation, allows that it would not be right, not consistent with God’s moral attributes to forgive the impenitent; and all, indeed, who urge repentance as the sole condition of pardon, adopt the same principle; but how, then, does it appear that, to grant pardon upon repentance is right, that is, just in itself, or a manifestation of a just and righteous government?

If right be taken in the sense of moral fitness, its lowest sense, the moral correspondence of one thing with another, it cannot be morally fit in a perfectly holy being to be so indifferent to offences, as not to express, toward the offenders, any practical displeasure of any kind; yet this the argument supposes, since the slightest infliction of punishment, should repentance take place, would be contrary to the principle assumed. If justice be taken in the sense of giving to every one what is due, the Divine Being cannot be just in this sense, should he treat an offender, though afterward penitent, precisely as he treats those who have persevered in obedience, without defect of any kind; and yet, if repentance be pleaded as a moral reason for entirely overlooking offence, then will all be treated alike, whether obedient or the contrary. But finally, if the justice of God be considered with reference to government, the impossibility of exonerating a penitent offender, and the upholding of a righteous administration is most apparent. That we are under government is certain; that we are under a settled law is equally so, and that law explains to us the nature of the government by which we are controlled. In all the statements made respecting this government in Scripture, the government of earthly sovereigns and magistrates is the shadow under which it is represented, and the one is the perfect model after which the other has been imperfectly framed. Nothing that is said of God being a father, is ever adduced to
lower his claims as Lord, or to diminish the reverence and fear of his creatures toward him under that character. The penalty of transgression is DEATH. This is too plainly written in the Scriptures to be, for a moment, denied, and if it were righteous to attach that penalty to offence, it is most certainly righteous to execute it, and, therefore, administrative justice cannot be maintained if it be not executed. As to the impenitent, this, indeed, is conceded; but penitence makes no difference; for, if the end of attaching this penalty to offence, was to maintain the authority of the law, then not to execute it upon the repentant would still be to annul that authority. This repentance is either in the power of the transgressor, or it is not. If the former, he will always be disposed to exercise it, when the danger approaches, rather than die; and so he may sin as often as he pleases, and yet have it always in his own power to turn aside the punishment, which amounts to a substantive repeal of the law and the abrogation of all government. If, on the other hand, the production of a penitent disposition is not in his own power, and can only come from above, as a matter of grace, it is a strange anomaly to suppose a government so established as to oblige the governor to concur in producing repentance in those who despise his authority, so that they may avoid punishment. This would be grace, and not law, most emphatically; for, if the governor were bound by any principle of any kind to produce this sentiment of repentance in order to constitute a moral fitness in the exercise of pardon, he would, for any thing we can see, be bound by it, to use the same means to render all penitent, that all might escape punishment, and to do this, too, as often as they fell into sin, that punishment might, in no case, follow, except when the means employed by him for that purpose were obstinately resisted; and thus repentance would be brought in as the substitute of obedience. But since the end of law is to command obedience, and it is invested with authority for the purpose of effecting that, it ceases to answer the purpose for which it was established, when it accepts repentance in the place of obedience. This is not its end, as an instrument of moral government; nor is it a means to its proper end, which is obedience; for repentance can give no security for future obedience, since a penitent transgressor, whose nature is infected with a corrupt moral principle and habit, is much more liable to sin again than when innocent, as in his first estate; and, as this scheme makes no provision at all for the moral cure of man’s fallen nature by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, so it abolishes all law as an instrument of moral order, and substitutes pardon as an END of government instead of obedience.
With this view of the insufficiency of repentance to obtain pardon the Scriptures agree; for not, now, to advert to the doctrine of the Old Testament, which will be subsequently considered, we need only refer to the Gospel, which is professedly a declaration of the mercy of God to sinning men, and which also professedly lays down the means by which the pardon of their offences is to be attained. Without entering at all into other subjects connected with this, it is enough here to show that, in the Gospel, pardon is not connected with mere repentance, as it must have been, had the doctrine, against which we have contended, been true. John the Baptist was emphatically a preacher of repentance, and, had nothing but mere repentance been required in order to salvation, he would have been the most successful of preachers. So numerous were the multitudes which submitted to the power of his ministry, that the largest terms are used by the Evangelist Matthew to express the effect produced by it, — “Then went out all Judea, and all Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” Of the truth of their repentance, no doubt is expressed. On the contrary, when John excepts only “many of the Sadducees and Pharisees” who came “to his baptism” as hypocrites, we are bound to conclude, that he, who appears to have had the supernatural gift of discovering the spirits of men, allowed the repentance of the rest generally to be genuine. It would follow, then, from the principle laid down by the adversaries of the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, namely, that repentance alone renders it morally fit in God to forgive sin, and that, therefore, he can require nothing else but true repentance in order to pardon, that the disciples of the Baptist needed not to look for any thing beyond what their master was the instrument of imparting by his ministry. But this is contradicted by the fact. He taught them to look for a higher baptism, that of the Holy Ghost; and to a more effectual teacher, the Christ, whose voice or herald he was; all he did and said bore upon it a preparatory character, and to this character he was most careful to give the utmost distinctness, that his hearers might not be mistaken. To two of his disciples, standing with him when “he looked upon Jesus as he walked,” he said, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” and thus he confessed that it was not himself, nor his doctrine, nor the repentance which it produced, which took away sin; but that it was taken away by Christ alone, and that in his sacrificial character, as “the Lamb of God.” Nay what, indeed, is still more explicit, he himself declares, that everlasting life was not attained by the repentance which he preached, but by believing on Christ; for he concludes his discourse
concerning Jesus (John 3:25, 36) with these memorable words, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” The testimony of John was, therefore, that more than repentance, even faith in Christ, was necessary to salvation. Such also was the doctrine of our Lord himself, though he, too, was a preacher of repentance; and that of the apostles, who, proclaiming that “all men every where” should repent, not less explicitly preached that all men every where should believe; and that they were “justified by faith,” and thus had “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
CHAPTER 20. — REDEMPTION — DEATH OF CHRIST PROPITIATORY.

These points, then, being so fully established, that sin is neither forgiven by the mere prerogative of God, nor upon the account of mere repentance in man, we proceed to inquire into the Scripture account of the real consideration on which the execution of the penalty of transgression is delayed, and the offer of forgiveness is made to offenders.

To the statements of the New Testament we shall first direct our attention, and then point out that harmony of doctrine on this subject which pervades the whole Scriptures, and makes both the Old and New Testament give their agreeing testimony to that one method of love, wisdom, and justice, by which a merciful God justifies the ungodly.

1. The first thing which strikes every attentive, and, indeed, every cursory reader of the New Testament, must be, that the pardon of our sin, and our entire salvation, is ascribed to the death of Christ. We do not, now, inquire in what sense his death availed to these great results, but we, at present, only state that, in some sense, our salvation is expressly and emphatically connected with that event. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” “He gave himself for us.” He died, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins.” “He gave his life a ransom for many.” “We who were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;” with innumerable other passages, in which, with equal emphasis, the salvation of man is connected with the death of Christ.

This is so undeniable, that it is, to a certain extent, recognized in the two great schemes opposed to that which has been received generally by the Church of Christ, which in all ages has proclaimed that the death of Christ was an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, and necessary to make the exercise of pardon consistent with the essential righteousness of God, and with his righteous government. The Socinian scheme admits that the death of Christ was important to confirm his doctrine, and to lead to his resurrection, the crowning miracle by which its truth was demonstrated;
and that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, because “we are led, by the due consideration of Christ’s death, and its consequences, to that repentance, which, under the merciful constitution of the Divine government, always obtains forgiveness.” The second scheme, which is that of the modern Arians, goes farther. It represents the coming of Christ, whom they consider to be the most exalted of the creatures of God, into the world, and his labours and sufferings in behalf of men, as acts of the most disinterested and tender benevolence, in reward and honour of which he is allowed to bestow pardon upon his disciples, upon their sincere repentance, and to plead his interest with God, who delights to honour the generous conduct of his Son toward the human race. His voluntary sufferings and death for the sins of mankind, according to them, gave to his intercession with God great efficacy, and thus, by his mediation, sinners are reconciled to God, and raised to eternal life.

Far as even the latter of these theories falls below the sense of Scripture on this subject, yet both are, in this respect, important, that they concede that the death of Christ, as the means of human salvation, is made so prominent in the New Testament, that it cannot be left out of our consideration when the doctrine of man’s salvation is treated of; and also, that this is a doctrine of the Holy Scriptures which must, in some way or other, be accounted for and explained. The Socinian accounts for it by making the death of Christ the means by which repentance is produced in the heart of man, so as to constitute it morally fit that he should be forgiven. The modern Arian accounts for it by connecting with this notion, that kind of merit in the death of Christ which arises from a generous and benevolent self devotion; and which, when pleaded by him in the way of mediation, God is pleased to honour by accepting repentance, when it is produced in the heart, and accompanied with purposes of amendment, in place of perfect obedience.

2. But the views given us of the death of Christ, by the writers of the New Testament, go much farther than these, because they represent the death of Christ as necessary to the salvation of men, a principle which both the hypotheses just mentioned wholly exclude. The reason of forgiveness is placed by one in repentance merely, by the other, also, in the exercise of the right which God had to pardon, but which he chose to exercise in honour of the philanthropy of Jesus Christ. Both make the death of Christ, though in a different way and in a very subordinate sense, the means of obtaining pardon, because it is a means of bringing men into a state in which they are fit objects for the exercise of an act of grace; but the
Scripture doctrine is, that the death of Christ is not the meritorious means, but the meritorious cause of the exercise of forgiveness: and repentance but one of the instrumental means of actually obtaining it; and, in consistency with this view, they speak of the death of Christ, not as one of many means, by which the same end might have been accomplished; but as, in the strictest sense, necessary to man’s salvation.

This has, indeed, been considered, even by some divines professing orthodoxy, to be a bold position, but, as we shall see, with little consistency on their part. It follows, of course, from the Socinian and Arian hypotheses, that if our Lord were a man, or an angelic creature; and if he were rather the mere messenger of a mercy which might be exercised on prerogative, than the procuring cause of it; any other creature beside himself might have conveyed the message of this mercy; might have exhibited a generous devotion in our behalf; and been an effectual instrument to bring men to that repentance which would prepare them to receive it. But when it is admitted that Christ was the Divine Son of God: that he was “God manifest in the flesh;” that the forgiveness of sin required a satisfaction to Divine justice of so noble and infinitely exalted a kind as that which was offered by the sufferings and death of the incarnate Deity, even from such premises alone it would seem necessarily to follow that, but for the interposition of Christ, sin could not have been forgiven, consistently with a perfectly righteous government, and, therefore, not forgiven at all, unless a sacrifice of equal merit, which supposes a being of equal glory and dignity as its subject, could have been found. If no such being existed out of the Godhead, then human hope rested solely on the voluntary incarnation of the Son of GOD; and the overwhelming fact and mystery of his becoming flesh, in order to suffer for us, itself shows, that the case to be remedied was one of a character absolutely extreme, and, therefore, not otherwise remediable. If inferior means had been sufficient, then more was done by the Father, when he delivered up his Son for us, than was necessary, a conclusion of an impious character; and if the greatest possible gift was bestowed, then nothing less could have been effectual, and this was necessary to human salvation. Every believer in the Divinity of Christ is bound to this conclusion.

This matter is, however, put beyond all reasonable question by the testimony of Scripture. “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.” Here a necessity for the death of Christ is plainly expressed. If it be said, that the necessity was the fulfilment of
what “had been written” in the prophets concerning the sufferings of Messiah, it is to be remembered, that what was predicted on this subject by the prophets arose out of a previous appointment of God, in whose eternal counsel Christ had been designated as the Redeemer of man; and that the sole end and reason of the death of Christ could not, therefore, be the mere fulfilment of the prophecies respecting him. The verse which follows abundantly proves this — “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name,” Luke 24:47. His death was not only necessary for the accomplishment of prophecy; but for the publication of “repentance and remission of sins in his name,” both of which, therefore, depended upon it. It was God’s purpose to offer forgiveness to man, before the prophets issued their predictions; it was his purpose to do this in “his name,” on account of, and in consideration of his dying for them: this was predicted; but the necessity of the death of Christ rested on this previous appointment to which the prophecies corresponded. In Matthew 16:21, the same sentiment is expressed without any reference to the fulfilment of prophecy. “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” The answer, too, of our Lord to Peter, who, upon this declaration, said, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” is remarkable. “But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” These words plainly imply, that for Christ to suffer and die, and in this manner, and not according to the carnal and human views of Peter, to accomplish the purpose of his coming into the world, was “of God;” it was his purpose, his appointment. This is not language to be used as to a martyr dying to prove his sincerity; for death, in such cases, is rather permitted than purposed and appointed, and it would be to adopt language never applied to such cases in the Holy Scriptures, to say that the sufferings and death of martyrs are “of GOD.” The necessity of Christ’s death, then, rested on Divine appointment, and that on the necessity of the case; and if he “must” die, in order that we might live, then we live only in consequence of his death.

The same view is conveyed by a strongly figurative expression in John 12:23, 24: “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it
bringeth forth much fruit.” From which it inevitably follows, that the death of Christ was as necessary to human salvation as the vegetable death of the seed of corn to the production of the harvest; necessary, therefore, in this sense, that one could not take place without the other. But for this he would have remained “alone,” and have brought no “sons to glory.”

In a word, all those passages of Scripture which speak of our salvation from death and misery by the sufferings of Christ, and call upon our gratitude on this account, are founded upon the same doctrine. These are too numerous to be cited, and are sufficiently familiar “We have redemption through his blood;” “we are saved from wrath through him,” &c. Such forms of speech are continually occurring, and the highest ascriptions of praise are given to the Father and to the Son on this account. But, most clearly, they all suppose that “wrath” and “death,” but for this interposition of the passion of Christ on our account, would have been the doom of sinning men. They contain not the most distant intimation, that had not he come into the world “to seek and to save them that were lost,” they would have been saved by any other means; that had not he, the good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep, they would have been brought by some other process into the heavenly fold. The very emphasis of the expression “lost,” implies a desperate case; for as lost they could not have been described, if pardon had been offered them on mere repentance; and if the death of Christ had been one only of many means, through some of which that disposition in God to forgive offenders must have operated, which is the doctrine of all who set up the goodness of the Divine government against its justice. In that case, mankind could not have been in a hopeless state, independent of Christ’s redemption, the view which is uniformly taken of their case in Scripture, where the death of Christ is exhibited, not as one expedient of many, but as the only hope of the guilty.

3. The Scriptures, in speaking of the death of Christ, inform us that he died “FOR us,” that is, in our room and stead. With this representation neither of the hypotheses to which we have adverted, as attempting to account for the importance attached to the death of our Lord in the New Testament, agrees, and, therefore, both of them fall far below the whole truth of the case. The Socinian scheme makes the death of Christ only an incidental benefit, as sealing the truth of his doctrine, and setting an example of eminent passive virtue. In this sense, indeed, they acknowledge that he died “for” men, because in this indirect manner they derive the benefit of instruction from his death, and because some of the motives to virtue are
placed in a stronger light. The modern Arian scheme, sometimes called the intercession hypothesis, acknowledges that he acquired, by his disinterested and generous sufferings, the highest degree of virtue, and a powerful interest with God, by which his intercession, on behalf of penitent offenders, is honoured by an exercise of higher mercy than would otherwise have taken place; but it by no means follows, from this, that repentance might not otherwise have taken place, and mercy have been otherwise exercised. According to this view, then, Christ died for the benefit, indeed, of men, somewhat more directly than on the Socinian scheme; but he did not die for them in the sense of the Scriptures, that is, in their room and stead; his death was not vicarious, and it is not, on that account, directly, that the guilty are absolved from condemnation.

To prove that our Lord died for men, in the sense of dying in their stead, the testimony of the sacred writers must, however, be adduced, and it is equally abundant and explicit. St. Peter says he died, “the just for the unjust,” that “he suffered for us.” St. Paul that “he died for all,” that “he tasted death for every man,” that he died “for the ungodly,” that “he gave himself a ransom for all,” and our Lord himself declares “that he gave himself a ransom for many” To show, however, that this phrase means no more than a final cause, and that the only notion intended to be conveyed is, that Christ died for our benefit, it is argued, by the objectors, that the Greek prepositions used in the above quotations \( \text{υπερ,} \) and \( \text{αντι,} \) do not always signify substitution; but are sometimes to be rendered “on account of,” as when Christ is said to have “suffered for our sins,” which cannot be rendered instead of our sins. All this may, indeed, be granted; but then it is as certain, that these prepositions do often signify substitution; and that the Greeks, by these forms of expression, were wont to express a vicarious death, is abundantly proved by the examples given by Raphelius, on Romans 5:8. Nor are instances wanting of texts in which these particles can only be interpreted when taken in the sense of “instead of,” and in “the place of.” So in the speech of Caiaphas, “it is expedient that one man should die, \( \text{υπερ,} \) for the people, and that the whole nation perish not;” he plainly declares, that either Christ or the nation must perish; and that by putting the former to death, he would die instead of the nation. In Romans 5:6-8, the sense in which Christ “died for us,” is indubitably fixed by the context. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ
died for us;” on which passage Doddridge has observed, “one can hardly imagine any one would die for a good man, unless it were to redeem his life by giving up his own.” In this sense also, $\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ is used by the LXX, 2 Samuel 18:33, where David says concerning Absalom, “would to God I had died for thee,” ($\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ $\sigma\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$.) Here he could mean nothing else but to wish that he had died in Absalom’s stead. In the sense of “in the room or stead of,” $\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ is also used in many places of the New Testament; as, “Archelaus did reign in Judea ($\alpha\nu\tau\iota$) in the room of his father Herod:” “if he ask a fish, will he ($\alpha\nu\tau\iota$) for a fish, in place or instead of a fish, give him a serpent.” When, therefore, the same preposition is used, Mark 10:45, “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for ($\alpha\nu\tau\iota$) many,” there can surely be no reason drawn from the meaning of the particle itself to prevent its being so understood. That it may be so taken is certain, for this is a sense of the preposition constantly occurring; and if that sense is rejected and another chosen, the reason must be brought from the contrariety of the doctrine which it conveys to some other; whereas not one passage is even pretended to be produced, which denies that Christ did thus die in the stead of the ungodly, and give his life a ransom in the place or stead of the lives of many. The particles $\upsilon\rho\epsilon\rho\$ and $\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ have other senses: this is not denied; but, as Bishop Stillingfleet has observed, “a substitution could not be more properly expressed than it is in Scripture by them.”

The force of this has, at all times, been felt by the Socinians, and has rendered it necessary for them to resort to subterfuges. Socinus acknowledges, and after him Crellius, that, “when redemption is spoken of, $\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ implies commutation,” but they attempt to escape, by considering both the redemption and the commutation metaphorical. Dr. Priestley, too, admits the probability of the interpretation of Christ’s dying for us, being to die instead of us, and then contends that he did this consequentially and not directly so, “as a substitute for us; for if, in consequence of Christ’s not having been sent to instruct and reform the world, mankind had continued unreformed, and if the necessary consequence of Christ’s coming was his death, by whatever means, and in whatever manner it was brought about; it is plain that there was, in fact, no other alternative but his death or ours.” (History of Corruptions, &c.) Thus, under the force of the doctrine of the New Testament, that Christ died in our stead, he admits the absolute necessity of the death of Christ, in order to human salvation, contrary to all the principles he elsewhere lays down, and in refutation of his own
objections and those of his followers to the orthodox view of the death of our Saviour as being the only means by which mercy could be dispensed to mankind. But that Christ died for us directly as a substitute, which is still the point denied, is to be fully proved from those scriptures, in which he is said to have borne the punishment due to our offences; and this being established, it puts an entire end to all quibbling on the import of the Greek prepositions.

To prove this, the passages of Holy Writ are exceedingly numerous; but it will be more satisfactory to select a few, and point out their force, than to give a long list of citations.

Grotius (De Satisfactione.) thus clearly proves that the Scriptures represent our sins as the impulsive cause of the death of Christ: —

“Another cause which moved God was our sins, which deserve punishment. Christ was delivered for our offences, Romans 4:25. Here the apostle uses the preposition διὰ with the accusative case, which with all Greek authors, sacred and profane, is the most usual manner of expressing an impulsive cause. For instance, διὰ τῶν, ‘because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,’ Ephesians 5:6. Indeed, whenever the expression, because of sins, is coupled with the mention of sufferings, it never admits of any other interpretation. ‘I will chastise you seven times because of your sins,’ Leviticus 26:28. ‘Because of these abominations the Lord God cast them out from his sight,’ Deuteronomy 18:12. So it is used in many other places of the sacred writings, and nowhere in a different sense. The expression, for sins, is also evidently of the same force, whenever it is connected with sufferings, as in the example following: ‘Christ died for our sins,’ 1 Corinthians 15:3. ‘Christ hath once suffered for sins,’ 1 Peter 3:18. ‘Christ gave himself for our sins,’ Galatians 1:4. ‘Christ offered one sacrifice for sins,’ Hebrews 10:12. In all which places we have either ὑπὲρ or περὶ with the genitive case. But Socinus maintains, that in all these places a final and not an impulsive cause is intended. He even goes so far as to assert, that the Latin pro and the Greek ὑπὲρ never denote an impulsive, but always a final cause. Many examples prove the latter assertion to be untrue. For both ὑπὲρ and περὶ are used to signify no less an impulsive than a final cause. The Gentiles
are said to praise God \( \upsilon \varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \omicron \upsilon \varsigma \) for his mercy, Romans 15:9. Paul says thanks are given \( \upsilon \varepsilon \lambda \omega \nu \) for us, Ephesians 1:16. And \( \upsilon \varepsilon \lambda \omega \nu \) for all; Ephesians 5:20. ‘We pray you,’ \( \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \omicron \omicron \) for Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20. ‘Great is my glorying for you, \( \upsilon \varepsilon \lambda \omega \nu \),’ 2 Corinthians 7:4, 9:2, and 12:5. ‘Distresses (\( \upsilon \varepsilon \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \omicron \omicron \)) for Christ,’ 2 Corinthians 12:10. ‘I thank God (\( \upsilon \varepsilon \lambda \omega \nu \)) for you,’ 1 Corinthians 1:4. ‘God shall reprove all the ungodly (\( \pi \varepsilon \rho \iota \pi \alpha \nu \tau \omicron \nu \varepsilon \gamma \rho \omicron \alpha \sigma \epsilon \beta \epsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \)) for all their works of ungodliness,’ Jude 15. In the same manner, the Latins say, to give or render thanks (pro beneficiis) for benefits, as often in Cicero. He also says, ‘to take vengeance (pro injuriis) for injuries;’ ‘to suffer punishment (pro magnitudine sceleris) for the greatness of a crime;’ to fear torments (pro maleficiis) for evil deeds. Plautus, ‘to chastise (pro commerita noxia) for faults which deserve it.’ And Terence, ‘to take vengeance (pro dictis et factis) for words and deeds.’ Certainly, in all these places, pro does not signify a final, but an impulsive cause. So, when Christ is said to have suffered and died for sins, the subject will not allow us, as Socinus wishes, to understand a final cause. Hence, also, as the Hebrew particle \( \mathrm{zm} \) denotes an antecedent or impulsive cause, (see Psalm 38:9, and many other places,) the words of Isaiah 53, cannot be better translated, or more agreeably with other scriptures, than He was wounded on account of our transgressions; he was bruised on account of our iniquities. And what can Romans 6:10, \( \theta \alpha \mu \alpha \rho \tau \iota \alpha \alpha \pi \varepsilon \theta \alpha \alpha \nu \), denote, but that he died on account of sin?”

Crellius, who attempted an answer to Grotius, at length acknowledges sin to have been an impulsive cause of the death of Christ; but neutralizes the admission by sophistry, on which Bishop Stillingfleet has well observed, that we understand not an impulsive cause in so remote a sense, as though our sins were an occasion of Christ’s dying, so that his death was one argument among many others, to believe his doctrine, the belief of which would cause men to leave their sins; but we contend for a nearer and more proper sense, that the death of Christ was primarily intended for the expiation of sins, with respect to God, and not to us, and that our sins, as an impulsive cause, are to be considered as so displeasing to God, that it was necessary, for the vindication of honour and the deterring the world from sin, that no less a sacrifice of atonement should be offered than the
blood of the Son of God. The sufferings of Christ, when considered with respect to our sins, are to be considered as a *punishment*; when with respect to God, as being designed to *expiate* them as a sacrifice of atonement.

It is thus that Christ is said to bear our sins. “Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” 1 Peter 2:24, where the apostle evidently quotes from Isaiah 53. “He shall bear their iniquities.” “He bore the sin of many.” The same expression is used by St. Paul, Hebrews 9:28, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Now to bear sin is, in the language of Scripture, to bear the punishment of sin, Leviticus 22:9; Ezekiel 18:20, and the use of the compound verb *αναφέρω*, by both apostles, is worthy of notice. St. Peter “might have said simply ἡνεγκε, he bore; but wishing at the same time to signify his being lifted up on the cross, he said ανηνεγκε, he bore up, meaning, he bore by going up to the cross.” (Grotius.) St. Paul, too, uses the same verb with reference to the Levitical sacrifices, which were carried to an elevated altar; and to the sacrifice of Christ. Socinus and his followers cannot deny that to bear sin, in Scripture generally, signifies to bear the punishment of sin; but, availing themselves of the very force of the compound verb *αναφέρω*, just pointed out, they interpret the passage in St. Peter to signify the bearing up, that is, the bearing or carrying away of our sins, which, according to them, may be effected in many other ways than by a vicarious sacrifice. To this, Grotius replies, “The particle *ανα* will not admit of such a sense, nor is the word ever so used by any Greek writer. In the New Testament it never occurs in such a meaning.” It is also decisive as to the sense in which St. Peter uses the phrase to bear sin, that he quotes from Isaiah 53:11, “For he shall bear their iniquities,” where the Hebrew word, by the confession of all, is never used for taking away, but for bearing a burden, and is employed to express the punishment of sin, as in Lamentations 5:7, “Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have *borne their iniquities.*”

Similar to this expression of bearing sins, and equally impracticable to the criticism of the Socinians, is the declaration of Isaiah in the same chapter, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;” and then to show in what sense he was wounded and bruised for our transgressions, he adds, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” Now, chastisement is the punishment of a fault; but the suffering person, of whom the prophet speaks, is declared by him to be wholly free from transgression; to be
perfectly and emphatically innocent. This prophecy is applied to Christ by the apostles, whose constant doctrine is the entire immaculateness of their Master and Lord. If chastisement, therefore, was laid upon Christ, it could not be on account of faults of his own; his sufferings were the chastisement of our faults, the price of our peace, and his “stripes,” another punitive expression, were borne by him for our “healing.” The only course which Socinus and his followers have taken, to endeavour to escape the force of this passage, is to render the word not chastisement, but affliction; in answer to which, Grotius and subsequent critics have abundantly proved that it is used not to signify affliction of any kind; but that which has the nature of punishment. These passages, therefore, prove a substitution, a suffering in our stead. The chastisement of offences was laid upon him, in order to our peace; and the offences were ours, since they could not be his “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

The same view is presented to us under another, and even still more forcible phrase, in the 6th and 7th verses of the same chapter. “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him [literally, hath made to meet on him] the iniquity of us all; he was oppressed and he was afflicted.” Bishop Lowth translates this passage, “and the Lord hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all; it was exacted, and he was made answerable.” In a similar manner, several former critics, (Vide Poli Synop.,) “he put or fixed together upon him the iniquity of us all; it was exacted, and he was afflicted.” This sense is fully established by Grotius against Socinus, and by Bishop Stillingfleet against Crellius, and thus the passage is obviously incapable of explanation, except by allowing the sufferings and death of our Lord to be vicarious. Our iniquities, that is, according to the Hebrew mode of speaking, their punishment, are made to meet upon him; they are fixed together and laid upon him; the penalty is exacted from him, though he himself had incurred no penalty personally, and, therefore, it was in consequence of that vicarious exaction that he was “afflicted,” was “made answerable,” and, voluntarily submitting, “he opened not his mouth.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, the apostle uses almost the same language. “For he hath made him to be sin [a sin offering] for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him.” The Socinian Improved Version has a note on this passage so obscure that the point is evidently given up in despair. Socinus before had attempted an elusive interpretation, which requires scarcely an effort to refute. By Christ’s being
made “sin,” he would understand being esteemed a sinner by men. But, as Grotius observes, (De Satisfactione,) neither is the Greek word, translated sin, nor the Hebrew word, answering to it, ever taken in such a sense. Beside, the apostle has attributed this act to GOD; it was he who made him to be sin; but he certainly did not cause the Jews and others to esteem Christ a wicked man. On the contrary by a voice from heaven, and by miracles, he did all that was proper to prove to all men his innocence. Farther, St. Paul places “sin” and “righteousness” in opposition to each other — “we are made the righteousness of GOD,” that is, are justified and freed from Divine punishment; but, in order to this, Christ was “made sin,” or bore our punishment. There is also another antithesis in the apostle’s words — God made him who knew no sin, and consequently deserved no punishment, to be sin; that is, it pleased him that he should be punished; but Christ was innocent, not only according to human laws, but according to the law of GOD; the antithesis, therefore, requires us to understand, that he bore the penalty of that law, and that he bore it in our stead.

How explicitly the death of Christ is represented in the New Testament as penal, which it could not be in any other way than by his taking our place, and suffering in our stead, is manifest also from Galatians 3:13,”Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse [an execration] for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” The passage in Moses, to which St. Paul refers, is Deuteronomy 21:22, 23: “If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and be put to death, and they hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, for he that is hanged is accursed of God, that thy land be not defiled.” This infamy was only inflicted upon great offenders, and was designed to show the light in which the person, thus exposed, was viewed by GOD, — he was a curse or execration. On this the remarks of Grotius are most forcible and conclusive: —

“Socinus says, that to be an execration means to be under the punishment of execration, which is true. For καταρα every where denotes punishment proceeding from the sanction of law, 2 Peter 2:14; Mark 25. 41. Socinus also admits, that the cross of Christ was this curse; his cross, therefore, had the nature of punishment, which is what we maintain. Perhaps Socinus allows that the cross of Christ was a punishment, because Pilate, as a judge, inflicted it; but this does not come up to the intention of the apostle; for, in order to prove that Christ was made obnoxious to
punishment, he cites Moses, who expressly asserts, that whoever hangs on a tree, according to the Divine law is ‘accursed of God,’ — consequently, in the words of the apostle, who cites this place of Moses, and refers it to Christ, we must supply the same circumstance, ‘accursed of God,’ as if he had said Christ was made accursed of God, or obnoxious to the highest and most ignominious punishment ‘for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles,’ &c. For when the apostles speak of the sufferings of Christ in reference to our good, they do not regard the acts of men in them, but the act of God.” (De Satisfactione.)

4. We are carried still farther into the real nature and design of the death of Christ, by those passages of Holy Scripture which connect with it propitiation, atonement, reconciliation, and the making peace between God and man; and the more attentively these are considered, the more unfounded will the Socinian notion appear, which represents the death of Christ as, indirectly only, a benefit to us, and as saving us from our sins and their punishment only as it is a motive to repentance and virtue.

To propitiate is to appease, to atone, to turn away the wrath of an offended person. In the case before us the wrath turned away is the wrath of God; the person making the propitiation is Christ; the propitiating offering or sacrifice is his blood. All this is expressed, in most explicit terms, in the following passages: John 2:2, “And he is the propitiation for our sins.” John 4:10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Romans 3:25, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” The word used in the two former passages is ἰλασμός; in the last ἰλαστρίον. Both are from the verb ἰλασκεῖν, so often used by Greek writers to express the action of a person, who, in some appointed way, turned away the wrath of a deity; and, therefore, cannot bear the sense which Socinus would put upon it, — the destruction of sin. This is not supported by a single example: with all Greek authorities, whether poets, historians, or others, the word means to propitiate, and is, for the most part, construed with an accusative case, designating the person whose displeasure is averted. (Grotius De Satisfactione.) As this could not be denied, Crellius comes to the aid of Socinus, and contends that the sense of this word was not to be taken from its common use in the Greek tongue; but from the Hellenistic use of it, namely, its use in the Greek of the New Testament, the LXX, and the Apocrypha. But this will not serve him; for, both by the LXX and in the Apocrypha it is used in the same sense as in the
Greek classic writers. Ezekiel 44:27, “He shall offer his sin offering, (ιλασμον,) saith the Lord GOD;” Ezekiel 45:19, “And the priest shall take of blood of the sin offering, εξιλασμου.” Num. 5:8, “The ram of the atonement,” κριος του ιλασμου; to which may be added, out of the Apocrypha, 2 Maccabees 3:33, “Now as the high priest was making an atonement,” ιλασμον. The propitiatory sense of the word ιλασμος being thus fixed, the modern Socinians have conceded, in their note on John 2:2, in their Improved Version, that it means “the pacifying of an offended party;” but they subjoin that Christ is a propitiation, because “by his Gospel he brings sinners to repentance, and thus averts the Divine displeasure.’ The concession is important; and the comment cannot weaken it, because of its absurdity; for, in that interpretation of propitiation, Moses, or any of the apostles, or any minister of the Gospel now who succeeds in bringing sinners to repentance, is as truly a propitiation for sin as Christ himself. On Romans 3:25, however, the authors of the Improved Version continue to follow their master Socinus, and translate the passage, “whom God hath set forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood.” “whom God hath set forth as a mercy seat, in his own blood;” and lay great stress upon this rendering, as removing “that countenance to the doctrine of atonement by vicarious sufferings,” which the common translation affords. The word ιλαστηριον is used in the Septuagint version, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to express the mercy seat or covering of the ark. But so little is to be gained by taking it in this sense in this passage, that this rendering is adopted by several orthodox commentators as expressing, by a figure, or rather by supplying a type to the antitype, in a very emphatic manner, the doctrine of our Lord’s atonement. The mercy seat was so called, because, under the Old Testament, it was the place where the high priest, on the feast of expiation, sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings, in order to make an atonement for himself and the whole congregation; and, since GOD accepted the offering which was then made, it is, for this reason, accounted the medium through which GOD showed himself propitious to the people. With reference to this, Jesus Christ may be called a mercy seat, as being the person in or through whom GOD shows himself propitious to mankind. And as, under the law, God was propitious to those who came to him by appearing before his mercy seat with the blood of their sin offerings; so, under the Gospel dispensation, he is propitious to those who come unto him by Jesus Christ, through faith in that blood which is elsewhere called “the blood of sprinkling,” which he shed for the remission of sins. Some able critics have, however, argued, from the force of the context, that the
word ought to be taken actively, and not merely declaratively; not as “a propitiatory,” but as a “propitiation,” which, says Grotius, “is shown by the mention which is afterward made of blood, to which the power of propitiation is ascribed.” Others supply θυμα], or ἔρειον, and render it expiatory sacrifice. (Vide Elsner Obs. Schleusner sub voce.) But, whichever of these renderings be adopted, the same doctrine is held forth to us. The covering of the ark was rendered a propitiatory only by the blood of the victims sprinkled before and upon it; and when the apostle says, that God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiatory, he immediately adds, having the ceremonies of the temple in his view, “through faith in his blood.” The text, therefore, contains no exhibition of any means of obtaining mercy but through the blood of sacrifice, according to the rule laid down in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “without shedding of blood there is no remission;” and is in strict accordance with <490107>Ephesians 1:7, “We have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins.” It is only by his blood that Christ himself reconciles us to God.

Unable, then, as they who deny the vicarious nature of the sufferings of Christ, are to evade the testimony of the above passages which speak of our Lord as a propitiation, what is their next resource? They deny the existence of wrath in God, in the hope of proving that propitiation, in a proper sense, cannot be the doctrine of Scripture, whatever may be the force of the mere terms which the sacred writers employ. In order to give plausibility to their statement, they pervert and caricature the opinion of the orthodox, and argue as though it formed a part of the doctrine of Christ’s propitiation and oblation for sin, that God is naturally an implacable and vengeful being, only made placable and disposed to show mercy by satisfaction being made to his displeasure through our Lord’s sufferings and death. This is as contrary to Scripture as it is to the opinions of all sober persons who hold the doctrine of Christ’s atonement God is love; but it is not necessary in order to support this truth, to assume that he is nothing else. He has, as we have seen, other attributes, which harmonize with this and with each other, though assuredly that harmony cannot be exhibited by any who deny the propitiation for sin made by the death of Christ. Their system, therefore, obliges them to deny the existence of some of the attributes of God, or to explain them away.

It is sufficient to show that there is not only no implacability in God, but a most tender and placable affection toward the sinning human race itself, that the Son of God, by whom the propitiation was made, was the free gift
of the Father to us. This is the most eminent proof of his love, that for our
sakes, and that mercy might be extended to us, “he spared not his own
Son; but delivered him up freely for us all.” Thus he is the fountain and
first moving cause of that scheme of recovery and salvation, which the
incarnation and death of our Lord brought into full and efficient operation.
The question, indeed, is not whether God is love, or whether he is of a
placable nature; in that we are agreed; but it is, whether God is holy and
just; whether we, his creatures, are under law or not; whether this law has
any penalty, and whether God, in his rectoral character, is bound to
execute and uphold that law. These are points which have already been
established, and as the justice of God is punitive, (for if it is not punitive,
his laws are a dead letter,) then is there wrath in God; then is God angry
with the wicked; then is man, as a sinner, obnoxious to this anger; and so a
propitiation becomes necessary to turn it away from him. Nor are these
terms unscriptural; they are used in the New Testament as emphatically as
in the Old, though in a special sense, a revelation of the mercy of God to
man. John the Baptist declares that, if any man believeth not on the Son of
God, “the wrath of God abideth upon him.” St. Paul declares, that “the
wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and
unrighteousness of men.” The day of judgment is, with reference to the
ungodly, said to be “the day of wrath;” God is called “a consuming fire;”
and as such, is the object of “reverence and godly fear.” Nor is this his
displeasure light, and the consequences of it a trifling and temporary
inconvenience. When we only regard the consequences which have
followed sin in society, from the earliest ages, and in every part of the
world, and add to these the many direct and fearful inflictions of
punishment which have proceeded from the “Judge of the whole earth,” to
use the language of Scripture, “our flesh may well tremble because of his
judgments.” But when we look at the future state of the wicked, as it is
represented in Scripture, though expressed generally, and surrounded as it
is with the mystery of a world, and a condition of being, unknown to us in
the present state, all evils which history has crowded into the lot of man
appear insignificant in comparison of banishment from God — separation
from the good — public condemnation — torment of spirit — “weeping,
wailing, and gnashing of teeth” — “everlasting destruction” — “everlasting
fire.” Let men talk ever so much, and eloquently, of the pure benevolence
of God, they cannot abolish the facts recorded in the history of human
suffering in this world as the effect of transgression; nor can they discharge
these fearful communications from the pages of the book of God. They
cannot be criticised away; and if it is “Jesus who saves us from this wrath to come,” that is, from those effects of the wrath of God which are to come, then, but for him, we should have been liable to them. That principle in God, from which such effects follow, the Scriptures call wrath; and they who deny the existence of wrath in God, deny, therefore, the Scriptures.

It by no means follows, however, that those who thus bow to inspired authority, must interpret wrath to be a passion in God; or that, though we conclude the awful attribute of his justice to require satisfaction, in order to the forgiveness of the guilty, we afford reason to any to charge us with attributing vengeful affections to the Divine Being. “Our adversaries,” says Bishop Stillingfleet, “first make opinions for us, and then show that they are unreasonable. They first suppose that anger in God is to be considered as a passion, and that passion a desire of revenge, and then tell us, that if we do not prove that this desire of revenge can be satisfied by the sufferings of Christ, then we can never prove the doctrine of satisfaction to be true; whereas we do not mean, by God’s anger, any such passion, but the just declaration of God’s will to punish, upon our provocation of him by our sins; we do not make the design of the satisfaction to be that God may please himself in the revenging the sins of the guilty upon the most innocent person, because we make the design of punishment not to be the satisfaction of anger as a desire of revenge, but to be the vindication of the honour and rights of the offended person by such a way as he himself shall judge satisfactory to the ends of his government.” (Discourse on the Sufferings of Christ.)

This is a sufficient answer; and we now proceed with those passages of Scripture, the phraseology of which still farther establishes the doctrine of Christ’s atonement. To those, in which Christ is called a propitiation, we add those which speak of reconciliation and the establishment of peace between God and man as the design and direct effect of his death. So Colossians 1:19, 22, “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven; and you that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death.” Romans 5:10, 11, “For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we
have now received the *atonement.*” 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19, “And all things are of God, who hath *reconciled* us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” The verbs translated to reconcile are *καταλλασσω* and *αποκαταλλασσω,* which signify a change from one state to another; but, in these passages, the connection determines the nature of the change to be a change from enmity to friendship. In Romans 5:11, the noun *καταλλαγη* is rendered, in our translation, *atonement,* but it is contended, that it ought to have been rendered *reconciliation,* unless we admit the primitive meaning of the English word atonement, which is being *at one,* to be affixed to it. It was not in this sense certainly that the word atonement was used by the translators, and it is now fixed in its meaning, and, in common language, signifies *propitiation* in the proper and sacrificial sense. It is not, however, at all necessary to stand upon the rendering of *καταλλαγη* in this passage by the term atonement. We lose nothing, as we shall see, and the Socinians gain nothing by rendering it reconciliation, which, indeed, appears more agreeable to the context. The word atonement would have been a proper substitute for “*propitiation*” in those passages of the New Testament in which it occurs, as being more obvious in its meaning to the common reader; and because the original word answers to the Hebrew *r p k,* which is used for the legal atonements; “but as the *reconciliation* which we have received through Christ was the effect of atonement made for us by his death, words which denote the former simply, as *καταλλαγη,* and words from the same root, may, when applied to the sacrifice of Christ, be not unfitly expressed by the latter, as containing in them its full import.” (Magee’s Discourses.) We may observe, also, that if, as it is contended, we must render Romans 5:11, “by whom we have received the *reconciliation,*” the preceding verse must not be overlooked, which declares “when we were enemies we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son,” which death we have just seen is in other passages called a “*propitiation*” or “*atonement,*” and so the apostle conveys no other idea by the term reconciliation, than reconciliation through an atonement.

The expressions “reconciliation” and “making peace,” necessarily suppose a previous state of hostility between God and man, which is reciprocal. This is sometimes called enmity, a term as it respects God, rather unfortunate, since enmity is almost fixed in our language to signify a malignant and revengeful feeling. Of this, the oppugners of the doctrine of the atonement have availed themselves to argue, that as there can be no
such affection in the Divine nature, therefore, reconciliation in Scripture does not mean the reconciliation of God to man, but of man to God, whose enmity the example and teaching of Christ they tell us are very effectual to subdue. It is, indeed, a sad and humbling truth, and one which the Socinians in their discussions on the natural innocence of man are not willing to admit, that by the infection of sin “the carnal mind is enmity to God,” that human nature is malignantly hostile to God, and to the control of his law; but this is far from expressing the whole of that relation of man, in which, in Scripture he is said to be at enmity with God, and so to need a reconciliation, — the making of peace between God and him. That relation is a legal one, as that of a sovereign in his judicial capacity and a criminal who has violated his laws, and risen up against his authority, and who is, therefore, treated as an enemy. The word εχθρος is used in this passive sense, both in the Greek writers and in the New Testament. So, in Romans 11:28, the Jews rejected and punished for refusing the Gospel are said by the apostle, “as concerning the Gospel” to be “enemies for your sakes;” treated and accounted such; “but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” In the same epistle, chap. 5:10, the term is used precisely in the same sense, and that with reference to the “reconciliation” by Christ, — “for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” — that is, when we were objects of the Divine judicial displeasure, accounted as enemies, and liable to be capitaliy treated as such. Enmity, in the sense of malignity and the sentiment of hatred, is added to this relation in the case of man; but it is no part of the relation itself; it is rather a cause of it, as it is one of the actings of a corrupt nature which render man obnoxious to the displeasure and the penalty of the law of God, and place him in the condition of an enemy. It is this judicial variance and opposition between God and man, which is referred to in the term “reconciliation,” and in the phrase “making peace,” in the New Testament; and the hostility is, therefore, in its own nature mutual.

But that there is no truth in the notion just refuted, viz. that reconciliation means no more than our laying aside our enmity to God, may also be shown from several express passages. The first is the passage we have above cited, Romans 5:11, “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God.” Here the act of reconciling is ascribed to God and not to us; but if this reconciliation consisted in the laying aside our own enmity, the act would be ours alone; and, farther, that it could not be the laying
aside of our enmity, is clear from the text, which speaks of reconciliation while we were yet enemies. “The reconciliation spoken of here, is not, as Socinus and his followers have said, our conversion. For that the apostle is speaking of a benefit obtained for us previous to our conversion, appears evident from the opposite members of the two sentences. That of the former runs thus: ‘much more being justified, we shall be saved from wrath through him,’ and that of the latter, ‘much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.’ The apostle argues from the greater to the less. If God were so benign to us before our conversion, what may we not expect from him now we are converted? To reconcile here cannot mean to convert; for the apostle evidently speaks of something greatly remarkable in the act of Christ; but to convert sinners is nothing remarkable, since none but sinners can be ever converted; whereas it was a rare and singular thing for Christ to die for sinners, and to reconcile sinners to God by his death, when there have been but very few good men, who have died for their friends. In the next place, conversion is referred more properly to his glorious life, than to his shameful death; but this reconciliation is attributed to his death, as contradistinguished from his glorious life, as is evident from the antithesis contained in the two verses. Beside, it is from the latter benefit that we learn the nature of the former. The latter, which belongs only to the converted, consists of the peace of God, and salvation from wrath, verse 9, 10. This, the apostle afterward calls, receiving the reconciliation, and what is it to receive the reconciliation, but to receive the remission of sins? Acts 10:43. To receive conversion is a mode of speaking entirely unknown. If, then, to receive the reconciliation is to receive the remission of sins, and in effect to be delivered from wrath or punishment, to be reconciled must have a corresponding signification.” (Vide Grotius De Satisfactione.)

2 Corinthians 5:19, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Here, the manner of this reconciliation is expressly said to be not our laying aside our enmity, but the non-imputation of our trespasses to us by God, in other words, the pardoning our offences and restoring us to favour. The promise, on God’s part, to do this is expressive of his previous reconciliation to the world by the death of Christ; for our actual reconciliation is distinguished from this by what follows, and hath “committed to us the ministry of reconciliation,” by virtue of which all men were, by the apostles, entreated and besought to be reconciled to God. The reason, too, of this reconciliation of God to the
world, by virtue of which he promises not to impute sin, is grounded by the apostle, in the last verse of the chapter, not upon the laying aside of enmity by men, but upon the sacrifice of Christ: — “For he hath made him to be sin (a sin offering) for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Ephesians 2:16, “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” Here the act of reconciling is attributed to Christ. Man is not spoken of as reconciling himself to God, but Christ is said to reconcile Jews and Gentiles together, and both to God, “by his cross.” Thus, says the apostle, “he is our peace;” but in what manner is the peace effected? Not, in the first instance, by subduing the enmity of man’s heart, but by removing the enmity of “the law.” “Having abolished in, or by his flesh, the enmity, even the law of commandments.” The ceremonial law only is here, probably, meant; for by its abolition through its fulfilment in Christ the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was taken away; but still it was not only necessary to reconcile Jew and Gentile together, but to “reconcile both unto God.” This he did by the same act; abolishing the ceremonial law by becoming the antitype of all its sacrifices; and thus, by the sacrifice of himself, effecting the reconciliation of all to God, “slaying the enmity by his cross,” taking away whatever hindered the reconciliation of the guilty to God, which, as we have seen, was not enmity and hatred to God in the human mind only, but that judicial hostility and variance which separated God and man as Judge and criminal. The feeble criticism of Socinus, on this passage, in which he has been followed by his adherents to this day, is thus answered by Grotius. “In this passage, the dative Θεῷ, to God, can only be governed by the verb αποκαταλλαξάω, that he might reconcile; for the interpretation of Socinus, which makes ‘to God’ stand by itself, or that to reconcile to God is to reconcile them among themselves, that they might serve God, is distorted and without example. Nor is the argument valid which is drawn from thence, that in this place St. Paul properly treats of the peace made between Jews and Gentiles; for neither does it follow, from this argument, that it was beside his propose to mention the peace made for each with God. For the two opposites which are joined, are so joined among themselves, that they should be primarily and chiefly joined by that bond; for they are not united among themselves, except by and for that bond. Gentiles and Jews, therefore, are made friends among themselves by friendship with God.” (Vide Grotius De Satisfactione.)
Here also a critical remark will be appropriate. The above passages will show how falsely it has been asserted that God is nowhere, in Scripture, said to be reconciled to us, and that they only declare that we are reconciled to God; but the fact is, that the very phrase of one being reconciled to God, imports the turning away his wrath from us. Whitby observes, on the words καταλλαττεῖν and καταλλαγή, “that they naturally import the reconciliation of one that is angry or displeased with us, both in profane and Jewish writers.” (See also Hammond, Rosenmuller, and Schleusner.) When the Philistines suspected that David would appease the anger of Saul, by becoming their adversary, they said, “Wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?” — not, surely, how shall he remove his own anger against his master; but how shall he remove his master’s anger against him; how shall he restore himself to his master’s favour? “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,” not that thou hast aught against thy brother, “first be reconciled to thy brother;” that is, appease and conciliate him: so that the words, in fact, import “see that thy brother be reconciled to thee,” since that which goes before is not that he hath done thee an injury, but thou him. r108

Thus, then, for us to be reconciled to God is to avail ourselves of the means by which the anger of God toward us is to be appeased, which the New Testament expressly declares to be generally “the sin offering” of him “who knew no sin,” and instrumentally, as to each individual personally, “faith in his blood.”

A general objection of the Socinians to this doctrine of reconciliation may be easily answered. When we speak of the necessity of Christ’s atonement, in order to man’s forgiveness, we are told that we represent the Deity as implacable; when we rebut that by showing that it was his very placability, his boundless and ineffable love to men, which sent his Son into the world to die for the sins of mankind, they rejoin with their leaders, Socinus and Crellius, that then “God was reconciled before he sent his Son, and that, therefore, Christ did not die to reconcile God to us.” The answer plainly is, that in this objection, they either mean that God had, from the placability and compassion of his nature, determined to be reconciled to offenders upon the sending his Son, or that he was actually reconciled when our Lord was sent. The first is what we contend for, and is in no wise inconsistent with the submission of our Lord to death, since that was in pursuance of the merciful appointment and decree of the Father; and the
necessary medium by which this placability of God could honourably and consistently show itself in actual reconciliation, or the pardon of sin. That God was not actually reconciled to man, that is, that he did not forgive our offences, independent of the death of Christ, is clear, for then sin would have been forgiven before it was committed, and remission of sins could not have been preached in the name of Christ, nor could a ministry of reconciliation have been committed to the apostles. The reconciliation of God to man is, throughout, a conditional one, and, as in all conditional processes of this kind, it has three stages. The first is when the party offended is disposed to admit of terms of agreement, which, in God, is matter of pure grace and favour; the second is when he declares his acceptance of the mediation of a third person, and that he is so satisfied with what he hath done in order to it, that he appoints it to be announced to the offender, that if the breach continues, the fault lies wholly upon himself; the third is when the offender accepts of the terms of agreement which are offered to him, submits, and is received into favour. “Thus,” says Bishop Stillington, “upon the death and sufferings of Christ, God declares that he is so satisfied with what Christ hath done and suffered in order to the reconciliation between himself and us, that he now publishes remission of sins to the world, upon those terms which the Mediator hath declared by his own doctrine and the apostles he sent to preach it. But because remission of sins doth not immediately follow upon the death of Christ, without any supposition of any act on our part, therefore the state of favour doth commence from the performance of the conditions which are required of us.” (Discourse on the Sufferings of Christ. See also Grotius De Satisfactione, cap. 7.) Whoever considers these obvious distinctions will have an ample answer to the Socinian objection.

5. To the texts which speak of reconciliation with God as illustrative of the nature of the death of Christ for us, we add those which speak of “redemption;” either by employing that word itself, or others of the same import. Romans 3:24, “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Ephesians 1:7, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” 1 Peter 1:18, 19, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb
without blemish, and without spot.” 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, “And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.”

By redemption, those who deny the atonement made by Christ wish to understand *deliverance* merely, regarding only the effect, and studiously putting out of sight the cause from which it flows. But the very terms used in the above cited passages, “to redeem,” and “to be bought with a price,” will each be found to refute this notion of a gratuitous deliverance, whether from sin or punishment, or both. Our English word to redeem, literally means to buy back; and λυτρω, to redeem, and απολυτρωσις, redemption, are, both in Greek writers and in the New Testament, used for the act of setting free a captive, by paying λυτρον, a ransom or redemption price. But, as Grotius (*De Satisfactione*, cap. viii) has fully shown, by reference to the use of the words both in sacred and profane writers, redemption signifies not merely the liberation of captives, but deliverance from exile, death, and every other evil from which we may be freed; and λυτρον, signifies every thing which satisfies another, so as to effect this deliverance. The nature of this redemption, or *purchased* deliverance, (for it is not gratuitous liberation, as will presently appear,) is, therefore, to be ascertained by the circumstances of those who are the subjects of it. The subjects in the case before us are sinful men. They are under guilt, — under “the curse of the law,” the servants of sin, under the power and dominion of the devil, and “taken captive by him at his will” — liable to the death of the body and to eternal punishment. To the whole of this case, the redemption, the *purchased* deliverance of man, as proclaimed in the Gospel, applies itself. Hence, in the above cited and other passages, it is said “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,” in opposition to guilt; redemption from “the curse of the law;” deliverance from sin, that “we should be set free from sin;” deliverance from the power of Satan; from death, by a resurrection; and from future “wrath,” by the gift of eternal life. Throughout the whole of this glorious doctrine of our redemption from these tremendous evils there is, however, in the New Testament, a constant reference to the λυτρον, *the redemption* price, which λυτρον is as constantly declared to be the death of Christ, which he endured in our stead. Matthew 20:28, “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom (λυτρον) for many.” 1 Timothy 2:6, “Who gave himself a ransom (αντιλυτρον) for all.” Ephesians 1:7, “In whom we have redemption (την απολυτροσιν) through his blood.” 1 Peter 1:18,19, “Ye were not redeemed (ελυτρωθητε) with corruptible things, as
silver and gold — but with the *precious blood of Christ.*” That deliverance of man from sin, misery, and all other penal evils of his transgression which constitutes our redemption by Christ is not, therefore, a gratuitous deliverance, granted without a consideration, as an act of mere prerogative; the ransom, the redemption price, was exacted and paid; one thing was given for another, — the precious blood of Christ for captive and condemned men. Of the same import are those passages which represent us as having been “bought,” or “purchased” by Christ. St. Peter speaks of those “who denied the Lord that *bought* them,” (τον αγορασαντα αυτους,) and St. Paul, in the passage cited above, says “ye are bought (ηγορασθητε) with a *price,*” which price is expressly said by St. John, *Revelation* 5:9, to be the blood of Christ — :”Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God (ηγορασας, hast purchased us) by thy blood.”

The means by which it has been attempted to evade the force of these most express statements of the inspired writers remain to be pointed out and refuted.

The first is to allege that the term redemption is sometimes used for simple deliverance, where no price or consideration is supposed to be given; as when we read in the Old Testament of God’s redeeming his people from trouble, from death, from danger, where no price is mentioned; and when Moses is called, <440735>Acts 7:35, λυτρωτης, a redeemer, because he delivered his people from the bondage of Egypt. But the occasional use of the term in an improper and allusive sense cannot be urged against its strict and proper signification universally; and granting the occasional use of it in an improper sense, it will still remain to be proved that, in the passages just adduced out of the New Testament, it is used in this manner. The propriety of words is not to be receded from, but for weighty reasons. The strict meaning of the verb to redeem, is to deliver from captivity, by paying a ransom; it is extended to signify deliverance from evils of various kinds by the intervention of a valuable consideration; it is, in some cases, used for deliverance by any means; the context of the passage, in which the word occurs, and the circumstances of the case must, therefore, be resorted to in order to determine the sense in which the word is used. Fair criticism requires that we take words in their proper sense, unless a sufficient reason can be shown, from their connection, to the contrary, and not that we are first to take them in their improper sense until the proper sense is forced upon us by argument. This, however, is not a case of argument, but of the obvious sense of the words used; for if deliverances, in some passages of
the Old Testament, from trouble and danger are spoken of as a redemption, without reference to a λυτρον, or ransom, our redemption by Christ is not so spoken of; but, on the contrary, the λυτρον, or redemption price, is repeatedly, expressly, and emphatically mentioned, and that price is said to be “the blood of Christ.” When Greek writers speak of αποινα and λυτρα, with reference to the release of a prisoner, nothing could be more absurd, than to attempt to resolve these terms into a figurative meaning; because their mention of the price, and the act of paying it, and the circumstances under which it was paid, all show that they use the terms in the proper and strict sense. For the same reason must they be so understood in the New Testament, since the price itself, which constitutes the λυτρον, and the person who paid it, and the circumstances under which the transaction took place, are all given with as minute an historical precision, and a figurative interpretation would involve us in as great an absurdity in the one case as the other. We apply this to the case of Moses being called a redeemer, with reference to his delivering Israel from Egypt, and remark, that the improper use of that term may be allowed in the case of Moses, because he is nowhere said to have redeemed Israel by his death, nor by his blood, nor to have purchased the Jews with a price, nor to have given himself as a ransom; nor to have interposed any other consideration, on account of which he was allowed to lead his people out of captivity. He is said to be a deliverer, a redeemer, and that is all; but the idea of a proper redemption could not, in the nature of things, apply to the case, and, therefore, it is impossible to interpret the term in its proper sense. The Jews were captives, and he delivered them, this was sufficient to warrant the use of the term redemption in its improper sense, a very customary thing in language; but their captivity was not their fault, as ours is; it was not penal, as ours; they were delivered from unjust oppression; and God required of Moses no redemption price, as a consideration for interposing to free them from bondage. In our case, the captivity was penal; there was a right lodged with the justice of God to detain us, and to inflict punishment upon us; and a consideration was therefore required, in respect of which that right was relaxed. In one instance we are, therefore, compelled to interpret the word in an improper sense; in the other strictly; at least no argument can be drawn from the use of the word with reference to Moses, to turn it out of its proper signification when used of Christ; and especially when all the circumstances, which the word in its proper sense was intended to convey, are found in the case to which the redemption of man by Christ is applied. Above all, the word λυτρον is added by
Scripture to the deliverance of men, effected by Christ; but it is nowhere added to the deliverance effected for the Israelites by Moses; and by this it is, in fact, declared, that the mode by which the redemption of each was effected, was not the same,—the one was by the destruction of the enemies of the Israelites; the other by the death of the Deliverer himself.

It has been attempted to evade the literal import of the important terms on which we have dwelt, by urging, that such all interpretation would involve the absurdity of paying a price to Satan, the power said to held men captive at his will.

But why should the idea of redemption be confined to the purchasing of a captive? The reason appears to be, that the objection may be invested with some plausibility. The fact, however, is, that this is but one species and instance of redemption; for the word, in its proper and general sense, means deliverance from evil of any kind, a λυτρον or valuable consideration intervening; which valuable consideration may not always be literally a price, that is, not money, but something done, or something suffered, by which, in the case of commutation of punishment, the lawgiver is satisfied, though no benefit occurs to him; because in punishment respect is not had to the benefit of the lawgiver but to the common good and order of things. So when Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, had to pass sentence upon his son, for a crime which, by his own laws, condemned the aggressor to the loss of both his eyes, rather than relax his laws by sparing his son, he ordered him to be deprived of one of his eyes, and submitted to be deprived of one himself. Thus the eye of Zaleucus was the λυτρον of that of his son; and, in a decimation of mutinous soldiers, those who are punished are the λυτρον of the whole body.

But even if the redemption, in Scripture, related wholly to captivity, it does not follow that the price must be paid to him who detains the captive. Our captivity to Satan is not parallel to the case of a captive taken in war, and in whom, by the laws of war, the captor has obtained a right, and demands an equivalent for liberation and the renunciation of that right. Our captivity to Satan is judicial. Man listens to temptation, violates the laws of God, joins in a rebellion against his authority, and his being left under the power of Satan is a part of his punishment. The satisfaction is, therefore, to be made to the law under which this captivity is made a part of the penalty; not to him who detains the captive, and who is but a permitted instrument in the execution of the law, but to him whose law has been violated. He
who pays the price of redemption has to do with the judicial authority only, and, his λυτρον being accepted, he proceeds to rescue the object of his compassion, and becomes the actual redeemer.

The λυτρον, in the case of man, is the blood of Christ; and our redemption is not a commutation of a pecuniary price for a person, but a commutation of the sufferings of one person in the stead of another, which sufferings being a punishment, in order to satisfaction, is a valuable consideration, and, therefore, a price for the redemption of man out of the hands of Satan, and from all the consequences of that captivity. (Vide Stillingfleet’s Discourses on the Sufferings, &c.)

Under this head, now that we are showing that the death of Christ is exhibited in Scripture as the price of our redemption, it may also be necessary to meet another objection, that this doctrine of purchase and commutation is inconsistent with that freeness of the grace of God in the forgiveness of sins, on which so great a stress is laid in the Scriptures. This objection has been urged from Socinus to Dr. Priestley, and is thus stated by the latter: (History of the Corruptions:) “The Scriptures uniformly represent God as our universal parent, pardoning sinners freely, that is, from his natural goodness and mercy, whenever they repent and reform their lives. All the declarations of Divine mercy are made, without reserve and limitation, to the truly penitent, through all the books of Scripture, without the most distant hint of any regard being had to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever.” The proofs which he gives for this bold, and, indeed, impudent position, are chiefly the declaration of the apostle, that we are justified freely by the grace of God, and he contends that the word freely “implies that forgiveness is the free gift of God, and proceeds from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever.” It is singular, however, that the position, as Dr. Priestley has put it in the above quotations, refutes itself; for even he restricts the exercise of this mercy of God, “to the truly penitent,” “to them who repent and reform their lives.” Forgiveness, therefore, is not, even according to him and his followers, free in the sense of unconditional; and at the very time he denies that pardon is bestowed by God, “without regard to any consideration whatever, foreign to his essential goodness and mercy,” he acknowledges that it is regulated, in its exercise, by the consideration of the penitence or non-penitence of the guilty, who are the subjects of it, from which the contradictory conclusion follows, that, in bestowing mercy, God has respect to a consideration foreign to his
goodness and mercy, even the penitence of man, so that there is, in the mode of dispensing mercy, a reserve and limitation on the part of GOD.

Thus, then, unless they would let in all kinds of license, by preaching an unconditional pardon, the Socinians are obliged to acknowledge, that a thing may be done freely, which is, nevertheless, not done unconditionally. For, as it was replied, of old, to Socinus, whom Dr. Priestley follows in this objection, if this be not acknowledged, then the grossest Antinomianism is the true doctrine. For, if forgiveness of sin can only be accounted a free gift by being dependent upon no condition, and subject to no restrictions, it follows, that the repentance and amendment of the offender himself are no more to be regarded than the sufferings and merit of any other being; and, consequently, that all sinners, without reserve or limitation, have an equal claim of pardon, whether they repent or not. If, to avoid this consequence, it be said that God is free to choose the objects to whom he will show mercy, and to impose upon them such restrictions, and require of them such qualifications as he thinks fit; it may then, with equal reason, be asserted, that he is also free to dispense his mercy for such reasons and by such methods as he, in his wisdom, shall determine to be most conducive to his own glory and the good of his creatures, and there is no reason whatever to be given why a regard to the sufferings or merit of another person should more destroy the freeness of the gift, than the requisition of certain qualifications in the object himself. (Vide Veysies’ Bampton Lectures.) Thus the argument urged in the objection proves as much against the objectors as it does against us, or rather it proves nothing against either: for the showing mercy to the guilty, by any method, was a matter in which almighty God was perfectly free. He might have exacted the penalty of his violated law upon the sinning individual; and to forgive sin, in any manner, was, in him, therefore, an act of unspeakable grace and favour. Again, from the mode and limitation of dispensing this grace and favour, he derives no advantage (for the gratification of his own benevolence is not a question of interest) in the whole transaction; both in the mercy dispensed and in the mode the benefit of the creature is kept in view; nor could the persons pardoned themselves furnish any part of the consideration on which they are pardoned, or, of themselves, perform the conditions required of them; so that, for all these reasons, the pardon of man is a free gift, and its mode of being dispensed is the proof that it is so, and not a proof to the contrary.
But the very passage of St. Paul, to which Dr. Priestley refers, when he contends that the doctrine of the New Testament is, “that forgiveness is the free gift of God, and proceeds from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever,” refutes his inference. The passage is, “being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” The same doctrine is taught in other passages; and so far is it from being true, that no reference is made to any consideration beyond the mere goodness and mercy of God, that consideration is stated in so many express words, “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;” of which redemption the blood of Christ is the price, as taught in the text above commented on. But though it was convenient, in order to render a bold assertion more plausible, to keep this out of sight, a little reflection might have shown, that the argument built upon the word freely, the term used by the apostle, proceeds upon an entire mistake. The expression has reference to ourselves and to our own exertions in the work of justification, not to any thing which has been done by another in our behalf; and it is here used to denote the manner in which the blessing is bestowed, not the means by which it was procured. “Being justified freely by his grace” — freely, in the original δωρεάν, in the way of a gift unmerited by us, and not in the way of a reward for our worthiness of desert, agreeably to the assertion of the apostle in another place, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” To be justified, is to be pardoned, and treated as righteous in the sight of God, and to be admitted thus into his favour and acceptance. But man, in his fallen state, had nothing in himself, and could do nothing of himself, by which he might merit, or claim as his due so great a benefit. Having, therefore, no pretensions to real righteousness, our absolution from the guilt of sin, and our admission to the character and privileges of righteous persons, must be imputed not to our merit, but to the grace of God; it is an act of mercy which we must acknowledge and receive as a free gift, and not demand as a just reward. Nor do the means by which our justification was affected in any respect alter its nature as a gift, or in the least diminish its freedom. “We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ;” but this redemption was not procured by us, nor provided at our expense. It was the result of the pure love of God, who, compassionating our misery, himself provided the means of our deliverance, by sending his only-begotten Son into the world, who voluntarily submitted to die upon the cross, that he might become the propitiation for our sins, and reconcile us to God. Thus is the whole an
entire act of mercy on the part of God and Christ; begun and completed for
our benefit, but without our intervention; and, therefore, with respect to us,
the pardon of sin must still be accounted a gift, though it comes to us
through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Equally unfounded is the argument built upon the passages in which the
forgiveness of sins is represented under the notion of the free remission of
a debt; in which act, it is said, there is no consideration of atonement and
satisfaction. When sin is spoken of as a debt, a metaphor is plainly
employed, and it would be a novel rule to interpret what is plainly literal by
what is metaphorical. There is, undoubtedly, something in the act of
forgiving sin which is common with the act of remitting a debt by a
creditor, or there would be no foundation for the metaphor; but it can by
no means legitimately follow, that the remission of sins is, in all its
circumstances, to be interpreted by all the circumstances which accompany
the free remission of a debt. We know on the contrary, that remission of
sins is not unconditional; repentance and faith are required in order to it,
which is acknowledged by the Socinians themselves. But this
acknowledgment is fatal to the argument they would draw from the
instances in the New Testament, in which almighty God is represented as a
merciful creditor, freely forgiving his insolvent debtors; for if the act of
remitting sins be in all respects like the act of forgiving debts, then indeed
can neither repentance, nor faith, nor condition of any kind, be insisted
upon in order to forgiveness; since, in the instances referred to, the debtors
were discharged without any expressed condition at all. But something,
also, previous to our repentance and faith, is constantly connected in the
Holy Scriptures of the New Testament with the very offer of forgiveness.
“It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day,”
that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name
among all nations.” It was necessary, as we have already seen, that the one
should take place before the other could be announced; and some degree of
necessity is allowed in the case, even on the Socinian hypothesis, although
a very subordinate one. But if by an act of prerogative alone, unfettered by
any considerations of justice and right, as is a creditor when he freely
forgives a debt, GOD forgives sins, then there could be no necessity of any
conceivable kind for “Christ to suffer;” and the offer of remission of sins
would, in that case, have been wholly independent of his sufferings, which
is contrary to the text. In perfect accordance with the above passage, is
that in Acts 13:38, where it is said, “Be it known unto you, therefore,
men and brethren, that through this man, (δια τουτου through the means of this man,) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Here the same means as those before mentioned by St. Luke, are obviously referred to, “the death and resurrection of Christ.” Still more expressly, Matthew 26:28, our Lord declares that his blood is “the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;” where he plainly makes his blood the procuring cause of that remission, and a necessary libation in order to its being attainable. Our redemption is said by St. Paul, Ephesians 1:7, to be, “through his blood,” and this redemption he explains to be “the remission of our sins;” and in writing to the Hebrews he lays it down, as that very principle of the Old Testament dispensation which made it typical of the New, that “without shedding of blood there was no remission.” This remission, is, nevertheless, for the reasons given above, always represented as a free act of the Divine mercy; for the apostles saw no inconsistency in giving to it this free and gracious character on the one hand, and on the other proclaiming, that that free and adorable mercy was called into exercise by the “chastisement of our sins being laid upon Christ;” and thus by uniting both, they broadly and infallibly distinguish “the act of a lawgiver, who in forgiving sins has respect to the authority of the law, and the act of a creditor, who in remitting a debt disposes of his property at his pleasure.”

But although no criticism can be more fallacious than to interpret the forgiveness of sins, which is a plain and literal transaction, by a metaphor, or a parable, which may have either too few or too many circumstances interwoven with it for just illustration, when applied beyond, or contrary to, its intention, the reason of the metaphor is at once obvious and beautiful. The verb αφιημι, is the word commonly used for the remission of sins and the remission of debts. It signifies to send away, dismiss; and is accommodated to both these acts. The ideas of absolute right in one party, and of binding obligation on the other, hold good equally as to the lawgiver and the transgressor, the creditor and the debtor. The lawgiver has a right to demand obedience, the creditor to demand his property; the transgressor of law is under the bond of its penalty, the debtor is under the obligation of repayment or imprisonment. This is the basis of the comparison between debts of money, and obligations of obedience to a lawgiver; and the same word is equally well applied to express the cancelling of each, though, except in the respects just stated, they are transactions and relations very different to each other. Every sin involves an obligation to punishment; and
when sin is dismissed, sent away, or in other words forgiven, the liability to punishment is removed, just as when a debt is dismissed, sent away, or in other words remitted, the obligation of repayment, and, in default of that, the obligation of imprisonment, or, according to the ancient law, of being sold as a slave, is removed with it. So far the resemblance goes; but the Scriptures themselves, by connecting pardon of sin with a previous atonement, prevent it from being carried farther. And, indeed, the reason of the case sufficiently shows the difference between the remitting of a debt, which is the act of a private man, and the pardon of transgressions against a public law, which is the act of a magistrate; between an act which affects the private interests of one, and an act, which, in its bearing upon the authority of the public law and the protection and welfare of society, affects the interests of many; in a word, between an act which is a matter of mere feeling, and in which rectoral justice can have no place, and one which must be harmonized with rectoral justice; for compassion to the guilty can never be the leading rule of government.

6. The nature of the death of Christ is still farther explained in the New Testament, by the manner in which it connects our justification with “faith in the blood,” the sufferings which Christ endured in our stead; and both our justification, and the death of Christ as its meritorious cause, with “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.” According to the testimony of the whole of the evangelic writers, the justification of man is an act of the highest grace, a manifestation of the superlative and ineffable love of God, and is, at the same time a strictly RIGHTEOUS proceeding.

These views, scattered throughout the books of the New Testament, are summed up in the following explicit language of St. Paul, Romans 3:24-26: “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” The argument of the apostle is exceedingly lucid. He treats of man’s justification before God, of which he mentions two methods. The first is by our own obedience to the law of God, on the principle of all righteous law, that obedience secures exemption from punishment; or, as he expresses it, chap. 10:5, “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them.” This method of justification he proves to be impossible to man in his
present state of degeneracy, and from the actual transgressions of Jews and Gentiles, on account of which “the whole world” is guilty before God; and he therefore lays it down as an incontrovertible maxim, that “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified,” since “by the law is the knowledge of sin;” for which it provides no remedy. The other method is justification by the grace of God, as a “free gift;” but coming to us through the intervention of the death of Christ, as our redemption price; and received instrumentally by our faith in him. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” He then immediately adds, “whom God hath set forth,” openly exhibited and publicly announced, “to be a propitiation;” to be the person through whose voluntary and vicarious sufferings he is reconciled to sinful man, and by whom he will justify all who “through faith” confide “in” the virtue of “his blood,” shed for the remission of sins. But this public announcement and setting forth of Christ as a propitiation was not only for a declaration of the Divine mercy; but pardon was offered to men in this method, to declare the “righteousness” of God, (εἰς ἐνδεξεῖσθαι δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ,) for a demonstration of his righteousness or justice, in the remission of past sins; “that he might be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” — that he might show himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of his government, even while he justifies the offender that believes in Jesus. The Socinian version renders the clause, “to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins,” to show his method of justification concerning the remission of past sins. Even then the strict rectoral justice of the act of justifying sinners, through faith in the blood of Christ, is expressed by the following clause, “that he might be just;” but the sense of the whole passage requires the literal rendering, “to declare his justice, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Some have indeed taken the word “just” (δικαιοίς) in the sense of merciful; but this is wholly arbitrary. It occurs, says Whitby, above eighty times in the New Testament, and not once in that sense. The sense just given is confirmed by all the ancient versions, and it is indeed put beyond the reach of verbal criticism by the clause, “for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” For, whatever view we take of this clause, whether we refer it to the sins of men before the coming of Christ, or to the past sins of one who is at any time justified, the παρεσίς, or “passing over” of sins, or, if the common rendering please better, “the remission of sins,” and the “forbearance of God,” are acts of obvious mercy; and to say that thus the mercy of God is manifested, is tautological and identical; whereas past
sins not punished through the forbearance of God without a public atonement, might have brought the _justice_ of God into question, but certainly not his mercy. It was the justice of the proceeding, therefore, that needed a demonstration, and not the mercy of it. This, too, is the obvious reason for the repetition so emphatically used by the apostle, and which is no otherwise to be accounted for; “to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, _to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness_;” “at this time,” now that Christ has actually appeared to pay the ransom, and to become the publicly announced propitiation for sin; God cannot now appear otherwise than just, although he justifies him that believeth in Jesus. Similar language is also used by St. John 1st Epistle, 1:9, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” — So that the grand doctrine of Christianity is unequivocally stated by both apostles to be, that, according to its constitution, the forgiveness of sin is at once an _act of mercy_ and an _act of justice_, or of strictly righteous government. Neither the Socinian nor the Arian hypothesis, at all harmonizes with this principle; on the contrary, they both directly contradict it, and cannot, therefore, be true. They make the forgiveness of sin, indeed, an act of mercy: but with them it is impossible that it should be an act of justice, because sin receives not its threatened punishment; the penalty of the law is not exacted; the offender meets with entire impunity; and the Divine administration, so far from being a righteous one, has, according to their system, no respect to either truth or righteousness; and, so far as offences against the Divine law are concerned, that law is reduced to a dead letter.

But in Scripture the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, is not only asserted to be a demonstration of the righteousness of God in a case which might seem to bring it into question, but the particular steps and parts of this “demonstration” are, by its light, easy to be traced. For,

1. The law, the rule of the Divine government, is by this means established in its _authority_ and _perpetuity_. The hypothesis which rejects the doctrine of the atonement, repeals the law by giving impunity to transgression; for, if punishment does not follow offence, or no other term of pardon be required than one which the culprit has it always in his own power, at once, to offer, (which we have seen is the case with the repentance stated by Socinians as the only condition of forgiveness,) then is the law, as to its authority, virtually repealed, and the Divine government, over rebellious
creatures, annihilated. The Christian doctrine of atonement, on the contrary, is, that sin cannot go unpunished in the Divine administration, and, therefore, the authority of the law is established by this absolute and everlasting exclusion of impunity from transgression.

2. Whether we take the righteousness or justice of God, for that holiness and rectitude of his nature from which his punitive justice flows; or for the latter, which consists in exacting the penalty righteously and wisely attached to offences against the Divine law, or for both united as the stream and the fountain; it is demonstrated, by the refusal of impunity to sin, that God is this holy and righteous Being, this strict and exact Governor. On any other theory, there is no manifestation of God’s hatred of sin, answering at all to that intense holiness of his nature, which must lead him to abhor it; and no proof of his rectoral justice as Governor of the world. Mercy is, according to them all, administered on a mere principle of feeling, without any regard to holiness or justice whatever.

3. The doctrine which connects the pardon of the guilty with the meritorious death of Christ, illustrates the attribute of Divine justice, by the very act of connecting and blending it with the attribute of love, and the exercise of an effectual compassion. At the time that it guards with so much care, the doctrine of non-impunity to sin, it offers impunity to the sinner; but then the medium through which this offer is made serves to heighten the impression of God’s hatred to sin, and the inflexible character of his justice. The person appointed to suffer the punishment of sin and the penalty of the law for us, was not a mere human being, not a creature of any kind, however exalted, but the Son of God; and in him Divinity and humanity were united in one person, so that he was “God manifested in the flesh,” assuming our nature in order that he might offer it in death a sacrifice to God. If this was necessary, and we have already proved it to have been so in the strictest sense, then is sin declared, by the strongest demonstration we can conceive, to be an evil of immeasurable extent; and the justice of God is, by a demonstration of equal force, declared to be inflexible and inviolable. God “spared not his own Son.”

Here, indeed, it has been objected by Socinus and his followers, that the dignity of a person adds nothing to the estimation of his sufferings. The common opinion of mankind, in all ages, is, however, a sufficient refutation of this objection, for in proportion to the excellence of the creatures immolated in sacrifice have the value and efficacy of oblations been
estimated by all people, which notion, when perverted, made them resort, in some instances, to human sacrifices, in cases of great extremity; and surely, if the principle of substitution existed in the penal law of any human government, it would be universally felt to make a great difference in the character of the law, whether an honourable or a mean substitute were exacted in place of the guilty; and that it would have greatly changed the character of the act of Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, before mentioned, and placed the estimation in which he held his own laws, and the degree of strictness with which he was determined to uphold them, in a very different light, if, instead of parting with one of his own eyes, in place of the remaining eye of his son, he had ordered the eye of some base slave or of a malefactor to be plucked out. But without entering into this, the notion will be explicitly refuted, if we turn to the testimony of Holy Writ itself, in which the dignity and Divinity of our Lord are so often emphatically referred to as stamping that value upon his sacrifice, as giving that consideration to his voluntary sufferings on our account, which we usually express by the term of “his merits,” Acts 20:28, as God, he is said to have “purchased the Church with HIS OWN BLOOD.” In Colossians 1:14, 15, we are said to have “redemption through HIS BLOOD, who is THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD.” In 1 Corinthians 2:8, “the LORD OF GLORY is said to have been CRUCIFIED.” St. Peter emphatically calls the blood of Christ “PRECIOUS BLOOD;” and St. Paul dwells particularly upon this peculiarity, when he contrasts the sacrifice of Christ with those of the law, and when he ascribes that purifying efficacy, which he denies to the blood of bulls and of goats, to the blood of Christ. “How MUCH MORE shall the BLOOD OF CHRIST, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” By the argument of Socinus there could be no difference between the blood of animals, shed under the law, as to value and efficacy, and the blood of Christ, which is directly in the teeth of the declaration and argument of the apostle, who also asserts, that the patterns of things in the heavens were purified by animal sacrifices; “but the heavenly things themselves with BETTER SACRIFICES than these,” namely, the oblation of Christ.

To another objection of Socinus, that because the Divinity itself suffers not, therefore it does not enter into this consideration of punishment, Grotius well replies, This is as much as to say that it is an offence of the same kind whether you strike a private person or a king, a stranger or a
father, because blows are directed against the body, not against dignity or relationship.  

4. In farther considering this subject, as illustrating the inherent and the rectoral righteousness of God, we are to recollect that, although by the atonement made for the sins of mankind by the death of Christ, all men, antecedently to their repentance and faith, are, to use the language of divines, put into “a salvable state,” yet none of them are by this act of Christ, brought from under the authority of the moral law. This remains in its full, and original force, and as they all continue under the original obligation of obedience, so in case of those conditions not being complied with, on which the actual communication of the benefit of redemption has been made to depend, those who neglect the great salvation offered to them by Christ, fall under the full original penalty of the law, and are left to its malediction, without obstruction to the exercise and infliction of Divine justice. Nor, with respect to those who perform the conditions required of them, and who, by faith in Christ, are justified, and thus escape punishment, is there any repeal, or even relaxation, of the authority of the law of God. The end of justification is not to set men free from law, but from punishment; for, concomitant with justification, though distinct from it, is the communication of the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, by which the corrupt and invalid nature of man is restored to the love of holiness and the power to practise it, and thus the law of God becomes his constant rule, and the measure of that holiness to which, when this new creation has taken place, he vigorously aspires: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Not, indeed, that this obedience, which, in the present life, is, in some respects, imperfect, and in every degree the result of the operation of God within us, can, after this change, be the rule of our continued justification and acceptance; that will rest, from first to last, upon the atonement of Christ, pleaded in our behalf; so that, if any man again sin, “he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;” but true faith leads, by an inseparable connection, both to justification and to regeneration; and they who, as the apostle argues, Romans 6:2, are thus “dead to sin, cannot continue any longer therein,” but yield willing obedience to the law of God. The rule of God, the authority of his law is
thus re-established over his creatures, and the strictness of a righteous
government is united with the exercise of a tender mercy.

Thus, then in the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, we see how the
righteousness, the essential and the rectoral justice, of God is manifested.
There is no impunity to sin; and yet the impunity to the sinner, through
faith in the blood of Christ, does not repeal, does not lower, but establish
the law of God. These views will also enable us to attach an explicit
meaning to the theological phrase, “the satisfaction made to Divine
justice,” by which the nature of Christ’s atonement is often expressed. This
is not a phrase of Holy Writ; but it is not, on that account, to be
disregarded, since, like many others, it has been found useful as a guard
against subtle evasions of the doctrine of Scripture, and in giving
explicitness, not indeed, to the language of inspiration, but to the sense in
which that language is interpreted.

The two following views of satisfaction may be given as those which are
most prevalent among those divines who hold the doctrine of the
atonement of Christ.

The first may be thus epitomised: —

The justice of God being concerned to vindicate his laws, and to inflict
upon offenders the due reward of their evil deeds, it is agreed that, without
proper satisfaction, sin could not be forgiven. For, as sin is opposite to the
purity and holiness of God, and, consequently, cannot but provoke his
displeasure; and, as justice is essential to the Divine nature, and exists there
in a supreme degree, it must, inflexibly, require the punishment of those
who are thus objects of his wrath. The satisfaction, therefore, made by the
death of Christ consisted in his taking the place of the guilty; and in his
sufferings and death being, from the dignity of his nature, regarded by the
offended Lawgiver, as a full equivalent and adequate compensation for the
punishment by death, of the personally guilty.

The second opinion does not assume the absolute necessity of a
satisfaction to Divine justice, but chiefly insists upon the wisdom and
fitness of the measure, arguing, that it became the almighty Governor of
the universe to consult the honour of his law, and not to suffer it to be
violated with impunity, lest his subjects should call in question his justice.
Accordingly, he sent his own Son into the world, who, by dying for our
sins, obtained our release from punishment; and, at the same time, made an
honourable display of the righteousness of God. In a word, Christ is supposed, in this opinion, to have made satisfaction for our sins, not because his death is to be accounted an adequate compensation, or a full equivalent for the remission of punishment; but because his suffering in our stead maintained the honour of the Divine law, and yet gave free scope to the mercy of the Lawgiver.

Both these opinions have great names for their advocates; but the reader will feel, that there is too much indistinctness in the terms and phrases in which they are expressed for either of them to be received as a satisfactory enunciation of this important doctrine. The first opinion, though greatly to be preferred, and with proper explanations, just, is defective in not explaining what is meant by the terms “a full equivalent” and “an adequate compensation.” The second is objectionable, as appearing to refer the atonement more to wisdom and fitness as an expedient, than to wisdom and fitness in close and inseparable connection with justice; and is defective in not pointing out what that connection between the death of Christ and that honouring of the law of God is, which allows of the remission of punishment to offenders, of which they speak. Each embodies much truth, and yet both are capable of originating great and fatal errors, unless their terms be definitely and Scripturally understood.

To clear this subject some farther observations will, then, be necessary.

The term satisfaction is taken from the Roman law, and signifies to content a person aggrieved, by doing or by offering something which procures liberation from the obligation of debts or the penalties of offences; not ipso facto, but by the will of the aggrieved party admitting this substitution. “Ea dictio (satisfaciendi vocabulum) in jure et usu communi significat facti alicujus aut rei exhibitionem, ex quâ non quidem ipso facto, sed accedente voluntatis actu liberatio sequatur; soletque non tautum in pecuniaris debitis, sed et in delictis hoc sensu usurpari, quod linquæ ex Romanâ depravatae appellant, aliquem contentare.” (Grotius De Satisfactione.) So the Roman lawyer Caius, “satisfacere dicimur ei cujus desiderium implemus,” we are said to satisfy him whose desires we fulfil. Ulpian opposes satisfaction to payment, “satisfactio pro solutione;” and, in criminal cases, Asconius lays it down as a rule, “satisfacere, est tantum facere, quantum satis sit irato ad vindictam,” to satisfy is to do as much as, to the party offended, may be enough in the way of vengeance. (Vide Chapman’s Eusebius.) It is from this use of the term that it has been
adopted into theology, and however its meaning may have been heightened or lowered by the advocates of different systems, it is plain that, by the term itself, nothing is indicated, but the contentment of the injured party by any thing which he may choose to accept in the place of the enforcement of his obligation upon the party indebted or offending. The sense in which it must be applied to designate the nature and effect of the death of Christ, in consistency with the views we have already taken, is obvious. We call the death of Christ a satisfaction offered to Divine justice for the transgressions of men, with reference to its effect upon the mind of the supreme Lawgiver. As a just Governor, he is satisfied, contented with the atonement offered by the vicarious death of his Son, and the conditions on which it is to become available to the offenders; and their punishment, those conditions being accomplished, is no longer exacted.

This effect upon the mind of the Lawgiver is not, as the Socinians would pervert the doctrine, the satisfaction of an angry, vengeful affection, as we have before shown; but, according to the very phrase employed in all cases, and which is sufficient to show that their perversion of our meaning is wilful, “a satisfaction,” or “contentment of his justice, which means, and can only rationally mean, the satisfaction of the mind of a just or righteous governor, disposed from the goodness of his nature, to show mercy to the guilty, and who can now do it consistently with the rectitude of his character, and the authority of his laws: which it is the office of punitive justice to proclaim, and to uphold. The satisfaction of Divine justice by the death of Christ, consists, therefore, in this, that this wise and gracious provision on the part of the Father having been voluntarily carried into effect by the Son, the just God has determined it to be as consistent with his own holy and righteous character, and the ends of law and government, to forgive all who have true “faith in the blood of Christ,” the appointed propitiation for sin, as though they had all been personally punished for their transgressions.

The death of Christ, then, is the satisfaction accepted; and this being a satisfaction to justice, that is, a consideration which satisfied God, as a being essentially righteous, and as having strict and inflexible respect to the justice of his government; pardon through, or for the sake of that death, became, in consequence, “a declaration of the righteousness of God,” as the only appointed method of remitting the punishment of the guilty; and if so, satisfaction respects not, in the first instance, according to the second opinion we have stated above, the honour of the law of God, but its
authority, and the upholding of that righteous and holy character of the Lawgiver, and of his administration, of which that law is the visible and public expression. Nor is this to be regarded as a merely wise and fit expedient of government, a point to which even Grotius leans too much, as well as many other divines who have adopted the second opinion; for this may imply that it was one of many other possible expedients, though the best; whereas we have seen, that it is every where in Scripture represented as necessary to human salvation; and that it is to be concluded, that no alternative existed but that of exchanging a righteous government for one careless and relaxed, to the dishonour of the Divine attributes, and the sanctioning of moral disorder; or the upholding of such a government by the personal and extreme punishment of every offender; or else the acceptance of the vicarious death of an infinitely dignified and glorious being, through whom pardon should be offered, and in whose hands a process for the moral restoration of the lapsed should be placed. The humiliation, sufferings, and death of such a being, did most obviously demonstrate the righteous character and administration of God; and if the greatest means we can conceive was employed for this end, then we may safely conclude, that the righteousness of God, in the forgiveness of sin, could not have been demonstrated by inferior means; and as God cannot cease to be a righteous Governor, man, in that case, could have had no hope.

The advocates of the second opinion not only speak of the honour of the Divine law being concerned in this transaction; but of the maintenance of the justice of God, in which they come substantially to an agreement with those who hold the first opinion; and if so, there appears no reason to except to such phrases as a “full equivalent” and “an adequate compensation,” when soberly interpreted. An equivalent is something of equal value, or of equal force and power, to something else; but here the value spoken of is judicial value, that which is to weigh equally in the mind of a wise, benevolent, and yet strictly righteous Governor; and if the death of Christ for sinners was determined, in his infallible judgment, to be as equal a “demonstration” of his justice, as the personal and extreme punishment of offenders themselves, it was, in this judicial consideration of the matter, of equal weight, and therefore of equal value, as a means of righteous government; for which reason, also, it was of equal force, or power, or cogency, another leading sense of the term equivalent. So also, as to the term “compensation,” which signifies the weighing of one thing
against another, the making amends. If this be interpreted as the former, *judicially*, the death of Christ for sinners is an adequate compensation for their personal punishment, in the estimation of Divine justice; because it is, at least, an equally powerful demonstration of the righteousness of God, who only in consideration of that atonement forgives the sins of offending men.

Just, however, and significant as these phrases are when thus interpreted, one reason why they have been objected to by some orthodox divines is, that they have been used in support of the Antinomian doctrine. On this account they have been by some wholly rejected, and a loose and dangerous phraseology introduced, when the reason of the case only required that they should be explained. The Antinomian perversion of them may here be briefly refuted, though that doctrine will afterward come under our more direct consideration.

In the first place the Antinomians connect the satisfaction of Christ, with the doctrine of the imputation of his *active* righteousness to believers. With them, therefore, the satisfaction of Christ means his performing for us that obedience which we were bound to perform. They consider our Lord as a proxy for men; so that his perfect obedience to the law should be esteemed by God, as done by them; as theirs in legal construction, and that his perfect righteousness being imputed to them, renders them legally righteous and sinless. The plain answer to this is,

1. That we have no such office ascribed in Scripture to the active righteousness of Christ, which is only spoken of there in connection with his atonement, as rendering him a fit victim or sacrifice for sin — “he died, the *just* for the unjust.”

2. That this doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s obedience makes his sufferings superfluous. For if he has done all that the law required of us, and if this is legally accounted our doing, then are we under no penalty of suffering, and his suffering in our stead was more than the law and the case required.

3. That this involves a *fiction* opposed to the ends of moral government, and shuts out the obligation of personal obedience to the law of God; so far, therefore, is it from being a demonstration of God’s righteousness, his rectoral justice, that it transfers the obligation of obedience from the subjects of the Divine government
to Christ, and leaves man without law; and God without dominion, which is obviously contrary to the Scriptures, and favourable to license of every kind.

4. This is not satisfaction in any good sense; it is merely the performance of all that the law requires by one person substituted for another.

Again, the terms full satisfaction and full equivalent, are taken by the Antinomians in the sense of the payment of debts by a surety for him who has not the means of payment; as though sins were analogous to civil debts. This proceeds upon the mistake of confounding the cancelling of a debt of judicial obligation, with the payment of a debt of money. We have already seen the difference between the relation of a sinner to his offended Judge and Sovereign, and that of a pecuniary debtor to a creditor, and have pointed out the basis of the metaphor, when it occurs as a figurative representation in Scripture. Such payment would not be satisfaction in the proper sense, which stands opposed to payment, and means the acceptance of something in the place of what is due, with which the Lawgiver is content. Nor can any such sense be forced upon the term satisfaction, for we have no such representation in Scripture of the death of Christ, as that it is, in principle, like the payment of so many talents or pounds by one person, for so many talents or pounds owing by another, and which thereby cancels all future obligation. His atoning act consisted in suffering, “the just for the unjust;” neither in doing just so many holy acts as we were bound to do, nor in suffering the precise quantum of pain which we deserved to suffer, neither of which appears in the nature of things to be even possible; but doing and suffering that which by reason of the peculiar glory and dignity of the person thus coming under the bond of the law, both as to obedience and suffering, was accounted by God to be a sufficient “demonstration of his righteousness,” in showing mercy to all who truly believe in him. And as this notion of payment in full and kind by a surety is contrary to the import of satisfaction, so also is it inconsistent with the import of the phrase, a full equivalent. He who pays a civil debt in full for another, does not render an equivalent; but gives precisely what the original obligation required. So, if the obedience of Christ were equal in quantity and degree to all the acts of obedience due by men, and is to be accounted theirs, there is no equivalent offered; but the same thing is done, only it is done by another; and if the penal sufferings of Christ were in nature, quantity, and intenseness, equal to the punishment of all sinners, in
time and eternity taken together, and are to be accounted their sufferings, no proper equivalent is offered in the case. The only true sense of the sufferings of Christ being a full equivalent for the remission of the punishment due to the guilty, is, that they equally availed to the satisfying of Divine justice, and vindicating the authority of his laws; that they were equivalent, in the estimation of a just Governor, in the administration of his laws, to the punishment of the guilty; equivalent in effect to a *legal satisfaction*, which would consist in the enforcement upon the persons of the offenders of the penalty of the violated commandment.

Another consequence to which the Antinomian view leads, is, that it makes the justification of men a matter of *right*, not of *grace*.

We can easily, when the doctrine of satisfaction is properly stated, answer the infidel and Socinian objection, that it destroys the free and gracious nature of an act of forgiveness. For, not to urge again what has before been advanced, that the Father was the fountain of this mercy, and “gave” the Son; the satisfaction was *quid recusabile*, or such as God might have refused. For if the laws, under which God had placed us, were “holy, just, and good,” which is their real character, and if the penalties attached to their violation were righteous, which must also be conceded, then it would have been righteous, every way consistent with the glory of God, and with every perfection of his nature, to have enforced the penalty. The satisfaction offered might not be unjust in him to accept, and yet he was clearly under no obligation to accept it could it have been offered independent of himself, much less could he be under any obligation to *provide* it, which he did. The offender could have no right to claim such a provision, and it depended, therefore, solely on the will of God, and as such was an act of the highest grace.

Again, the forgiveness of sinners, through an atonement, is not *de jure*, that which can be claimed as a matter of *right*. It is made to consist with law, but is not in any sense by the law. However valuable the atonement, yet, independent of the favour and grace of the Lawgiver, it could not have obtained our pardon. Both must concur in order to this, the kindness and compassion of the being offended inducing him to accept *satisfaction*, and such a satisfaction as would render it morally fit and honourable in him to offer forgiveness. “By grace,” therefore, we “are saved;” and nothing that Christ has done, renders us not deserving of punishment, or cancels our obligations as creatures and subjects, as a surety cancels the obligations of
a debtor, whose debt he pays for him. Forgiveness in God can, therefore, be no other than an act of high and distinguished mercy.

We are also to consider, even now that the atonement has been accepted, and the promise of forgiveness proclaimed, upon the conditions of repentance and faith, that we claim forgiveness not on the ground of justice, but on that of the faithfulness of God, who has been pleased to bind himself by promises; and also that the mercy and grace of God are farther illustrated by his not proceeding to extremities against us upon our first refusals of his overtures, of which all are in some degree guilty. He exercises toward us, in all cases, “all long suffering,” and calls us not hastily to account for our neglect of the Gospel, any more than for the infractions of his law, both which he might do, were his government severe and his mercy reluctant.

But abundantly as the objection may thus be answered, it is not to be satisfactorily refined, on the Antinomian principle, that Christ paid our debt, in the sense of yielding to the law, in kind and in quantity, those acts of obedience, or that penalty of suffering, or both, which the law required. The matter in that case, on the part of the Father, loses its character of grace, and is reduced to a strictly equitable proceeding; or at least the mercy is of no higher a kind than is the mercy of a creditor who accepts the full amount of his debt from the surety instead of the debtor, which is assuredly much below that love of the Father, to which allusions so admiring and so grateful are often made in the New Testament. The consequences, also, become absurd and wholly contradictory to the Scriptures; and such a view of the satisfaction of Christ is inconsistent with conditions of pardon and acceptance; for if the debt is in this sense actually tendered and accepted, on what ground can conditions of release stand? It is, therefore, consistent in the Antinomian scheme, to deny all conditions of pardon and acceptance, and to make repentance and faith merely the means through which men come to the knowledge of their previous and eternal election. By them, as fulfilled conditions, their relation to God is not changed, so that from guilty and condemned criminals they become sons of God. Such they were previous to faith, and previous even to birth, and thus the Scripture is contradicted, which represents believers before repentance and faith, to be “the children of wrath, even as others.” That passage also in Galatians loses its meaning, “we have believed in Jesus Christ, THAT we might be justified by the faith of Christ.”
With such explanations of the terms of the first of the two opinions on the satisfaction of Christ, above given, it may be taken as fully accordant with the doctrine of the New Testament on this important subject.

Another remark may here be in its proper place. It has been sometimes said by theologians, sufficiently sound in their general views of the doctrine of the atonement, that we know not the vinculum, or bond of connection, between the sufferings of Christ, and the pardon of sin, and this, therefore, they place among the mysteries of religion. To me this appears rather to arise from obscure views of the atonement than from the absence of information on this point in the Scriptures themselves. Mysteries of love and incomprehensible facts are found, it is true in the incarnation, humiliation, and sufferings of our Lord: but the vinculum, or connection of those sufferings appears to be matter of express revelation, when it is declared that the death of Christ was “a demonstration of the righteousness of God,” of his righteous character and his just administration, and therefore allowed the honourable exercise of mercy without impeachment of justice, or any repeal or relaxation of his laws. If it be meant, in this allegation of mystery, that it is not discoverable now the death of Christ is as adequate a display of the justice of God, as though offenders had been personally punished, this also is clearly in opposition to what the apostle has said, in the passage which has been so often referred to, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,” εἰς ενδείξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, for a demonstration, or MANIFESTATION of his righteousness; nor surely can the particulars before stated in explanation of this point, be well weighed, without our perceiving how gloriously the holiness and essential rectitude of God, as well as his rectoral justice, were illustrated by this proceeding; this, surely, is manifestation, not mystery.

For, generally speaking, it cannot be a matter of difficulty to conceive how the authority of a law may be upheld, and the justice of its administration made manifest, even when its penalty is exacted in some other way than the punishment of the party offending. When the Locrian legislator voluntarily suffered the loss of one of his eyes, to save that of his son condemned by his own statutes to lose both, and did this that the law might neither be repealed nor exist without efficacy; who does not see that the authority of his laws was as much, nay more, impressively sanctioned than if his son had endured the full penalty? The case, it is true, has in it nothing parallel to the work of Christ, except in that particular which it is here adduced to
illustrate; but it shows that it is not, in all cases, necessary for the 
upholding of a firm government that the offender himself should be 
punished. This is the natural mode of maintaining authority; but not, in all 
cases, the only one; and, in that of the redemption of man, we see the 
wisdom of God in its brightest manifestation securing this end, and yet 
opening to man the door of hope. The strict justice of the case required 
that the righteous character of the Divine administration should be upheld; 
but in fact, by the sufferings of our Lord being made the only means of 
pardon, it has received a stamp more legible and impressive than the 
extreme punishment of offenders, however awful, while it connects love 
with justice, and presents God to us at once exact in righteousness and 
affectioningly gracious and merciful. “The Judge himself bore the punishment 
of transgression, while he published an amnesty to the guilty, and thus 
asserted the authority, and importance, and worth of the law by that very 
act which beamed forth love unspeakable, and displayed a compassion 
which knew no obstacle but the unwillingness of the criminals to accept it. 
The eternal Word became flesh, and exhibited, in sufferings and in death, 
that combination of holiness and mercy which, believed, must excite love, 
and, if loved, must produce resemblance.” (Erskine on Revealed Religion.) 
“Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.” 
Thus the vinculum, that which connects the death of Christ with our 
salvation, is simply the security which it gives to the righteous 
administration of the Divine government.

An objection is made by the opponents of the doctrine of atonement to the 
justice of laying the punishment of the guilty upon the innocent, which it 
will be necessary briefly to consider. The objection resolves itself into an 
inquiry how far such benevolent interpositions of one person for another, 
as involve sacrifice and suffering, may go without violating justice; and 
when the subject is followed in this direction, the objection will be found to 
be of no weight.

That it has always been held a virtue to endure inconveniences, to 
encounter danger, and even to suffer for the sake of others, in certain 
circumstances, cannot be denied, and no one has ever thought of 
controlling such acts by raising any questions as to their justice. Parents 
and friends not only endure labour and make sacrifices for their children 
and connections, but often submit to positive pain in accomplishing that to 
which their affection prompts them. To save a fellow creature perishing by 
water or fire, generous minds often expose themselves to great personal
risk of life, and even sometimes perish in the attempt; yet the claims of humanity are considered sufficient to justify such deeds, which are never blamed, but always applauded. No man’s life we grant, is at his own disposal; but in all cases where it is agreed that God, the only being who has a right to dispose of life, has left men at liberty to offer their lives for the benefit of others, no one questions the justice of their doing it. Thus, when a patriot army marches to almost certain destruction to defend its coasts from foreign invasion and violence, the established notion that the life of every man is placed by God at the disposal of his country, justifies the hazard. It is still a clearer instance, because matter of revelation, that there are cases in which we ought “to lay down our lives for the brethren,” that is for the Church and the interests of religion in the world. Christians are called to pursue their duty of instructing, and reforming, and saving others, though, in some cases, the active services into which they may be led will shorten life; and in times of persecution it is obligatory upon them not only to be ready to suffer, but to die, rather than deny Christ. No one questions the justice of this, because all see that the Author and Lord of the lives of men has given to them the right of thus disposing of life, nor do we ever hear it urged, that it was unjust in him to require them to submit to the pain of racks and fires, and other modes of violent death, which they certainly did not deserve, and when, as to any crime meriting public and ignominious death, they were, doubtless, innocent. These cases are not adduced as parallel to the death of Christ for sinners; but so far they agree with it that, in the ordinary course of providence, and by express appointment of God, men suffer and even die for the benefit of others, and in some cases the morally worthy, the comparatively innocent, die for the instruction, and, instrumentally, for the salvation of the unworthy and vicious. There is a similarity in the two cases also in other particulars, as that the suffering danger or death is in both matter of choice, not of compulsion or necessity; and that there is a right in the parties to choose suffering and death, though, as we shall see, this right in benevolent men is of a different kind to that with which Christ was invested.

Some writers of great eminence on the doctrine of atonement have urged also, in answer to the objection before us, the suffering of persons in consequence of the sins of others, as children on account of the crimes of their parents, both by the natural constitution of things and by the laws of many states; but the subject does not appear to derive any real illustration from these examples; for, as a modern writer well observes, “the principles
upon which the Catholic opinion is defended destroy every kind of similarity between these cases and the sufferings of Christ. In all such instances of the extension of punishment, persons suffer for sins of which they are innocent, but without their consent, in consequence of a constitution under which they are born, and by a disposition of events which they probably lament; and their suffering is not supposed to have any effect in alleviating the evils incurred by those whose punishment they bear.” (Hill’s Lectures.)

In all the cases mentioned above, as most in point in this argument, we grant that there is no instance of satisfaction by vicarious punishment; no legal substitution of one person for another. With respect to human governments, they could not justly adopt this principle in any case. They could not oblige an innocent person to suffer for the guilty, because that would be unjust to him; they could not accept his offer, were he ever so anxious to become the substitute of another, for that would be unjust to God, since they have no authority from him so to take away the life of one of his creatures, and the person himself has no authority to offer it. With respect to the Divine government, a parallel case is also impossible, because no guilty man could be the substitute for his fellows, his own life being forfeited; and no higher creature could be that substitute, of which we are fully assured by this, that if it was necessary that Christ, who is infinitely above all creatures, should suffer for us, in order that God might be just in justifying the guilty, then his justice could not have been manifested by the interposition of any creature whatever in our behalf, and, therefore, the legal obstacle to our pardon must have remained in full force. There can be no full parallel to this singular and only case; but yet, as to the question of justice, which is here the only point under consideration, It rests on the same principles as those before mentioned. In the case of St. Paul we see a willing sufferer; he chooses to suffer and to die “for the elect’s sake,” and that he might publish the Gospel to the world. He knew that this would be his lot, and he glories in the prospect. He gave up cheerfully what might have remained to him of life by the constitution of nature. Was it, then, unjust in God to accept this offering of generous devotedness for the good of mankind, when the offering was in obedience to his own will? Certainly not. Was it an unjust act toward God, that is, did it violate the right of God over his life, for St. Paul to choose to die for the Gospel? Certainly not. For God had given to him the right of thus disposing of his life, by making it his duty to die for the truth. The same
considerations of choice and right unite in the sufferings of our Lord, though the case itself was one of an infinitely higher nature, a circumstance which strengthens but does not change the principle. He was a willing substitute, and choice was in him abundantly more free and unbiassed than it could be in a creature, and for this reason, that he was not a creature. His incarnation was voluntary; and, when incarnate, his sufferings were still a matter of choice; nor was he, in the same sense as his disciples, under the power of men. “No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself.” He had the right of doing so in a sense that no creature could have. He died not only because the Father willed it; not because the right of living or dying had been conceded to him as a moral trust, as in the case of the apostles; but because, having himself the supreme power of life and death, from his boundless benevolence to man, he willed to die; and thus was there, in this substitution, a concurrence of the Lawgiver, and the consent of the substitute. To say that any thing is unjust, is to say that the rights of some one are invaded; but if, in this case, no right was invaded, than which nothing can be more clear, then was there in the case nothing of injustice as assumed in the objection. The whole resolves itself, therefore, into a question not of justice, but of the wisdom of admitting a substitute to take the place of the guilty. In the circumstances, first of the willingness of the substitute to submit to the penalty, and secondly of his right thus to dispose of himself, the justice of the proceeding is fully cleared; and the question of wisdom is to be determined by this consideration, whether the end of punishment could be as well answered by this translation of the penalty to a substitute as if the principals themselves had personally been held to undergo it. This, when the whole evangelical scheme is taken into account, embracing the means and conditions by which that substitution is made available, and the concomitants by which it is attended, as before explained, is also obvious — the law of God is not repealed nor relaxed, but established; those who continue disobedient fall into aggravated condemnation, and those who avail themselves of the mercy of God thus conceded, are restored to the capacity and disposition of obedience, and that perfectly and eternally in a future state of existence; so that, as the end of punishment is the maintenance of the authority of law and the character of the Lawgiver, this end is even more abundantly accomplished by this glorious interposition of the compassion and adorable wisdom of GOD our Saviour.
So unfounded is this objection to the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Christ; to which we may add, that the difficulty of reconciling those sufferings to the Divine justice does not, in truth, lie with us, but with the Socinians. Different opinions, as to the nature and end of those sufferings, neither lessen nor heighten them. The extreme and emphatic sufferings of our Lord is a fact which stands unalterably upon the record of the inspired history. We who regard Christ as suffering by virtue of a voluntary substitution of himself in our room and stead, can account for such agonies, and, by the foregoing arguments, can reconcile them to justice; but, as our Lord was perfectly and absolutely innocent, as” he did no sin,” and was, in this respect, distinguished from all men who ever lived, and who have all sinned, by being entirely “holy and harmless,” “separated from sinners,” how will they reconcile it to Divine justice that he should be thus as pre-eminent in suffering as he was in virtue, and when, according to them, he sustained a personal character only, and not a vicarious one? For this difficulty they have, and can have no rational solution.

As to the passage in Ezekiel 18:20, which Socinians sometimes urge against the doctrine of Christ’s vicarious passion, it is briefly but satisfactorily answered by Grotius.

“Socinus objects from Ezekiel, ‘The soul that sinneth it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.’ But in these words God does not teach us what he must necessarily do; but what [in a particular case] he had freely decreed to do. It no more, therefore, follows from hence, that it is unjust altogether for a son to bear any part of the punishment of his father’s crime, than that it is unjust for a sinner not to die. The place itself evinces that God does not here treat of perpetual and immutable right; but of that ordinary course of his providence which he was determined hereafter to pursue with respect to the Jews, that he might cut off all occasion of complaint.” (De Satisfactione.)
CHAPTER 21. — REDEMPTION — SACRIFICES OF THE LAW.

It has, then, been established, upon the testimony of various texts, in which the doctrine is laid down, not in the language of metaphor and allusion, but clearly and expressly, that the death of Christ was vicarious and propitiatory; and that by it a satisfaction was offered to the Divine justice for the transgressions of men; in consideration of which pardon and salvation are offered to them in the Gospel through faith; and I have preferred to adduce these clear and cogent proofs of this great principle of our religion, in the first place, from those passages in the New Testament, in which there are no sacrificial terms, no direct allusions to the atonements of the law, and other parts of the Levitical piacular system, to show that, independent of the latter class of texts, the doctrine may be established against the Socinians; and, also, that by having first settled the meaning of the leading passages, we may more satisfactorily determine the sense in which the evangelists and apostles use the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament, with reference to the death of Christ, a subject in which, from its nature, the opponents of the atonement, find a freedom of remark and license of criticism, by which they are apt to mislead and perplex the unwary. This second class of texts, however, when approached by the light of the argument already made good, and exhibited also in that of their own evidence, will afford the most triumphant refutation of the notions of those who, to their denial of the Godhead of our Lord, add a proud and Pharisaic rejection of the sacrificial efficacy of his death.

We shall not, in the first instance, advert to the sacrifices under the patriarchal dispensation, as to the origin of which a difference of opinion exists, a subject on which some remarks will be offered in the sequel. Among the Jews, sacrifices were unquestionably of Divine original; and as terms taken from them are found applied so frequently to Christ and to his sufferings in the New Testament, they serve farther to explain that peculiarity under which, as we have seen, the apostles regarded the death of Christ, and afford additional proof that it was considered by them as a sacrifice of expiation, as the grand universal sin offering for the whole world.
He is announced by John, his forerunner, as “the LAMB OF GOD;” and that not with reference to meekness or any other moral virtue, but with an accompanying phrase, which would communicate to a Jew the full sacrificial sense of the term employed — “the Lamb of GOD which TAKETH AWAY the sin of the world.” He is called our PASSOVER, sacrificed for us.” He is said to have given “himself for us, AN OFFERING and A SACRIFICE to GOD, for a sweet-smelling savour.” As a Priest, it was necessary he should have somewhat to offer; and he offered himself, “his own blood,” to which is ascribed the washing away of sin, and our eternal redemption. He is declared to have “put away sin by the SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF,” to have “BY HIMSELF purged our sins,” to have “SANCTIFIED the people by his own blood,” to have “offered to GOD one SACRIFICE FOR SINS.” Add to these, and innumerable other similar expressions and allusions, the argument of the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which, by proving at length, that the sacrifice of Christ was superior in efficacy to the sacrifices of the law, he most unequivocally assumes, that the death of Christ was a sacrifice and sin offering, for without that it would no more have been capable of comparison with the sacrifices of the law, than the death of John the Baptist, St. Stephen, or St. James, all martyrs and sufferers for the truth, who had recently sealed their testimony with their blood. This very comparison, we may boldly affirm, is utterly unaccountable and absurd on any hypothesis which denies the sacrifice of Christ; for what relation could his death have to the Levitical immolations and offerings, if it had no sacrificial character? Nothing could, in fact, be more misleading, and even absurd, than to apply those terms, which, both among Jews and Gentiles, were in use to express the various processes and means of atonement and piacular propitiation, if the apostles and Christ himself did not intend to represent his death strictly as an expiation for sin: — misleading, because such would be the natural and necessary inference from the terms themselves, which had acquired this as their established meaning; and absurd, because if, as Socinians say, they used them metaphorically, there was not even an ideal resemblance between the figure, and that which it was intended to illustrate. So totally irrelevant, indeed, will those terms appear to any notion entertained of the death of Christ which excludes its expiatory character, that to assume that our Lord and his apostles used them as metaphors, is profanely to assume them to be such writers as would not in any other case be tolerated; writers wholly unacquainted with the commonest rules of elocution, and therefore wholly unfit to be teachers of others, not only in religion but in things of inferior importance.
The use of such terms, we have said, would not only be wholly absurd, but criminally misleading to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, who were first converted to Christianity. To them the notion of propitiatory offerings, offerings to avert the displeasure of the gods, and which expiated the crimes of offenders, was most familiar, and the corresponding terms in constant use. The bold denial of this by Dr. Priestley might well bring upon him the reproof of Archbishop Magee who, after establishing this point from the Greek and Latin writers, observes, “So clearly does their language announce the notion of a propitiatory atonement, that if we would avoid an imputation on Dr. Priestley’s fairness, we are driven, of necessity, to question the extent of his acquaintance with those writers.” The reader may consult the instances given by this writer, in No. 5 of his Illustrations appended to his Discourses on the Atonement; and particularly the tenth chapter of Grotius’s De Satisfactione, whose learning has most amply illustrated and firmly settled this view of the heathen sacrifices. The use to be made of this in the argument is, that as the apostles found the very terms they used with reference to the nature and efficacy of the death of Christ, fixed in an expiatory signification among the Greeks, they could not, in honesty, use them in a distant figurative sense, much less in a contrary one, without due notice of their having invested them with a new import being given to their readers. From ἀγος, a pollution, an impurity, which was to be expiated by sacrifice, are derived ἀγνιζω and ἀγιαζω, which denote the act of expiation; καβοιρω too, to purify, cleanse, is applied to the effect of expiation; and ἰλαζω denotes the method of propitiating the gods by sacrifice. These, and other words of similar import, are used by the authors of the Septuagint, and by the evangelists and apostles; but they give no notice of using them in any strange and altered sense; and when they apply them to the death of Christ, they must, therefore, be understood to use them in their received meaning.

In like manner the Jews had their expiatory sacrifices, and the terms and phrases used in them are, in like manner, employed by the apostles to characterize the death of their Lord; and they would have been as guilty of misleading their Jewish as their Gentile readers, had they employed them in a new sense, and without warning, which, unquestionably, they never gave.

The force of this has been felt, and as, in order to avoid it, the two points, the expiatory nature of the Jewish sacrifices and their typical signature have been questioned, it will be necessary to establish each.
As to the expiatory nature of the sacrifices of the law, it is not necessary to show that all the Levitical offerings were of this character. There were also offerings for persons and for things prescribed for purification, which were incidental; but even they grew out of the leading notion of expiatory sacrifice, and that legal purification which resulted from the forgiveness of sins. It is enough to show that the grand and eminent sacrifices of the Jews were strictly expiatory, and that by them the offerers were released from punishment and death, for which ends they were appointed by the Lawgiver.

When we speak, too, of vicarious sacrifice, we do not mean, either on the one hand, such a substitution as that the victim should bear the same quantum of pain and suffering as the offender himself; or, on the other, that it was put in the place of the offender as a mere symbolical act, by which he confessed his desert of punishment; but a substitution made by Divine appointment, by which the victim was exposed to sufferings and death instead of the offender, in virtue of which the offender himself should be released. In this view one can scarcely conceive why so able a writer as Archbishop Magee should prefer to use the term “vicarious import,” rather than the simple and established term “vicarious;” since the Antinomian notion of substitution may be otherwise sufficiently guarded against, and the phrase “vicarious import” is certainly capable of being resolved into that figurative notion of mere symbolical action, which, however plausible, does, in fact, deprive the ancient sacrifices of their typical, and the oblation of Christ of its real efficacy. Vicarious acting, is acting for another; vicarious suffering, in suffering for another; but the nature and circumstances of that suffering in the case of Christ, is to be determined by the doctrine of Scripture at large, and not wholly by the term itself, which is, however, useful for this purpose, (and therefore to be preserved,) that it indicates the sense in which those who use it understand the declaration of Scripture, that Christ “died FOR us,” to be that he died not merely for our benefit, but in our stead; in other words, that but for his having died, those who believe in him would personally have suffered that death which is the penalty of every violation of the law of God.

That sacrifices under the law were expiatory and vicarious, admits of abundant proof.

The chief objections made to this doctrine, are, first, that under the law, in all capital cases, the offender, upon legal proof or conviction, was doomed
to die, and that no sacrifice could exempt him from the penalty. Secondly, that in all lower cases to which the law had not attached capital punishment, but pecuniary mulcts, or personal labour or servitute, upon their non-payment, this penalty was to be strictly executed, and none could plead any privilege or exemption on account of sacrifice; and that when sacrifices were ordained with a pecuniary mulet, they are to be regarded in the light of fine, one part of which was paid to the state, the other to the Church. This was the mode of argument adopted by the author of “the Moral Philosopher,” and nothing of weight has been added to these objections since.

Now much of this may be granted, without any prejudice to the argument; and, indeed, is no more than the most orthodox writers on this subject have often adverted to. The law, under which the Jews were placed, was at once, as to them, both a moral and a political law; and the Lawgiver excepted certain offences from the benefit of a pardon, which implied exemption from temporal death, which was the state penalty, and therefore would accept no atonement for such transgressions. Blasphemy, idolatry, murder, and adultery, were those “presumptuous sins” which were thus exempted, and the reason will be seen in the political relation of the people to GOD. In refusing this exemption from punishment in this world, in certain cases, respect was had to the order and benefit of society. Running parallel, however, with this political application of the law to the Jews as subjects of the theocracy, we see the authority of the moral law kept over them as men and creatures; and if these “presumptuous sins,” of blasphemy and idolatry, of murder and adultery, and a few others, were the only capital crimes, considered politically, they were not the only capital crimes, considered morally, that is, there were other crimes which would have subjected the offender to death, but for this provision of expiatory oblations. The true question then is, whether such sacrifices were appointed by God, and accepted instead of the personal punishment or life of the offender, which otherwise would have been forfeited, as in the other cases; and if so, if the life of animal sacrifices was accepted instead of the life of man, then the notion that they were mere mulcts and pecuniary penalties falls to the ground, and the vicarious nature of most of the Levitical oblations is established.

That other offences, beside those above mentioned, were capital, that is, exposed the offender to death, is clear from this, that all offences against the law had this capital character. As death was the sanction of the
commandment given to Adam, so every one who transgressed any part of
the law of Moses became guilty of death; every man was accursed, that is,
devoted to die, who “continued not in all things written in the book of the
law;” “the man only that doeth these things shall live by them,” was the
rule; and it was, therefore, to redeem the offenders from this penalty that
sacrifices were appointed. So, with reference to the great day of expiation,
we read, “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to
cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins; and this shall be an
everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of
Israel for all their sins, once a year,” Leviticus 16:30-34.

To prove that this was the intention and effect of the annual sacrifices of
the Jews, we need do little more than refer to Leviticus 17:10, 11, “I
will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off
from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have
given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it
is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Here the blood
which is said to make atonement for the soul, is the blood of the victims,
and to make an atonement for the soul, is the same as to be a ransom for
the soul, as will appear by referring to Exodus 30:12-16, and to be a
ransom for the soul, is to avert death. “They shall give every man a ransom
for his soul unto the Lord, that there be no plague among them,” by which
their lives might be suddenly taken away. The “soul” is also here used
obviously for the life; the blood, or the life, of the victims in all the
sacrifices, was substituted for the life of man, to preserve him from death,
and the victims were therefore vicarious. (Vide Outram de Sacrif. lib. 1, c.
22.)

The Hebrew word rendered atonement, , signifying primarily to cover,
overspread, has been the subject of some evasive criticisms. It comes,
however, in the secondary sense to signify atonement, or propitiation,
because the effect of that is to cover, or, in Scripture meaning, to obtain
the forgiveness of offences. The Septuagint, also, renders it by , to appease, to make propitious. It is used, indeed, where
the means of atonement are not of the sacrificial kind, but these “instances
equally serve to evince the Scripture sense of the term, in cases of
transgression, to be that of reconciling the offended Deity, by averting his
displeasure; so that when the atonement for sin is said to be made by
sacrifice, no doubt can remain, that the sacrifice was strictly a sacrifice of
propitiation. Agreeably to this conclusion we find it expressly declared, in
the several cases of piacular oblations for transgression of the Divine commands, that the sin for which atonement was made by those oblations, should be forgiven.” (Magee’s Discourses, vol. i, page 332.)

As the notion that the sacrifices of the law were not vicarious, but mere mulcts and fines, is overturned by the general appointment of the blood to be an atonement for the souls, the forfeited lives of men, so also is it contradicted by particular instances. Let us refer to Leviticus 5:15, 16, “If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord, he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add a fifth part thereto, and shall give it to the priest.” Here, indeed, is the proper “fine” for the trespass; but it is added, “he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord, a ram without blemish, and the priest shall make atonement for him, with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.” Thus, then, so far from the sacrifice being the fine, the fine is distinguished from it, and with the ram only was the atonement made to the Lord for his trespass. Nor can the ceremonies, with which the trespass and sin offerings were accompanied, agree with any notion but that of their vicarious character. The worshipper, conscious of his trespass, brought an animal, his own property, to the door of the tabernacle. This was not an eucharistical act, not a memorial of mercies received, out of sins committed. He laid his hands upon the head of the animal, the symbolical act of transfer of punishment, then slew it with his own hand, and delivered it to the priest, who burnt the fat and part of the animal upon the altar, and having sprinkled part of the blood upon the altar, and, in some cases, upon the offerer himself, poured the rest at the bottom of the altar. And thus, we are told, “the priest shall make an atonement for him, as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.” So clearly in it made manifest by these actions, and by the description of their nature and end, that the animal bore the punishment of the offender, and that by this appointment he was reconciled to God, and obtained the forgiveness of his offences.

An equally strong proof, that the life of the animal sacrifice was accepted in place of the life of man, is afforded by the fact, that atonement was required by the law to be made, by sin offerings and burnt offerings, for even bodily distempers and disorders. It is not necessary to the argument to explain the distinctions between these various oblations, nor yet to inquire what the reason which required propitiation to be made for corporal infirmities, which, in many cases, could not be avoided. They were,
however, thus connected with sin as the cause of all these disorders, and God, who had placed his residence among the Israelites, insisted upon a perfect ceremonial purity, to impress upon them a sense of his moral purity, and the necessity of purification of mind. Whether these were the reasons, or whatever other reason there might be in the case, and whether it is at all discoverable by us, all such unclean persons were liable to death, and were exempted from it only by animal sacrifices. This appears from the conclusion to all the Levitical directions concerning the ceremonial to be followed in all such cases. Leviticus 15:31, “Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; THAT THEY DIE NOT in (or by) their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle which is among them.”

So that by virtue of the sin offerings, the children of Israel were saved from a death, which otherwise they would have suffered for their uncleanness, and that by substituting the life of the animal for the life of the offerer. Nor can it be urged, that death is, in these instances, threatened only as a punishment of not observing these laws of purification, for the reason given in the passage just quoted, for the threatening of death is not hypothetical upon their not bringing the prescribed atonement, but is grounded upon the fact of “defiling the tabernacle of the Lord, which was among them,” which is supposed to be done by all uncleanness as such, in the first instance.

As a farther proof of the vicarious character of the principal sacrifices of the Mosaic economy, we may instance those statedly offered for the whole congregation. Every day were offered two lambs, one in the morning, and the other in the evening, “for a continual burnt offering.” To these daily victims were to be added, weekly, two other lambs for the burnt offering of every Sabbath. None of these could be considered in the light of fines for offences, since they were offered for no particular persons, and must be considered, therefore, unless resolved into an unmeaning ceremony, piacular and vicarious. To pass over, however, the monthly sacrifices, and those offered at the great feasts, it is sufficient to fix upon those which are so often alluded to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, offered on the solemn anniversary of expiation. On that day, to other prescribed sacrifices, were to be added another ram for a burnt offering, and another goat, the most eminent of all the sacrifices, for a sin offering, whose blood was to be carried by the high priest into the inner sanctuary, which was not done by the blood of any other victim, except the bullock, which was offered the same day as a sin offering for the family of Aaron.
“The circumstances of this ceremony, whereby atonement was to be made ‘for all the sins’ of the whole Jewish people, are so strikingly significant that they deserve a particular detail. On the day appointed for this general expiation, the priest is commanded to offer a bullock and a goat, as sin offerings, the one for himself, and the other for the people, and having sprinkled the blood of these, in due form, before the mercy seat, to lead forth a second goat, denominated the scape goat; and after laying both his hands upon the head of the scape goat, and confessing over him all the iniquities of the people, to put them upon the head of the goat, and to send the animal, thus bearing the sins of the people, away into the wilderness; in this manner expressing, by an action which cannot be misunderstood, that the atonement, which it is affirmed was to be effected by the sacrifice of the sin offering, consisted in removing from the people their iniquities by this translation of them to the animal. For it is to be remarked, that the ceremony of the scape goat is not a distinct one; it is a continuation of the process, and is evidently the concluding part, and symbolical consummation of the sin offering. So that the transfer of the iniquities of the people upon the head of the scape goat, and the beating them away into the wilderness, manifestly imply, that the atonement effected by the sacrifice of the sin offering consisted in the transfer, and consequent removal of those iniquities.” (Magee’s Discourses.)

How, then, is this impressive and singular ceremonial to be explained? Shall we resort to the notion of mulcts and fines? but if so, then this and other stated sacrifices must be considered in the light of penal enactments. But this cannot agree with the appointment of such sacrifices annually in succeeding generations — “this shall be a statute for ever unto you.” The law appoints a certain day in the year for expiating the sins both of the high priest himself and of the whole congregation, and that for all high priests, and all generations of the congregation. Now, could a law be enacted, inflicting a certain penalty, at a certain time, upon a whole people, as well as upon their high priest, thus presuming upon their actual transgression of it? The sacrifice was also for sins in general, and yet the penalty, if it were one, is not greater than individual persons were often obliged to undergo for single trespasses. Nothing, certainly, can be more absurd than this hypothesis. (Vide Chapman’s Eusebius.)
Shall we account for it by saying, that sacrifices were offered *for the benefit* of the worshipper, but exclude the notion of expiation? But here we are obliged to confine the benefit to *reconciliation* and the *taking away of sins*, and that by the appointed means of *the shedding of blood*, and the presentation of blood in the holy place, accompanied by the expressive ceremony of imposition of hands upon the head of the victim, the import of which act is fixed beyond all controversy, by the priest’s confessing, at the same time, over that victim, the sins of all the people, and imprecating upon its head the vengeance due to them, Leviticus 16:21.

Shall we content ourselves with merely saying that this was a symbol; but the question remains of what was it the symbol? To determine that, let the several parts of the symbolic action be enumerated. Here is confession of sin — confession before God, at the door of his tabernacle — the substitution of a victim — the figurative transfer of sins to that victim — the shedding of blood, which God appointed to make atonement for the soul — the carrying the blood into the holiest place, the very permission of which clearly marked the Divine acceptance — the bearing away of iniquity — and the actual reconciliation of the people to God. If, then, this is symbolical, it has nothing correspondent with it; it never had or can have any thing correspondent to it but the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, and the communication of the benefits of his passion in the forgiveness of sins to those that believe in him, and their reconciliation with God.

Shall we, finally, say, that those sacrifices had respect not to God to obtain pardon by expiation; but to the offerer, teaching him moral lessons, and calling forth moral dispositions? We answer, that this hypothesis leaves many of the *essential* circumstances of the ceremonial wholly unaccounted for. The tabernacle and temple were erected for the residence of God, by his own command. There it was his will to be approached, and to these sacred places the victims were required to be brought. Any where else they might as well have been offered, if they had had respect only to the offerer; but they were required to be brought *to God*, to be offered according to a prescribed ritual, and by an order of men appointed for that purpose. “But there is no other reason why they should be offered in the sanctuary, than this, that they were offered to the inhabitant of the sanctuary; nor could they be offered to him without having respect to him, or without his being the object of their efficacy, as in the case of solemn prayers addressed to him. There were some victims whose blood, on the day of atonement, was to be carried into the inner sanctuary; but for what purpose can we suppose
the blood to have been carried into the most sacred part of the Divine residence, and that on the day of atonement, except to obtain the favour of him in whose presence it was sprinkled?” (Outram De Sacrificiis.) To this we may add, that the reason given for these sacred services is not in any case a mere moral effect to be produced upon the minds of the worshippers; they were to make atonement, that is, to avert God’s displeasure, that the people might not “DIE.”

We may find also another most explicit illustration in the sacrifice of the passover. The sacrificial character of this offering is strongly marked; for it was, CORBAN, an offering brought to the tabernacle; it was slain in the sanctuary, and the blood sprinkled upon the altar by the priests. It derives its name from the passing over, and sparing the houses of the Israelites, on the door posts of which the blood of the immolated lamb was sprinkled, when the first born in the houses of the Egyptians were slain; and thus we have another instance of life being spared by the instituted means of animal sacrifice, Nor need we confine ourselves to particular instances — “almost all things,” says an authority, who surely knew his subject, “are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

By their very law and by constant usage, then, were the Jews familiarized to the notion of expiatory sacrifice, as well as by the history contained in their sacred books, especially in Genesis, which speaks of the vicarious sacrifices offered by the patriarchs, and the book of Job, in which that patriarch is recorded to have offered sacrifices for the supposed sins of his sons, and Eliphaz is commanded by a Divine oracle, to offer a burnt offering for himself and his friends, “lest God should deal with them after their folly.”

On the sentiments of the uninspired Jewish writers on this point, the substitution of the life of the animal for that of the offerer, and, consequently, the expiatory nature of their sacrifices, Outram has given many quotations from their writings, which the reader may consult in his work on Sacrifices. Two or three only need be adduced by way of specimen. R. Levi Ben Gerson says, “the imposition of the hands of the offerers was designed to indicate, that their sins were removed from themselves, and transferred to the animal.” Isaac Ben Arama — “he transfers his sins from himself, and lays them upon the head of his victim.” R. Moses Ben Nachman says, with respect to a sinner offering a victim, “It was just that his blood should be shed, and that his body should be burned;
but the Creator, of his mercy, accepted this victim from him, as his substitute and ransom; that the blood of the animal might be shed instead of his blood; that is, that the blood of the animal might be given for his life."

Full of these ideas of vicarious expiation, then, the apostles wrote and spoke, and the Jews of their time and in subsequent ages heard and read the books of the New Testament. The Socinian pretence is, that the inspired penmen used the sacrificial terms which occur in their writings figuratively, but we not only reply, as before, that they could not do this honestly, unless they had given notice of this new application of the established terms of the Jewish theology; but that if this be assumed, their writings leave us wholly at a loss to discover what it really was which they intended to teach by these sacrificial terms and allusions. They are, themselves, utterly silent as to this, and the varying theories of those who reject the doctrine of atonement, in fact, confess that their writings afford no solution of the difficulty. If, therefore, it is blasphemous to suppose, on the one hand, that inspired men should write on purpose to mislead; so, on the other, is it utterly inconceivable that, had they only been ordinary writers, they should construct a figurative language out of terms which had a definite and established sense, without giving any intimation at all that they employed them otherwise than in their received meaning, or telling us why they adopted them at all, and more especially when they knew that they must be interpreted, both by Jews and Greeks, in a sense which, if the Socinians are right, was in direct opposition to that which they intended to convey.

This will, however, appear with additional evidence, when the typical, as well as the expiatory character of the legal sacrifices are considered. In strict argument, the latter does not depend upon the former, and if the oblations of the Mosaic institute had not been intentionally adumbrative of the one oblation of Christ, the argument, from their vicarious and expiatory character, would still have been valid. For if the legal sacrifices were offered in place of the offender, blood for blood, life for life, and if the death of Christ is represented to be, in as true a sense, a sacrifice and expiation, then is the doctrine of the New Testament writers, as to the expiatory character of the death of our Lord, explicitly established.

That the Levitical sacrifices were also TYPES, is another argument, and accumulates the already preponderating evidence.
A type, in the theological sense, is defined by systematic writers to be a sign or example, prepared and designed by God to prefigure some future thing. It is required that it should represent (though the degree of clearness may be very different in different instances) this future object, either by something which it has in common with it, or in being the symbol of some property which it possesses; — that it should be prepared and designed by God thus to represent its antitype, which circumstance distinguishes it from a simile, and from hieroglyphic; — that it should give place to the antitype so soon as the latter appears; and that the efficacy of the antitype should exist in the type in appearance only, or in a lower degree. (Vide Outram De Sacrificiiis.) These maybe considered as the general properties of a type.

Of this kind are the views given us, in the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, of the Levitical dispensation, and of many events and examples of the Mosaic history. Thus St. Paul calls the meats and drinks, the holy days, new moons, and sabbaths of the Jews, including in them the services performed in the celebration of these festivals, “a shadow of things to come;” “the body” of which shadow, whose form the shadow generally and faintly exhibited, “is Christ.” Again, when speaking of the things which happened to the Israelites, in the wilderness, he calls them “ensamples” (τυποί) types, “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” In Hebrews 10:1, the same apostle, when he discourses expressly on the “sacrifices” of the tabernacle, calls them “the shadow of good things to come,” and places them in contrast with “the very image of the things,” that is, the “good things” just before mentioned; and, in the preceding chapter, he tells us that the services performed in the tabernacle prefigured what was afterward to be transacted in the heavenly sanctuary. These instances are sufficient for the argument, and, in examining them, we may observe, that if the things here alluded to are not allowed to be types, then they are used as mere illustrative rhetorical illustrations, and in their original institution had no more reference to the facts and doctrines of the Christian system than the sacrificial services of pagan temples, which might, in some particulars, upon this hypothesis, just as well have served the apostle’s purpose. But if, upon examination, this notion of their being used merely as rhetorical illustrations be contradicted by the passages themselves, then the true typical character of these events and ceremonies may be considered as fairly established.

With respect to the declaration of St. Paul, that the punishments inflicted upon the disobedient and unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness were “types
written for our admonition,” it is only to be explained by considering the history of that people as designedly, and, by appointment, typical. These things happened for types; and that, by types, the apostle means much more than a general admonitory correspondence between disobedience and punishment, which many other circumstances might just as well have afforded; he adds, that “they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come,” that is, for the admonition of Christians who had entered into the obligations of the new dispensation. For this purpose they were recorded; by this act of God they were made types in the highest sense; and could not become types in the sense of mere figurative illustration, which would have been contingent upon this rhetorical use being made of them by some subsequent writer. This is farther confirmed also by the preceding verses, in which the apostle calls the manna “spiritual meat,” which can only be understood of it as being a type of the bread which came down from heaven, even Christ, who, in allusion to the same fact, so designates himself. The “rock,” too, is called the spiritual rock, and that rock, adds the apostle, “was Christ;” but in what conceivable meaning, except as it was an appointed type of him?

This is St. Paul’s general description of the typical character of “the Church in the wilderness.” In the other passages quoted, he adduces, in particular, the Levitical services. He calls the ceremonial of the law “a shadow,” (σκιά;) in the Epistle to the Colossians, he opposes this shadow to “the body;” in that to the Hebrews, to “the very image;” by which he obviously means the reality of “the good things” adumbrated, or their essential form or substance. Now whether we take the word σκιά for the shadow of the body of man; or for a faint delineation, or sketch, to be succeeded by a finished picture, it is clear, that whatever the law was, it was by Divine appointment; and as there is a relation between the shadow and the body which produces it, and the sketch or outline and the finished picture, so if, by Divine appointment, the law was this shadow of good things to come, which is what the apostle asserts, then there was an intended relation of one to the other, quite independent of the figurative and rhetorical use which might be made of a mere accidental comparison. If the apostle speaks figuratively only, then the law is to be supposed to have no appointed relation to the Gospel, as a shadow or sketch of good things to come, and this relation is one of imagination only; if the relation was a designed and an appointed one, then the resolution of the apostle’s words into figurative allusion cannot be maintained. But, farther, the
apostle grounds an argument upon these types; an argument, too, of the most serious kind; an argument for renouncing the law and embracing the Gospel, upon the penalty of eternal danger to the soul: no absurdity can, therefore, be greater than to suppose him to argue so weighty and important a question upon a relation of one thing to another existing only in the imagination, and not appointed by God; and if the relation was so appointed, it is of that instituted and adumbrative kind which constitutes a type in its special and theological sense.

Of this appointment and designation of the tabernacle service to be a shadow of good things to come, the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews affords several direct and unequivocal declarations. So verse seven and eight, “But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people; the HOLY GHOST SIGNIFYING this (showing, declaring by this type) that the way into the holiest of all was not YET made manifest.” Here we have the declaration of a doctrine by type, which is surely very different to the figurative use of a fact, employed to embellish and enforce an argument by a subsequent writer, and this is also referred to the design and intention of the “Holy Ghost” himself, at the time when the Levitical ritual was prescribed, and this typical declaration was to continue until the new dispensation should be introduced. In verse nine, the tabernacle itself is called a figure or parable: “Which was a figure (παραβολή) for the time then present.” It was a parable by which the evangelical and spiritual doctrines were taught; it was an appointed parable, because limited to a certain time, “for the time then present,” that is, until the bringing in of the things signified, to which it had this designed relation. Again, verse 23, “the things under the law” are called “patterns (representations) of things in the heavens;” and in verse 24, the holy places made with hands are denominated “the figures,” (antitypes) “of the true.” Were they then representations and antitypes only in St. Paul’s imagination, or in reality and by appointment? Read his argument: “It was necessary, that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves, with better sacrifices than these.” On the hypothesis that sacrificial terms and allusions are employed figuratively only by the apostle, what kind of argument, we may ask, is this? On what does the common necessity of the purification, both of the earthly and the heavenly tabernacle, by sacrifices, though different in their degree of value and efficacy, rest? Could the apostle say that this was
necessary, to afford him a figurative embellishment in writing his epistle? The necessity is clearly grounded upon the relation *instituted* by the Author of the Levitical economy himself; the heavenly places were not to be entered by sinners, but through the blood of “better sacrifices;” and to teach this doctrine early to mankind, it was “necessary” to purify the earthly tabernacle, and thus give the people access to it only by the blood of the inferior sacrifices, that both they and the tabernacle might be the types of evangelical and heavenly things, and that they might be taught the only means of obtaining access to the tabernacle in heaven. There was, therefore, in setting up these “patterns,” an intentioned adumbration of these future things, and hence the word used is ῥυσίγμα, the import of which is shown in chapter 8:5, where it is associated with the term, the shadow of heavenly things, — “who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,” or “these” priests perform the service with a representation and shadow of the heavenly things.”

The sacrificial ceremonies, then, of the Levitical institute, are clearly established to be typical, and have all the characters which constitute a type in the received theological sense. They are represented by St. Paul, in the passages which have been under consideration, as adumbrative; as designed and appointed to be so by God; as having respect to things future, to Christ and to his sacerdotal ministry; as being inferior in efficacy to the antitypes which correspond to them, the “better sacrifices,” of which he speaks; and they were all displaced by the antitype, the Levitical ceremony being repealed by the death and ascension of our Lord.

Since, then, both the expiatory and the typical characters of the Jewish sacrifices were so clearly held by the writers of the New Testament there can be no rational doubt as to the sense in which they apply sacrificial terms and allusions, to describe the nature and effect of the death of Christ. As the offering of the animal sacrifice took away sin, that is, obtained remission for offences against the law, we can be at no loss to know what the Baptist means, when, pointing to Christ, he exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” As there was a transfer of suffering and death, from the offender to the legally clean and sound victim, so Christ died, “the just for the unjust;” as the animal sacrifice was expiating, so Christ is our ἵλασμος, propitiation, or expiation; as by the Levitical oblations men were reconciled to God, so “we, when enemies, were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;” as under the law, “without shedding of blood there was no remission,” so, as
to Christ, we are “justified by his blood,” and have “redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;” as by the blood of the appointed sacrifices, the holy places, made with hands, were made accessible to the Jewish worshippers, that blood, being carried into them, and sprinkled by the high priest, so “Christ entered once, with his own blood into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,” and has thus opened for us a “new and living way” into the celestial sanctuary; as the blood of the Mosaic oblations was the blood of the Old Testament, so, he himself says, “this is my blood of the New Testament, shed for the remission of sins;” as it was a part of the sacrificial solemnity, in some instances, to feast upon the victim; so, with direct reference to this, our Lord also declares that he would give his own “flesh for the life of the world;” and that “whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; for my flesh is meat INDEED, and my blood is drink INDEED;” that is, it is in truth and reality what the flesh and blood of the Jewish victims were in type.

The instances of this use of sacrificial terms are, indeed, almost innumerable, and enough, I trust, has been said to show that they could not be employed in a merely figurative sense; nevertheless there are two or three passages in which they occur as the basis of an argument which depends upon taking them in the received sense, with a brief consideration of which we may conclude this part of the subject.

When St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, “for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” or “him who knew no sin, he hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” he concludes a discourse upon our reconciliation to GOD, and lays this down as the general principle upon which that reconciliation, of which he has been speaking, is to be explained and enforced. Here, then, the question is, in what sense Christ was MADE SIN for us. Not, certainly, as to the guilt of it; for it is expressly said, that “he knew no sin;” but as to the expiation of it, by his personal sufferings, by which he delivers the guilty from punishment. For the phrase is manifestly taken from the sin offerings of the Old Testament, which are there sometimes called “sins,” as being offerings for sin, and because the animals sacrificed represented the sinners themselves. Thus, Leviticus 4:21, the heifer to be offered, is called, in our translation, more agreeably to our idiom, “a sin offering for the congregation;” but, in the LXX, it is denominated “THE SIN of the congregation.” So, also, in verse 29, as to the red heifer which was to be offered for the sin of private persons, the person offending was “to lay his
hand upon the head of the sin offering,” as we rightly interpret it; but, in the LXX, “upon the head of his SIN,” agreeably to the Hebrew word, which signifies indifferently either sin or the offering for it. Thus, again, in Leviticus 6:25, “This is the law of the sin offering,” in the Greek, “This is the law of sin;” which also has, “they shall slay the SINS before the Lord,” for the sin offerings. The Greek of the Apostle Paul is thus easily explained by that of the LXX, and affords a natural exposition of the passage — “Him who knew no sin, God hath made sin for us,” as the sin offerings of the law were made sins for offenders, the death of innocent creatures exempting from death those who were really criminal. (Vide CHAPMAN’S Eusebius, chap. 4.) This allusion to the Levitical sin offerings is also established by the connection of Christ’s sin offering with our reconciliation. Such was the effect of the sin offerings among the Jews, and such, St. Paul tells us, is the effect of Christ being made a sin offering for us; a sufficient proof that he does not use the term figuratively, nor speak of the indirect but of the direct effect of the death of Christ in reconciling us to GOD.

Again, in Ephesians 5:2, “Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.” Here, also, he uses the very terms applied to the Jewish sacrifices. How, then, could a Jew, or even a Gentile, understand him? Would an inspired man use sacrificial language without a sacrificial sense, and merely amuse his readers with the sound of words without meaning, or employ them without notice being given, in a meaning which the readers were not accustomed to affix to them? The argument forbids this, as well as the reason and honesty of the case. His object was to impress the Ephesians with the deepest sense of the love of Christ; and he says, “Christ LOVED us; and gave up himself for us;” and then explains the mode in which he thus gave himself up for us, that is, in our room and stead, “an OFFERING and SACRIFICE to God, for a sweet-smelling savour;” by which his readers could only understand, that Christ gave himself up a sacrifice for them, as other sacrifices had been given up for them, “in the way of expiation, to obtain for them the mercy and favour of GOD.” The cavil of Crellius and his followers on this passage is easily answered. He says, that the phrase “a sweet-smelling savour,” is scarcely ever used of sin offerings or expiatory sacrifices; but of burnt offerings, and peace offerings, by which expiation was not made. But here are two mistakes. The first lies in assuming that burnt offerings were not expiatory, whereas they are said “to make atonement,” and were so
considered by the Jews, though sometimes also they were eucharistic. The
second mistake is, that the phrase, “a sweet-smelling savour,” is by some
peculiar fitness applied to one class of offerings alone. It is a gross
conception, that it relates principally to the odour of sacrifices burned with
fire; whereas it signifies the acceptableness of sacrifices to God; and is so
explained in Philippians 4:18, where the apostle calls the bounty of the
Philippians, “an odour of sweet smell,” and adds, exegetically, “a sacrifice
acceptable and well pleasing to God.” The phrase is, probably, taken from
the incensing which accompanied the sacrificial services.

To these instances must be added the whole argument of St. Paul, in the
Epistle to the Hebrews. To what purpose does he prove that Christ had a
superior priesthood to Aaron, if Christ were only metaphorically a priest?
What end is answered by proving that his offering of himself had greater
efficacy than the oblations of the tabernacle, in taking away sin, if sin was
not taken away in the same sense, that is, by expiation? Why does he lay so
mighty a stress upon the death of our Lord, as being “a better sacrifice,” if,
according to the received sense, it was no sacrifice at all? His argument, it
is manifest, would go for nothing, and be no better than an unworthy
trifling with his readers, and especially with the Hebrews to whom he
writes the epistle, beneath not only an inspired but an ordinary writer. Fully
to unfold the argument, we might travel through the greater part of the
epistle; but one or two passages may suffice. In Hebrews 7:27,
speaking of Christ as our high priest, he says, “Who needeth not daily as
those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for
the people’s, for this (latter) he did once when he offered up himself.” The
circumstance of his offering sacrifice not daily, but “once for all,” marks
the superior value and efficacy of his sacrifice; his offering up this sacrifice
“of himself” for the sins of the people, as the Jewish high priest offered his
animal sacrifices for the sins of the people, marks the similarity of the act;
in both cases atonement was made, but with different degrees of efficacy;
but unless atonement for sin was in reality made by his thus offering up
“himself,” the virtue and efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice would be inferior to
that of the Aaronical priesthood, contrary to the declared design and
argument of the epistle. Let us, also, refer to Hebrews 9:13, 14, “For if
the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the
unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,” so as to fit the offender
for joining in the service of the tabernacle, “how much more shall the blood
of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to
God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living GOD.”

The comparison here lies in this, that the Levitical sacrifices expiated legal punishments; but did not in themselves acquit the people absolutely in respect to God, as the Governor and Judge of mankind; but that the blood of Christ extends its virtue to the conscience, and eases it of all guilty terror of the wrath to come on account of “dead works,” or works which deserve death under the universal, moral law. The ground of this comparison, however, lies in the real efficacy of each of these expiations. Each “purifies,” each delivers from guilt, but the latter only as “pertaining to the conscience,” and the mode in each case is by expiation. But to interpret the purging of the conscience, as the Socinians, of mere dissuasion from dead works to come, or as descriptive of the power of Christ to acquit men, upon their repentance, declaratively destroys all just similitude between the blood of Christ and that of the animal sacrifices, and the argument amounts to nothing.

We conclude with a passage, to which we have before adverted, which institutes a comparison between the Levitical purification of the holy places made with hands, and the purification of the heavenly places by the blood of Christ. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of GOD for us.”

To enter into the meaning of this passage, we are to consider that God dwelt personally among the Israelites; that the sanctuary and tabernacle are represented as polluted by their sins, and even corporal impurities, the penalty of which was death, unless atoned for, or expiated according to law, and that all unclean persons were debarred access to the tabernacle and the service of God, until expiation was made, and purification thereby effected. It was under these views that the sin offerings were made on the day of expiation, to which the apostle alludes in the above passage. Then the high priest entered into the holy of holies, with the blood of sacrifices, to make atonement both for himself and the whole people. He first offered for himself and for his house a bullock, and sprinkled the blood of it upon and before the mercy seat within the veil. Afterward he killed a goat for a sin offering for the people and sprinkled the blood in like manner. This was called atoning for, or hallowing and reconciling the holy place, and the
tabernacle of the congregation, “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins.” The effect of all this was the remission of sins, which is represented by the scape goat, who carried away the sins which had been confessed over him, with imposition of hands; and the purification of the priests and people, so that their holy places were made accessible to them, and they were allowed, without fear of the death which had been threatened, to “draw near” to God.

We have already shown that here the holy places made with hands, and the “true holy places,” of which they were the figures, were purified and opened, each in the same way, by the sprinkling of the blood of the victims — the patterns or emblems of things in the heaven, by the blood of animals, the heavenly places themselves by “better sacrifices,” and that the argument of the apostle forbids us to suppose that he is speaking figuratively. Let us, then, merely mark the correspondence of the type and antitype in this case, as exhibited by the apostle. He compares the legal sacrifices and that of Christ in the similar purification of the respective Αγια or sanctuaries to which each had relation. The Jewish sanctuary on earth was purified, that is, opened and made accessible by the one; the celestial sanctuary, the true and everlasting seat of God’s presence, by the other. Accordingly, in other passages, he pursues the parallel still farther, representing Christ as procuring for men, by his death, a happy admission into heaven, as the sin offerings of the law obtained for the Jews a safe entrance into the tabernacle on earth. “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Thus, also, he tells us that “we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Christ Jesus,” and that as the bodies of those animals whose blood was carried into the holy of holies by the high priest, to make an atonement for sin, were burned “without the camp,” so also Jesus suffered without the gate, “that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.”

The notion that sacrificial terms are applied to the death of Christ by rhetorical figure is, then, sufficiently refuted by the foregoing considerations. But it has been argued, that as there is, in many respects, a want of literal conformity between the death of Christ and the sacrifices of
the law, a considerable license of figurative interpretation must be allowed. Great confusion of ideas on this subject has resulted from not observing a very obvious distinction which exists between figurative and analogical language. It by no means follows, that when language cannot be interpreted literally it must be taken figuratively, or by way of rhetorical allusion. This distinction is well made by a late writer. (Veysies’ Bampton Lectures.)

“Figurative language,” he observes, “does not arise from the real nature of the thing to which it is transferred, but only from the imagination of him who transfers it. So, a man of courage is figuratively called a lion, not because the real nature of a lion belongs to him, but because one quality which characterizes this animal belongs to him in an eminent degree, and the imagination conceives of them as partakers of a common nature, and applies to them one common name. But there is a species of language, usually called analogical, which, though not strictly proper, is far from being merely figurative, the terms being transferred from one thing to another, not because the things are similar, but because they are in similar relations. The term thus transferred, is as truly significant of the real nature of the thing, in the relation in which it stands, as it could be, were it the primitive and proper word. Thus the term foot properly signifies the lower extremity of an animal, or that on which it stands; but, because the lower extremity or base of a mountain is to the mountain what the foot is to the animal, it is therefore called the same name, and the term thus applied is significant of something real, something which, if not a foot in strict propriety of speech, is, nevertheless truly so, considered with respect to the circumstance upon which the analogy is founded. But this mode of expression is more common with respect to our mental and intellectual faculties and operations, which we are wont to denominate by words borrowed from similar functions of the bodily organs and corresponding attributes of material things. Thus to see, is properly to acquire impressions of sensible objects by the organs of sight; but to the mind is also attributed an eye, with which we are analogically said to see objects intellectual. In like manner, great and little, equal and unequal, smooth and rough, sweet and sour, are properly attributes of material substances; but they are analogically ascribed to such as are immaterial; for without intending a figure, we speak of a great mind, and a little mind; and the natural temper of one man is said to be equal, smooth, and sweet, while that of another is called unequal, rough, and sour. And if we thus express such intellectual
things as fall more immediately under our observation, we cannot wonder that things spiritual and Divine, which are more removed from our direct inspection, should be exhibited to our apprehension in the same manner. The conceptions which we thus form, may be imperfect and inadequate; but they are, nevertheless, just and true, consequently the language in which they are expressed, although borrowed, is not merely figurative, but is significant of something real in the things concerned.”

To apply this to the case before us, the blood or life of Christ is called our *ransom* and the *price* of our redemption. Now, admitting that these expressions are not to be understood literally, does it follow that they contain mere figure and allusion? By no means. They contain *truth* and *reality*. Christ came to redeem us from the power of sin and Satan, by paying for our deliverance no less a price than his own blood. “In him we have redemption through his blood.” “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many;” and we are taught, by this representation, that the blood of Christ, in the deliverance of sinful man, corresponds to a price or ransom in the deliverance of a captive, and consequently is a price or ransom, if not literally, at least *really* and *truly*.

When Christ is called “our passover,” the same analogical use of terms is manifest, and in several other passages which will be familiar to the reader; but we hesitate to apply the same rule of interpretation throughout, and to say with the author just quoted, and Archbishop Magee, who refers to him on this point with approbation, that Christ is called a “sin offering” and a “sacrifice” analogically. These terms, on the contrary, are used *properly*, and must be understood *literally*. — For what was an expiatory sacrifice under the law, but the offering of the life of an innocent creature in the place of the guilty, and that, in order to obtain his exemption from death? The death of Christ is as literally an offering of himself “the just for the unjust,” to exempt the latter from death. The legal sin offerings cleansed the body and qualified for the ceremonial worship prescribed by the law; and the blood of Christ as truly purifies the conscience and consecrates to the spiritual service required by the Gospel. The *circumstances* differ, but the things themselves are not so much analogical as identical in their nature, though differing in circumstances, that is, so far as the legal sacrifices had any efficacy, *per se*; but, in another and a higher view, the sacrifice of Christ was the only true sacrifice, and the Levitical ones were but the appointed types of that. If, therefore, in this argument, we may refer to the Mosaic sacrifices, to fix the sense in which the New Testament
uses the sacrificial terms in which it speaks of the death of Christ, against an objector; yet, in fact, the sacrifices of the law are to be interpreted by the sacrifice of Christ, and not the latter by them. — They are rather analogical with it, than it with them. There was a previous ordination of pardon through the appointed sacrifice of the Lamb of God, “slain from the foundation of the world,” to which they all, in different degrees, referred, and of which they were but the visible and sensible monitors “for the time present.”

As to the objection, that the Jewish sacrifices had no reference to the expiation of moral transgression, we observe,

1. That a distinction is to be made between sacrifice as a part of the theo-political law of the Jews, and sacrifice as a consuetudinary rite, practised by their fathers, and by them also previous to the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, and taken up into the Mosaic institute. This was continued partly on its original ground, and partly, and with additions, as a branch of the polity under which the Jews were placed. With this rite they were familiar before the law, and even before the exodus from Egypt. “Let us go,” says Moses to Pharaoh, “we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” Here sacrifice is spoken of, and that with reference to expiation, or the averting of the Divine displeasure. There is in this, too, an acknowledgment of offences, as the reason of sacrificing; but these offences could not be against the forms and ceremonies of an institute which did not then exist, and must, therefore, have been moral offences. We may add to this, that in the books of Leviticus and Exodus, Moses speaks of sacrifices as a previous practice, and, in some cases, so far from prescribing the act, does no more than regulate the mode. “If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male.” Had their sacrifices, therefore, reference only to cases of ceremonial offence, then it would follow that they had been deprived of the worship of their ancestors, which respected the obtaining of the Divine favour in the forgiveness of moral offences, and that they obtained, as a substitute, a kind of worship which respected only ceremonial cleansings, and a ceremonial reconciliation. They had this, manifestly, as the type of something higher; and they had also the patriarchal rites with renewed sanctions and under new regulations; and thus there was a real advance in the spirituality of their worship, while it became, at the same time, more ceremonial and exact.
2. That the offerings which were formerly prescribed under the law had reference to moral transgressions, as well as to external aberrations from the purity and exactness of the Levitical ritual.

“Atonement” is said to be made “for sins committed against any of the commandments of the Lord.” It appears also, that sins of “ignorance” included all sins which were not ranked in the class of “presumptuous sins,” or those to which death was inevitably annexed by the civil law, and, therefore, must have included many cases of moral transgression. For some specific instances of this kind, sin offerings were enjoined, such as lying, theft, fraud, extortion, and perjury.  

3. That if all the sin offerings of the Levitical institute had respected legal atonement and ceremonial purification, nothing could have been collected from that circumstance to invalidate the true sacrifice of Christ. It is of the nature of a type to be inferior in efficacy to the antitype; and the Apostle Paul himself argues, from the invalidity of Levitical sacrifices to take away guilt from the conscience, the superior efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. It follows, then, that as truly as they were legal atonements, so truly was Christ’s death a moral atonement; as truly as they purified the flesh, so truly did his sacrifice purify the conscience.
CHAPTER 22. — REDEMPTION — PRIMITIVE SACRIFICES.

To the rite of sacrifice before the law, practised in the patriarchal ages, up to the first family, it may be proper to give some consideration, both for the farther elucidation of some of the topics above stated, and for the purpose of exhibiting the harmony of those dispensations of religion which were made to fallen man in different ages of the world. That the ante-Mosaic sacrifices were expiatory, is the first point which it is necessary to establish. It is not, indeed, at all essential to the argument, to ascend higher than the sacrifices of the law, which we have already proved to be of that character, and by which the expiatory efficacy of the death of Christ is represented in the New Testament. — This, however, was also the character of the more ancient rites of the patriarchal Church; and thus we see the same principles of moral government, which distinguish the Christian and Mosaic dispensations, carried still higher as to antiquity, even to the family of the first man, the first transgressor, “without shedding of blood there was no remission.”

The proofs that sacrifices of atonement made a part of the religious system of the patriarchs who lived before the law, are first the distribution of beasts into clean and unclean, which we find prior to the flood of Noah. This is a singular distinction, and one which could not then have reference to food, since animal food was not allowed to man prior to the deluge; and as we know of no other ground for the distinction, except that of sacrifice, it must, therefore, have had reference to the selection of victims to be solemnly offered to God, as a part of worship, and as the means of drawing near to him by expiatory rites for the forgiveness of sins. Some, it is true, have regarded this distinction of clean and unclean beasts as used by Moses by way of prolepsis, or anticipation, a notion which, if it could not be refuted by the context, would be perfectly arbitrary. But not only are the beasts, which Noah was to receive into the ark, spoken of as clean and unclean; but in the command to take them into the ark, a difference is made in the number to be preserved, the former being to be received by sevens, and the latter by two of a kind. This shows that this distinction among beasts had been established in the time of Noah, and thus the assumption of a prolepsis is refuted. In the law of Moses a similar distinction is made; but the only reasons given for it are two: in this manner, those victims which
God would allow to be used for piacular purposes, were marked out; and by this distinction those animals were designated which were permitted for food. The former only can, therefore, be considered as the ground of this distinction among the antediluvians; for the critical attempts, which have been made to show that animals were allowed to man for food, previous to the flood, have wholly failed.

A second argument is furnished by the prohibition of blood for food, after animals had been granted to man for his sustenance along with the “herb of the field.” This prohibition is repeated by Moses to the Israelites, with this explanation, “I have given it upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls.” From this “additional reason,” as it has been called, it has been argued, that the doctrine of the atoning power of blood was new, and was then, for the first time, announced by Moses, or the same reason for the prohibition would have been given to Noah. To this we may reply,

1. That unless the same reason be supposed as the ground of the prohibition of blood to Noah, as that given by Moses to the Jews, no reason at all can be conceived for this restraint being put upon the appetite of mankind from Noah to Moses; and yet we have a prohibition of a most solemn kind, which in itself could have no reason enjoined, without any external reason being either given or conceivable.

2. That it is a mistake to suppose, that the declaration of Moses to the Jews, that God had “given them the blood for an atonement,” is an additional reason for the interdict, not to be found in the original prohibition to Noah. The whole passage in Leviticus xvii, is, “And thou shalt say to them, WHATSOEVER man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul, that eateth blood, and I will cut him off from among his people, FOR THE LIFE of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls; for it is the BLOOD (or LIFE) that maketh atonement for the soul.” The great reason, then, of the prohibition of blood is, that it is the LIFE; and what follows respecting atonement, is exegetical of this reason; the life is in the blood, and the blood or life is given as an atonement. Now, by turning to the original prohibition in Genesis, we find that precisely the same reason is given. “But the flesh with the blood, which is the life thereof, shall ye not eat.” The reason, then, being the same, the question is, whether the exegesis added by Moses, must not necessarily be understood in the
general reason given for the restraint to Noah. Blood is prohibited for this reasons that it is the *life*; and Moses adds, that it is “the blood,” or life “which makes atonement.” Let any one attempt to discover any reason for the prohibition of blood to Noah, in the mere circumstance that it is “the life,” and he will find it impossible. It is no reason at all, moral or instituted, except that as it was life substituted for life, the life of the animal in sacrifice for the life of man, and that it had a sacred appropriation. The manner, too, in which Moses introduces the subject, is indicative that, though he was renewing a prohibition, he was not publishing a “new doctrine;” he does not teach his people that God had then given, or appointed, blood to make atonement; but he prohibits them from eating it, because he had made this appointment, without reference to time, and as a subject with which they were familiar. Because the blood was the life, it was sprinkled upon, and poured out at the altar: and we have in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and the sprinkling of its blood, a sufficient proof, that before the giving of the law, not only was blood not eaten, but was appropriated to a sacred, sacrificial purpose. Nor was this confined to the Jews; it was customary with the Romans and Greeks, who, in like manner, poured out and sprinkled the blood of victims at their altars, a rite derived, probably, from the Egyptians, as they derived it, not from Moses, but from the sons of Noah. The notion, indeed, that the blood of the victims was peculiarly sacred to the gods, is impressed upon all ancient pagan mythology.

Thirdly, the sacrifices of the patriarchs were those of animal victims, and their use was to avert the displeasure of God from sinning men. Thus in the case of Job, who, if it could be proved that he did not live before the law, was, at least, not under the law, and in whose country the true patriarchal theology was in force, the prescribed burnt offering was for the averting the “wrath” of God, which was kindled against Eliphaz and his two friends, “lest,” it is added, “I deal with you after your folly.” The doctrine of expiation could not, therefore, be more explicitly declared. The burnt offerings of Noah, also, after he left the ark, served to avert the “cursing of the ground any more for man’s sake,” that is, for man’s sin, and the “smiting any more every thing living.” In like manner, the end of Abel’s offering was pardon and acceptance with God, and by it these were attained, for “he obtained witness that he was righteous.” But as this is the first sacrifice which we have on record, and has given rise to some
controversy, it may be considered more largely: at present, however, the only question is its expiatory character.

As to the matter of the sacrifice, it was an animal offering. “Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof;” or, more literally, “the fat of them,” that is, according to the Hebrew idiom, the fattest or best of his flock. Le Clerc and Grotius would understand Abel to have offered the wool and milk of his flock, which interpretation, if no critical difficulty opposed it, would be rendered violently improbable by the circumstance that neither wool nor milk is ever mentioned in Scripture as fit oblations to God. But to translate the word rendered firstlings, by best and finest, and then to suppose an ellipsis, and supply it with wool, is wholly arbitrary, and contradicted by the import of the word itself. But, as Dr. Kennicott remarks, the matter is set at rest by the context; “for, if it be allowed by all, that Cain’s bringing or the fruit of the ground, means his bringing the fruit (itself) of the ground, then Abel’s bringing or the firstlings of his flock must, likewise, mean his bringing the firstlings of his flock” (themselves.) (Two Dissertations. See also Magee’s Discourses.)

This is farther supported by the import of the phrase πλειονα θυσιαν, used by the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when speaking of the sacrifice of Abel. Our translators have rendered it “a more excellent sacrifice.” Wickliffe translates it, as Archbishop Magee observes, uncouthly, but in the full sense of the original, “a much more sacrifice;” and the controversy which has been had on this point is, whether this epithet of “much more,” or “fuller,” refers to quantity or quality; whether it is to be understood in the sense of a more abundant, or of a better, a more excellent sacrifice. Dr. Kennicott takes it in the sense of measure and quantity, as well as quality, and supposes that Abel brought a double offering of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fruit of the ground also. His criticism has been very satisfactorily refuted by Archbishop Magee; (Discourses on Atonement;) and Mr. Davison, who has written an acute work in reply to those parts of that learned prelate’s work on the atonement, which relate to the Divine origin of the primitive sacrifices, has attempted no answer to this criticism, and only observes that “the more abundant sacrifice is the more probable signification of the passage, because it is the more natural force of the term πλειονα when applied to a subject, as θυσιαν, capable of measure and quantity.” This is but assumption; and we read the term in other passages of Scripture, (as in
Matthew 6:25, “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” where the idea of quantity is necessarily excluded, and that of superiority and excellence of quality, is as necessarily intended. But why is this stress laid on quantity? Are we to admit the strange principle that an offering is acceptable to God, because of its quantity alone, and that the quantity of sacrifice, when even no measure has been prescribed by any law of God, has an absolute connection with the state of the heart of an offerer? Frequency or non-frequency of offering might have some claim to be considered as this indication; but, certainly, the quantity of gifts, where, according to the opinion of those generally who adopt this view, sacrifices had not yet been subjected to express regulation, would be a very imperfect indication. If the quantity of a sacrifice could at all indicate, under such circumstances, any moral quality, that quality would be gratitude; but then we must suppose Abel’s offering to have been eucharistic. Here, however, the sacrifice of Abel was that of animal victims, and it was indicative of faith, a quality not to be made manifest by the quantity of an offering made, for the one has no relation to the other; and the sacrifice itself was, as we shall see, of a strictly expiatory character.

This will more fully appear, if we look at the import of the words of the apostle in some views, which have not always been brought fully out in what has been more recently written on the subject. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it, he being dead yet speaketh.”

What is the meaning of the apostle, when he says that it was witnessed or testified to Abel that he was righteous? His doctrine is, that men are sinners; that all, consequently, need pardon; and to be declared, witnessed, or accounted righteous, are, according to his style of writing, the same as to be justified, pardoned, and dealt with as righteous. Thus, he argues that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” — “that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness” — “that he received the sign of circumcision, a seal,” a visible, confirmatory, declaratory, and witnessing mark “of the righteousness which he had by faith.” In these cases we have a similarity so striking, that they can scarcely fail to explain each other. In both, sinful men are placed in the condition of righteous men — the instrument, in both cases, is faith; and the transaction is, in both cases also, publicly and sensibly witnessed; as to Abraham, by
the sign of circumcision; as to Abel, by a visible acceptance of his sacrifice, and the rejection of that of Cain.

But it is said, “St. Paul affirms that Abel, by the acceptance of his sacrifice, gained the testimony of God, that he was a righteous man. He affirms, therefore, that it was his personal habit of righteousness to which God vouchsafed the testimony of his approbation, by that acceptance of his offering. The antecedent faith in God, which produced that habit of a religious life, commended his sacrifice, and the Divine testimony was not to the specific form of his oblations; but to his actual righteousness.” (Davison’s Inquiry into the Origin and Intent of Primitive Sacrifice.)

The objections to this view of the matter are many.

1. It leaves out entirely all consideration of the difference between the sacrifice of Abel and that of Cain, and places the reason of the acceptance of one and the rejection of the other wholly in the moral character of the offerers; whereas St. Paul most unequivocally places the acceptance of Abel’s offering upon its nature and the principle of faith which originated it. For, whether we translate the phrase above referred to, “a more excellent sacrifice,” or “a more abundant sacrifice,” it is put in contrast with the offering of Cain, and its peculiar nature cannot be left out of the account. By Mr. Davison’s interpretation, the designation given to Abel’s offering by the apostle is entirely overlooked.

2. The “faith” of Abel, in this transaction, is also passed over as a consideration in the acceptance of his sacrifice. It is, indeed, brought in as “an antecedent faith, which produced the habit of a religious life,” and thus mediately “commended the sacrifice;” but, in fact, on this ground any other influential grace or principle might be said to have commended his sacrifice, as well as faith; any thing which tended to produce “the habit of a religious life,” his fear of God, his love of God, as effectually as his faith in God. There is, then, this manifest difference between this representation of the case and that which is given by St. Paul, that the one makes “the habit of a religious life,” the immediate, and faith but the remote reason of the acceptableness of Abel’s gifts; while the other assigns a direct efficacy to the faith of Abel, and the kind of sacrifice by which that faith was expressed, and of which it was the immediate result.

3. In this chapter the apostle is not speaking of faith under the view of its tendency to induce a holy life; but of faith as producing certain acts of very
various kinds, which being followed by manifest tokens of the Divine favour, showed how acceptable faith is to GOD, or how it “pleases him,” according to his own position laid down in the commencement of the chapter — “Without faith it is impossible to please GOD.” Abel had faith, and he expressed that faith by the kind of sacrifice he offered; it was in this way that his faith “pleased God;” it pleased him as a principle, and by the act to which it led, and that act was the offering of a sacrifice to God different from that of Cain. Cain had not this faith, whatever might be its object; and Cain accordingly did not bring an offering to which God had “respect.” That which vitiated the offering of Cain was the want of this faith, for his offering was not significant of faith; that which “pleased God,” in the case of Abel, was his faith, and he had “respect” to his offering, because it was the expression of that faith, and upon his faith so expressing itself, God witnessed to him “that he was righteous.”

So, certainly, do the words of St. Paul, when commenting upon this transaction, establish it against the author above quoted, that Abel’s sacrifice was accepted, because of its immediate connection with his faith, for, by faith he is said to have offered it; and all that, whatever it might be, which made Abel’s offering differ from that of Cain, whether abundance, or kind, or both, was the result of this faith. So clearly, also, is it laid down by the apostle that Abel was witnessed to be “righteous,” not with reference to any previous “habit of a religious life,” but with reference to his faith; and not to his faith as leading to personal righteousness, but to his faith as expressing itself by his offering “a more excellent sacrifice.”

Mr. Davison, in support of his opinion, adopts the argument of many before him, that “the rest of Scripture speaks to Abel’s personal righteousness. Thus, in St. John’s distinction between Cain and Abel, ‘wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.’ Thus in the remonstrance of GOD with Cain, that remonstrance with Cain’s envy for the acceptance of Abel’s offering is directed, not to the mode of their sacrifice, but to the good and evil doings of their respective lives — ‘If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted, and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.’” (Inquiry, &c.)

With respect to the words in St. John, they may be allowed to refer to Abel’s “personal righteousness,” without affecting the statement of St. Paul in the least. It would be a bad rule of criticism fully to explain the comments of one sacred writer upon a transaction, the principle and nature
of which he explains professedly, by the remark of another, when the subject is introduced only allusively and incidentally. St. John’s words must not here be brought in to qualify St. Paul’s exposition; but St. Paul’s exposition to complete the incidental allusion of St. John. Both apostles agreed that no man was righteous personally, till he was made righteous by forgiveness; accounted and witnessed righteous by faith; and both agree that from that follows a personal righteousness. If St. John, then, refers to Abel’s personal righteousness, he refers to it as flowing from his justification and acceptance with God, and by that personal righteousness the “wrath” of Cain, which was first excited by the rejection of his sacrifice, was, probably ripened into the “hatred” which led on his fratricide; for it does not appear that he committed that act immediately upon the place of sacrifice, but at some subsequent period; and, certainly, it was not the antecedent holy life of Abel which first produced Cain’s displeasure against his brother, for this is expressly attributed to the transactions of the day in which each brought his offering to the Lord. St. John’s reference to Abel’s personal righteousness does not, therefore, exclude a reference also, and even primarily to his faith as its instrumental cause, and the source of its support and nourishment; and, we may add, that it is St. John’s rule, and must be the rule of every New Testament writer, to regard a man’s submission to, or rejection of, God’s method of saving men by faith, as the best evidence of personal righteousness, or the contrary. As to Genesis 4:7, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted; and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door,” in order to show that it cannot be proved from this passage, that Abel’s offering was accepted because of his personal righteousness, it is not necessary to avail ourselves of Lightfoot’s view of it, who takes “sin” to be the ellipsis of sin-offering, as in many places of Scripture. For and against this rendering much ingenious criticism has been employed, for which the critics must be consulted. The interpretation which supposes Cain to be referred to a sin offering, an animal victim “lying at the door,” is, at best, doubtful; but if this be conceded, the argument framed upon the declaration to Cain, “if thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted,” as though the reason of the acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice was in “well doing” in the moral sense only, is wholly groundless, since the apostle so explicitly refers the reason of the acceptance of his sacrifice to his faith, as before established. It is enough to show that there is nothing in these words to contradict this, even if we take them in the most obvious sense, and omit the consideration that the Hebrew text has, in this place, been disturbed, of which there are strong
indications The passage may be taken in two views. Either to “do well,” may mean to do as Abel had done, viz. to repent and bring those sacrifices which should express his faith in God’s appointed method of pardoning and accepting men, thus submitting himself wholly to God; and then it is a merciful intimation that Cain’s rejection was not final; but that it depended upon himself, whether he would seek God in sincerity and truth. Or the words may be considered as a declaration of the principles of God’s righteous government over men. “If thou doest well,” if thou art righteous and unsinning, thou shalt be accepted as such, without sacrifice; “but if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door,” and is chargeable upon thee with its consequence; thus, after declaring his moral condition, leaving it to himself to seek for pardon in the method established in the first family, and which Cain must be supposed to have known as well as Abel, or, otherwise, we must suppose that they had received no religious instruction at all from Adam their father. To the former view of the sense of the passage it cannot be objected that to offer proper sacrifices from a right principle cannot be called, in the common and large sense “to do well,” for even “to believe” is called “a work” by our Saviour; and the sacrifice of Abel was, moreover, an act, or a series of acts, which were the expressions of his faith, and therefore, might be called a doing well, without any violence. Agreeably to this, the whole course of the submission of the Jews to the laws concerning their sacrifices, is often, in Scripture, designated by the terms obedience, and ways, and doings. The second interpretation corresponds to the great axiom of moral government alluded to by St. Paul “This do and thou shalt live,” which is so far from excluding the doctrine of justification by faith, that it is the ground on which he argues it, inasmuch as it shuts out the justification of men by law when it has once been violated.

If, then, it has been established that the faith of Abel had an immediate connection with his sacrifice, and both with his being accepted as righteous, that is, justified, in St. Paul’s use of the term, to what had his faith respect? The particular object of the faith of the elders, celebrated in Hebrews xi, is to be deduced from the circumstances adduced as illustrative of the existence and operation of this great principle, and by which it manifested itself. Let us illustrate this, and then ascertain the objects of Abel’s faith also from the manner of its manifestation, from the acts in which it embodied and rendered itself conspicuous.
Faith is, in this chapter, taken in the sense of affiance in God, and, as such, it can only be exercised toward God as to all particular acts, in those respects, in which we have some authority to confide in him. This supposes revelation, and, in particular, some promise or declaration on his part, as the warrant for every act of affiance. When, therefore, it is said that “by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death,” it must be supposed that he had some promise or intimation to this effect, on which, improbable as the event was, he nobly relied, and in the result God honoured his faith before all men. The faith of Noah had immediate respect to the threatened flood, and the promise of God to preserve him in the ark which he was commanded to prepare. The faith of Abraham had different objects. In one of the instances which this chapter records, it respected the promise of the land of Canaan to his posterity, and also the promise of the heavenly inheritance, of which that was the type: which faith he publicly manifested by “sojourn ing in the land of promise, as in a strange country,” and “dwelling in tabernacles,” rather than taking up a permanent residence in any of its cities, because “he looked for a city which hath foundations.” In the case of the offering of Isaac, he believed that God would raise his immolated son from the dead, and the ground of his faith is stated, in verse 18, to be the promise, “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The faith of Sarah respected the promise of issue, — “she judged him faithful who had promised.” “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come,” which faith had for its object the revelation made to him by God as to the future lot of the posterity of his two sons. The chapter is filled with other instances expressed or implied: and from the whole, as well as from the nature of the thing, it will appear that when the apostle speaks of the faith of the elders in its particular acts, he represents it as having respect to some promise, declaration, or revelation of God.

This revelation was necessarily antecedent to the faith; but it is also to be observed, that the acts by which the faith was represented, whenever it was represented by particular acts, and when the case admitted it, had a natural and striking conformity and correspondence to the previous revelation. So Noah built the ark, which indicated that he had heard the threat of the world’s destruction by water, and had received the promise of his own and family’s preservation, as well as that of a selection of the beasts of the earth; to all which the means of preservation, by which his faith was represented, and which it led him to adopt, corresponded. When Abraham went into Canaan, at the command of God, and upon the promise that that
country should become the inheritance of his descendants, he showed his faith by taking possession of it for them in anticipation, and his residence there indicated the kind of promise which he had received. When he lived in that promised land in tents, though opulent enough to have established himself in a more settled state, the very manner in which his faith expressed itself, showed that he had received the promise of a “better country,” which made him willing to be a “stranger and wanderer on earth;” for “they that say such things,” says the apostle, namely, that they are strangers and pilgrims, “confessing” it by these significant acts, “declare plainly that they seek a country,” “that is, a heavenly.” Thus, also, when Moses’s faith expressed itself, in his refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, this also clearly indicated that he had received the promise of something higher and more excellent than “the riches of Egypt,” which he renounced, even “the recompense of the reward,” to which, we are told, “he had respect.” When his faith manifested itself by his forsaking Egypt at the head of his people, “not fearing the wrath of the king,” this indicated that he had received a promise of protection and success, and he, therefore, “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

If, then, all these instances show, that when the faith which the apostle commends exhibits itself in some particular act, that act has a correspondency to the previous promise of revelation, which faith must have for its ground and reason, then are we constrained to interpret the acts of Abel’s faith, so as to make them also correspond with some antecedent revelation, or rather, we must suppose that the antecedent revelation, though not expressly stated, (which is also the case in several other of the instances which are given in the chapter,) must have corresponded with them. His faith had respect to some previous revelation, and the nature of the revelation is to be collected from the significant manner in which he declared his faith in it.

Now that which Abel did, “by faith,” was, if considered generally, to perform an act of solemn worship, in the confidence that it would be acceptable to God. This supposes a revelation, immediate or by tradition, that such acts of worship were acceptable to God, or his faith could have had no warrant, and would not have been faith, but fancy. But the case must be considered more particularly. His faith led him to offer “a more excellent sacrifice” than that of Cain; but this as necessarily implies, that there was some antecedent revelation, to which his faith, as thus expressed, had respect, and on which that peculiarity of his offering, which
distinguished it from the offering of Cain, was founded; a revelation which indicated, that the way in which God would be approached acceptably, in solemn worship, was by animal sacrifices. Without this, too, the faith to which his offering, which was an offering of the firstlings of his flock, had a special fitness and adaptation, could have had no warrant in Divine authority. But this revelation must have included, in order to its being the ground of faith, as “the substance of things hoped for,” a promise of a benefit to be conferred, in which promise Abel might conﬁde. But if so, then this promise must have been connected, not with the worship of God in general, or performed in any way whatever indifferently, but with his worship by animal oblations; for it was in this way that the faith of Abel indicated itself, specially and distinctively, the antecedent revelation was, therefore, a promise of a benefit to be conferred, by means of animal sacrifice; and we are taught what this benefit was, by that which was actually received by the offerer — “he obtained witness that he was righteous;” which, if the notion of his antecedent righteousness has been refuted, must be interpreted in the sense of a declaration of his personal justification, and acceptance as righteous, upon forgiveness of his sins. The reason of Abel’s acceptance and of Cain’s rejection is hereby made manifest; the one, in seeking the Divine favour, conformed to his established and appointed method of being approached by guilty men, and the other not only neglected this, but profanely and presumptuously substituted his own inventions.

It is impossible, then, to allow the act of Abel, in this instance, to have been an act of faith, without allowing that it had respect to a previous and appropriate revelation; a revelation which agreed to all the parts of that sacrificial action, by which he expressed his faith in it. Had Abel’s sacrifice been eucharistic merely, it would have expressed gratitude, but not faith; or if faith in the general sense of confidence in God that he would receive an act of grateful worship, and reward the worshipper, it did not more express faith than the offering of Cain, who surely believed these two points, or he would not have brought an offering of any kind. The offering of Abel expressed a faith which Cain had not, and the doctrinal principles which Abel’s faith respected, were such as his sacrifice visibly embodied. If it was not, then, an eucharistic sacrifice, it was an expiatory one; and, in fact, it is only in a sacrifice of this kind, that it is possible to see that faith exhibited, which Abel had, and Cain had not. By subsequent sacrifices of expiation, then, is this early expiatory offering to be explained, and from
these it will be obvious to what doctrines and principles of an antecedent revelation the faith of Abel had respect, and which his sacrifice, the exhibition of his faith, proclaimed. Confession of the fact of being a sinner — acknowledgment of the demerit and penalty of sin and death — submission to an appointed mode of expiation; animal sacrifice offered vicariously, but, in itself, a mere type of a better sacrifice, “the seed of the woman,” appointed to be offered at some future period — the efficacy of this appointed method of expiation to obtain forgiveness and to admit the guilty into the Divine favour.

For these reasons, we think that the conclusion of many of our ancient divines, so admirably embodied in the following words of Archbishop Magee, is not too strong, but is fully supported by the argument of the case, as founded upon the brief but very explicit declarations of the history of the transaction in Genesis, and by the comment upon it in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

> “Abel, in firm reliance on the promise of God, and in obedience to his command, offered that sacrifice, which had been enjoined as the religious expression of his faith; while Cain, disregarding the gracious assurances that had been vouchsafed, or at least disdaining to adopt the prescribed mode of manifesting his belief, possibly as not appearing to his reason to possess any efficacy or natural fitness, thought he had sufficiently acquitted himself of his duty in acknowledging the general superintendence of God, and expressing his gratitude to the Supreme Benefactor, by presenting some of those good things, which he thereby confessed to have been derived from his bounty. In short, Cain, the first born of the fall, exhibits the first fruits of his parents’ disobedience, in the arrogance and self sufficiency of reason rejecting the aids of revelation, because they fell not within its apprehension of right. He takes the first place in the annals of Deism, and displays, in his proud rejection of the ordinance of sacrifice, the same spirit, which, in later days, has actuated his enlightened followers, in rejecting the sacrifice of Christ.”

If it should be asked, what evidence we have from Scripture, that such an antecedent revelation as that to which we have said Abel’s faith must have had respect, was made, the reply is, that if this rested only upon the necessary inferences which, in all fairness and consistency of interpretation,
we must draw from the circumstances of the transaction, when combined with the apostle’s interpretation of it, the ground would be strong enough to enable us to defend it against both the attacks of Socinians, and of those orthodox divines who, like Mr. Davison, would wrest it from us, as an unnecessary post to be taken in the combat with the impugners of the Christian doctrine of atonement, or one which is rather injurious than otherwise to the efficiency of the more direct argument. “Such expositions,” says Mr. Davison, “do evil and disservice to truth; they bring in a wrong principle; they enforce a comment without a text. Such a principle is, undoubtedly, wrong, and has been the source of much religious speculation.” This we grant, and feel how important the caution is. But it does not here apply. It is not enough to say that “the text” is not in the “Mosaic history,” we must prove that it is not in the New Testament, or necessarily implied in its comments upon and inferences from Old Testament facts and relations. The “text” itself, supposed to be wanting, may be there, and even “the comment” of an inspired writer often supplies the text, and his reasoning the premises wanting, in so many words, in the brief and veiled narrative of Moses. An uninspired comment, we grant, has not this prerogative; but an inspired one has, which is an important consideration, not to be overlooked. When we say that the MANNA, which fell in the wilderness, represented the supply of the spiritual Israel with the true bread which comes down from heaven, Mr. Davison might reply this is “the comment;” but where is “the text?” We acknowledge that the text upon which this comment is hung, is not in the history of Moses; but the authority of this comment, and, if we may so speak, an implied “text” itself, is to be found in the words of our Lord, who calls himself “that bread;” and in the words of St. Paul, who terms the manna the “spiritual” or typical bread. If we allege that the “ROCK,” which when smitten poured forth its stream to refresh the fainting Israelites, was a figure of Christ, it might, in like manner, be urged that “the text” is wanting, and, certainly, we should not gather that view from the history of Moses; yet “the comment” is not ours, but that of the apostle, who says “that Rock was Christ,” which can only be understood as asserting that it was an instituted and appointed type of Christ. Where we have no intimations of such adumbrations in the persons and transactions of the Old Testament, we are not at liberty to invent them, nor can we justly carry them beyond what is expressed by our inspired authority, or naturally and fairly inferred to be from it. On the other hand we are bound not to interpret the Old Testament without reference to the New; and not to disregard that light which the perfect
revelation affords not only by its direct effulgence, but by its reflections upon the history of our redemption, up to the earliest ages.

If it be argued, from the silence of the Mosaic history, that such types and allusions were not understood as such by the persons among whom they were first instituted, the answer is,

1. That though they should not be supposed capable of understanding them as dearly as we do, yet it must be supposed, that the spiritual among them had their knowledge and faith greatly assisted by them, and that they were among those “wondrous things of the law,” which were, in some measure, revealed to those who prayed with David, that their eyes might be opened “to behold them,” or otherwise they were totally without religious use during all the ages previous to Christianity, and we must come to the conclusion that the whole system of types was without edification to the Jews, and are instructive only to us. If we conclude thus as to types, we may come to the same conclusion as to the prophecies of Messiah, to the spiritual meaning and real application of many of which there appears to be as little indication of a key as to the types. But this cannot be affirmed, for St. Peter tells us, that of this “salvation the prophets searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” The prophecies could, probably, be but dimly interpreted; but something was known of their general meaning, something important was obtained by “searching” to reward the search into their import. The same discovery of the general import and bearing of the types, must also have rewarded a search equally eager and pious. If this is not allowed, then they were not types to the ancient Church, a position which is contradicted by St. Paul, who declares, as to one instance, which may serve for the rest, namely, the entering of “the priest alone once every year into the inner tabernacle,” that by this “the Holy Ghost SIGNIFIED that the way to the holiest was not YET made manifest,” and that the tabernacle itself, including of course, its services, “was a figure FOR THE TIME THEN PRESENT, in or during which gifts and sacrifices were offered.”

But,

2. We have, in one of the instances before adverted to in Hebrews xi, a direct proof of a distinct revelation, which is nowhere recorded in the Mosaic history separate from the temporal promise in which it appears to
have been involved. By faith Abraham, having received the promise of Canaan as “a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance,” went to sojourn there; but by faith also he sojourned in this land of promise as a stranger, dwelling in tents, “for he looked for a city which had foundations,” for the “heavenly state,” and by that act he, and Isaac, and Jacob, “the heirs with him of the same PROMISE,” declared plainly that they “desired a better country, even a heavenly.” Of this better country they then received a PROMISE, which promise is not distinctly recorded in the history of Moses; and it must, therefore have been either included in the promise of Canaan, which was made to them and their descendants, as a type, an understood type, of the eternal and heavenly rest, which is agreeable to the allusions of St. Paul in other parts of the epistle; or else it was matter of separate and unrecorded revelation. In either view the history of Moses is silent, and yet we are compelled, by the comment of the apostle, and in opposition to the argument which Mr. Davison and others found upon that silence, to allow either a collateral revelation, separate from the promise of Canaan or that that promise itself had a mystic sense which became the object of their faith; and thus the inspired comment of the apostle supplies a text wanting in the history, or an enlarged interpretation of that which is found in it.

With this case of Abraham, Mr. Davison is evidently perplexed, and feels how forcibly it bears against his own rules of interpreting the Mosaic history of the religion of those early ages. He justly contends, against Grotius and Le Clerc, that the object of the faith recorded in Hebrews 11, was not always a temporal one. But, then, he proposes to show “how God, without having granted to those patriarchs the explicit revelation of an eternal heavenly state, a revelation which is nowhere exhibited in the Pentateuch, trained them to the aim and implicit persuasion of that eternal state by large and indefinite promises of being ‘their God’ and ‘their great reward,’ promises to which the present life, as to them, furnished no adequate completion.” Thus, then, we are to conclude, that the heavenly state to which these patriarchs looked, was a matter of entire inference from the promise that God would be “their God and their reward,” and from the consideration that nothing had occurred to them, in this present life, to be adequate to these promises. To the latter we may reply that, if this were the only ground of their faith, they could not have made the inference till the close of life; for how could they know that something adequate to these promises, if no previously explained to refer chiefly to
the future state, might not yet, though after much delay, occur to them? But they had this faith from the very giving of the promises, and, therefore, it was not left to future inference from circumstances. With respect to the former, that they inferred that there was a heavenly state, from the promise to Abraham, “I will be thy God,” when no previous “explicit revelation” of a future state was made; it not only supposes that the patriarchs had no revelation at all of a future life, no knowledge of the soul’s immortality, or of a general judgment, of which, indeed, “Enoch prophesied;” but it is inconsistent with the public and expressive action, (an action, probably intended to be instructive as a symbolical one to all with whom Abraham was connected in Canaan,) that he “dwelt in tents,” in order “to declare plainly that he sought a better country.” This, surely, was not an action to be founded upon a probable, but still uncertain, inference from the unexplained general promise, “I will be thy God;” but one which was suited only to express a firm faith in an explicit revelation and a particular promise.

But the whole of this theory is swept away entirely by the declaration of the apostle, “These all died in faith, not having received THE PROMISES,” that is, the things promised; “but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;” strangers, not at home, pilgrims, journeying to it. Now this home, this better country which they sought, the apostle here expressly says was not to them matter of inference, but the subject of “PROMISES,” in the faith of which they both lived and died.

In the case of Abel’s offering, as in those just given, the inspired comment of the apostle supplies “the text” to the history; or, in other words, it so illustrates and enlarges our knowledge of the transaction in its principles and antecedent circumstances, that we are bound to understand it not as persons who have not this additional information, or those who choose to disregard it, but as it is explained upon authority not to be questioned. Abel, says the apostle, offered his more excellent sacrifice “by faith,” and faith must have respect to a preceding revelation.

We have just seen what doctrinal principles were implied in the practice of expiatory sacrifices, and if Abel’s sacrifice was of this kind, which is the only satisfactory account which can be given of it, we have no reason to suppose that it included any thing less or lower than those appointed under the law, and which are expressly stated to be types and figures, and
shadows of the evangelical expiation of sin. An antecedent revelation to this effect must be supposed as the ground of his faith; but we are not left wholly to this: we have an account, though brief, of such a revelation.

That the account is brief is no objection. What is written is not, for that reason, to be disregarded. There were, doubtless, reasons sufficiently wise why the history of the patriarchal ages was not more largely given. If it were only to exercise our diligence, and to lead us to resort to what has been called “the analogy of faith,” and to interpret Scripture by Scripture, the reason would be important. In arguing from this brevity or silence, however, both against the Divine institution of primitive sacrifice, and the evangelical interpretation of the sacrifice of Abel, some writers are apt to overlook the fact, that the book of Genesis is but a sketch of this period of ancient history; that it is so throughout, and that it nowhere professes to be more. Arguments of this kind, as that of Bishop Warburton, who thinks it strange that if sacrifice were of Divine institution, not more is said on so important a subject, seem, insensibly, to proceed upon the supposition that the book of Genesis was the ritual and directory of the patriarchal Church, as that of Leviticus was the ritual of the Jewish. The absence of any account of the institution and prescribed mode of sacrifice might, in that case, have been thought strange; but it is a brief history, evidently intended only to be introductory to that of God’s chosen people, the Jews, whose proper historiographer Moses, by Divine suggestion, became. Moses grounds no argument upon any part of it in favour of his own institutions, except it may be an implied one in favour of the peculiar relation of the Jews to God, as the seed of Abraham, to whom the land of Canaan was promised, and with whom a special covenant was made. The history of Abraham he was, therefore, bound to relate more at length, and he has done so; but where no immediate application of former events was to be made in this way, and the object was merely that of brief general instruction, we can see no particular rules binding upon him to omit or to insert any thing, to dilate, or to contract his narrative. If we are to argue from the brevity or the omissions of the narrative of the book of Genesis, we may often fall into great absurdities, as many have done; and it might, indeed, be almost as fairly argued from the silence of this rapid history of the antediluvian world, that no code of morals was Divinely enjoined before the giving of the ten commandments, as that sacrifices were not Divinely instituted before the mandates issued from Sinai; for the silence of the book of Genesis equally respects both. We, rather choose to argue, that
as moral obedience must respect a law, and authoritative law must be a
revelation from God; so as faith respects doctrine and promise, that
doctrine and those promises, if faith be obligatory, must also be a
revelation from God; and again, as we collect from God’s displeasure
against, or favour to certain kinds and courses of moral conduct, that man
was under a law which respected morals; so also, from his acceptance of
one kind of sacrifice, and his rejection of another, in the case of Cain and
Abel, it will, for the same reason follow, that man was under a law of
sacrifice, and more especially since the sacrifices to which God, in after
ages, had uniform and special respect, were of the same kind as that of
Abel, — animal, vicarious, and expiatory. In morals, we must suppose
either traditional or personal revelation, or else give to them a human
origin or invention, and in worship we have only the same alternative; but
to give to primitive morality one origin, and to primitive worship another;
to ascribe one to God and another to man, is to form a very incongruous
system, and to involve ourselves in great difficulties. We must suppose
Adam to have been an inspired teacher of morals, but to have left worship
indifferent; or, if we exclude traditional revelation, and assume that every
man was taught personally by God in those times, that God made
revelations of his law, but none of his grace; that he revealed the standard
by which every man might discover his sin and danger, but that he made no
discovery of the means by which a man, painfully sensible of his guilt and
liableness to the punishment, might approach him so as to obtain his
forgiveness and blessing.

But beside this, it is easy to collect, from the sacred record in the early part
of Genesis, brief as it is, no unimportant information of the theology which
existed in the first family even prior to the sacrifice of Abel. That man was
under law is certain; that death was the penalty of sin is equally certain.
That the first pair sinned, and that they did not die, notwithstanding the
law, were obvious facts. That the terms of their probation were changed,
and that they were not shut out for ever from the Divine regard were
circumstances equally clear; and also that they had means of approach to
God, means of obtaining his favour, means of sanctification, means of
obtaining eternal life, must also be necessarily inferred. Claims of justice
and yearnings of mercy in God were seen at natural and legal variance and
opposition; and if these were harmonized, and harmonized they were, or
“the Lamb” could not be said to have been slain “from the foundation of
the world,” then must we suppose that there was some indication of this
“wisdom of God” revealed for a practical end, the necessity of which must always have existed, to prevent despair on the one hand, and a presumptuous disregard of the Divine laws on the other. Though in figurative language, or symbolical action, the manifestation of this truth might be made, yet it must have been substantially made, or it could not have been practical and influential. A veiled truth, is yet a truth, though veiled. A shadow indicates the outline of the substance, though a shadow; and the sun, though shrouded with clouds, fills the hemisphere with light, though not with brightness, for day, however clouded, is far different from night. We cannot conceive of a theology at all suited, in any practical degree, to man’s fallen state, unless it comprehend the particulars we have given, as well as the knowledge of the existence and perfections of God; and if we find an express indication of the evangelical method of saving man by the interposition of the incarnate Son of God, we may be sure that, at least all that this indication, when fairly interpreted, contains was known to Abel before he offered his sacrifice; and, both from the brevity of the narrative and the office of Adam as the teacher of religion to his children, we might also infer that this indication was matter of converse and explanation, though this latter consideration we shall not insist upon.

It is in the first promise that this indication is to be found, and here we shall join issue with Mr. Davison as to its import, and the extent in which its meaning must have been understood in the first family.

In another part of this work it has been established, that this prophetic promise must be understood symbolically, and that it contained the first manifestation of Messiah. This, indeed, Mr. Davison acknowledges, but denies that his Divine nature, incarnation, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, and their atoning efficacy, could be inferred from it. As his remarks contain all that can be said against the commonly received opinion that it contained an intimation of all these, we may quote them. They contain some truth and much error.

“One object of faith has been always the same; that object the Redeemer. The original promise in paradise created this prospect of faith to be the light and hope of the world for ever. But that original promise could not be interpreted by itself into the several parts of its appointed completion. The general prediction of the redeeming seed, ‘It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel,’ though adequate in the mind of God, to the determinate form of the
Christian redemption, could not be so deduced into its final sense by the mind of man. And since there is no other promise or prediction extant, applicable to the faith of the first ages, and explanatory of the mode of the Christian redemption, we can justly ascribe no other knowledge of that redemption to those ages than such as is comprehended in the proper and apparent sense of the first evangelical promise, in which the particular notion of a sacrifice of expiation or atonement, or, indeed, of any sacrifice was then impossible to be discovered. It was the office of later revelation to fill up the design of this promise, and revelation, alone, could do it. For the deductions of supernatural truth are not within the sphere of human intellect. They are not to be inferred as discoverable conclusions from one primary principle. A Redeemer being foretold, his Divine nature, his incarnation, the vicarious nature of his sufferings, his death, and the atoning efficacy of it, all these, though real connections of truth, comprehended with the original promise, in the scheme of the Divine economy, came down to man, like new streams of light, by these separate channels, and when they are communicated in their proper form, then we know them; not before.” (Inquiry, &c.)

One very misleading notion, as the reader will perceive from what has been already said, lies at the bottom of these remarks. It is assumed contrary to evidence, that the book of Genesis is a complete history of the religious opinions of the patriarchs, and that they knew nothing on the subject of theology but what appears on the face of the account given by Moses, who touches their theological system but incidentally. We say that this notion is unfounded, not only because we must necessarily infer, that in order to be religious, nay even moral men, they knew much more than the rapid Mosaic sketch includes; but we conclude this fact on the authority of the inspired writers of the New Testament. Thus, for instance, we have seen that Abraham had a revelation of a future state, and that Enoch prophesied of the “coming of the Lord to judgment, with thousands of his saints,” though neither of those revelations are recorded by Moses. But though this is sufficient to show that the view taken of the primitive theology, by Mr. Davison, and those whose opinions he has undertaken to advocate, is far too narrow, and that his conclusions, from such premises, must be unsatisfactory; it is not on this ground that his notion of the general and indefinite nature of the first promise shall be refuted. Let it be forgotten,
for a moment, that Adam was naturally the religious head and religious teacher of his family; that there was always an inspiration in the Church of God; that the general promises and prophecies were adapted to excite inquiry; and that spiritual men would always, more or less, as now, be led into the mystery veiled under the letter and symbol; yet, taking the prophecy simply by itself, it will be obvious from a careful consideration of it, that the view just given does not do it justice, and that it must have been more amply and more particularly understood than Mr. Davison, in support of his hypothesis, would represent. He would have it taken so generally as to be incapable of interpretation “into the several parts of its appointed completion,” and to be only able to convey some one general notion of a deliverer. But why are we to confine it to one general indistinct impression? Why, though the several parts of this prophetic promise should be allowed to be comparatively obscure, and their impression to be general, should it not be considered in the parts of which it is actually composed? and why should not each part have been apprehended separately and distinctively, though yet obscurely? Of several parts the prophecy is, in fact, composed, and to these parts, as well as to the general impression made by the whole, must the attention of the patriarchs have been necessarily directed. The Divine nature, the incarnation, the vicarious nature of Messiah’s sufferings, and their atoning efficacy, we are told, came to men “by separate channels,” and were not in any way to be apprehended in this promise. In their farther and full development we grant this; but let us see whether this promise, “interpreted even by itself,” must not have led the patriarchs many steps, at least, toward all these doctrines.

The Divine nature of the promised Redeemer, we are told, was a separate revelation; but, surely, this promise clearly indicated that he was to be of a superior nature, not only to man, but to that fell spirit whom he was to subdue, and whose subtlety, power, and malice, our first parents had so lamentably experienced; that he was to deprive him of that dominion which he had acquired over man, and restore the world from the evil effects which it had sustained from the success of his temptations. This was seen in the promise by an easy and natural interpretation, and the step from this to the absolute Divinity of this Restorer, or, at least, to an apprehension of the probability of it, was certainly not a large and difficult one. The blessings, too, which he was to procure for sinful man were of such a nature as to give the most exalted ideas of the being who could bring them back to man when forfeited by a most righteous sentence. They were
spiritual blessings. For, if our first parents were to derive any consolation or benefit from the promise in this life; if it was to turn their repentance to any account; or to give them any hope and confidence toward God, whom they had offended, to be assured that the head of the serpent should be bruised, then their attention must have been turned to spiritual blessings as the result of this, since in this life they neither obtained exemption from labour, suffering, or death. Now those who adopt the principle of Mr. Davison, and will allow of no revelations in those ages being assumed but those which are recorded by Moses, are bound to allow that there was in the promise something which was intended to give religious hope and comfort to the first pair, and to their immediate posterity, or they cannot account for the existence of religious worship and the hope which it implies, since there is no other recorded promise of the same antiquity, and they will allow nothing to be assumed beside what is written. If, then, this first promise ministered to the religious hope, faith, and comfort of our first parents, it turned that hope to the spiritual blessings which they had lost, namely, the favour of God and eternal life, and to these as coming to them through the bruising of the head of the serpent by the seed of the woman. The same conclusion we must come to, if we adopt what we appear compelled to do, on apostolic authority, the doctrine of collateral expository revelations, for these would throw light upon the figurative and symbolic terms of the promise, and show much of its real and spiritual import. In either case we must resort to this promise as the source of that hope of pardon and spiritual victory, which, from the time it was given, became an inmate in the bosoms of faithful men, and animated them in their moral conflicts. Whoever, then, the seed of the woman might be, he was, in this very promise, exhibited as the Restorer of the all-important spiritual blessings of the Divine favour, power over Satan, and eternal life. Thus their notions of his character, and, indeed, of his superior nature, would be still farther advanced.

But the bruising of the head of Satan, which could only be understood of a fatal blow to be inflicted on the power which he had acquired over man, and which had displayed itself in the introduction of suffering and death, in the evil dispositions of men toward each other, and all the miseries which so soon sprung up in society, directed their hope also to future blessings as to themselves and their posterity, which blessings could be no less than deliverance from the evils which the subtlety of the serpent had introduced, namely, as to them, deliverance from affliction and death; and, as to
society, a return to primeval purity. Whether they looked for this deliverance by a renovation of the present world, or by the introduction of the pious into another, we cannot say. If our first parents were, for some time, uncertain as to this point, the antediluvian family could not long remain so, since the doctrine of a future life was known to Enoch, and, if not before, was revealed to others by the fact of his translation, and he was but “the seventh from Adam.” But whether by the renovation of the earth, and the restoration of the body of man to immortality in this world, or by the resurrection of the body and the glorification of the soul in a future state, still was such a restoration implied in the promise, and the person by whom death was to be conquered and sin expelled from man’s heart, and immortality and bliss restored, was still “the seed of the woman.” That the Divinity of a being capable of bestowing such favours, was, at least, indicated in the first promise, is not, therefore, too strong a conclusion; and though new communications of this truth, coming through “separate channels,” illustrated the text of this revelation, yet in the channel of the original promise, through which came the first hope of “a Redeemer,” we see those concomitant circumstances from which it could not but be inferred, that he was, at least, super-human and super-angelic. He was the seed of the woman, and yet superior to “the archangel fallen” — and he was seen in that promise, as he is seen now, though with greater detail of circumstance, as the great medium of pardon, moral renovation, immortality, and eternal life.

It is equally untenable to say, that the doctrine of the incarnation was not to be deduced from the promise before us, but that this also came by “a separate channel.” The farther revelation of this truth opened for itself various courses, but it is there also. The being there spoken of as superior to the serpent, and as so superior to man, even in his innocence and perfection, that he should subdue the power which had subdued Adam, and recover what Adam lost, was, nevertheless to be “the SEED of the woman:” to be her offspring even in her fallen state; so that in truth so much of the doctrine of the incarnation was to be deduced from the promise, that this “seed of the woman” was at once to be man, and more than man. And then for the doctrine of his “vicarious sufferings,” and their efficacy, why should we be compelled wholly to look for the first indication of this to revelations coming to man through separate and later channels? These, we again thankfully acknowledge, have been abundantly opened; but, if we allow Adam and the patriarchs to have been men of but common powers of
reflection, (though to them a very vigorous and even cultivated intellect might in justice be conceded,) then the first indication of this truth also must have been seen in the first promise. It was comparatively dim and obscure we grant; but there was a substantive manifestation of it; and, to say nothing of collateral instruction from GOD himself, it was apprehended in the first promise, not by difficult and distant, but by near and natural inference, that the restoration of man should be effected by the sufferings of the Restorer. For what could be understood by the bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman in the conflict which was to spring from the enmity put between that seed, some one distinguished person so called, and the serpent, but a temporary injury and suffering? and why should he sustain the injury rather than any other descendant of the woman, except that the conflict, in which he engaged, was in his character of Redeemer, coming forth to the struggle for man’s sake, and for man’s rescue? As he was a being superior to man, and yet man, then is there an indication of his incarnation; if of his incarnation, then it was indicated also that his sufferings were voluntary, or to suffer could not spring from his weakness who was able to subdue, but from the will of him who chose, in this way, to subdue the grand enemy His suffering, then, was for man, and it was voluntary suffering for man; and if voluntary, then was there a connection between this his temporary voluntary suffering and the bruising of the serpent’s head, that is, his conquest over Satan, and the rescue of man from his dominion; in other words, there was an efficacy in his sufferings which connected themselves, not by accident, but by appointment and institution, with man’s salvation from those evils, spiritual and corporal, which had been induced by the power and malice of the devil.

Interpreted then by itself, there is much more in this promise than Mr. Davison has discovered in it. It exhibited to man the means of his salvation; this was to be effected by the interposition of a being of a superior nature, made “the seed of the woman;” his office was to destroy the works of the devil; he exposed himself to voluntary sufferings for this end; these sufferings had a direct efficacy and connection with man’s deliverance from the power of Satan, and, therefore, we may add, with the justice of GOD, since Satan could have no power over man but by God’s permission, which permission was a part of man’s righteous punishment. This last consideration is of great importance. For as the patriarchs, with their lofty and clear notions of the majesty of the Divine being, could not suppose that Satan had obtained any victory over him, or that the conflict between the
Redeemer and him was to be one of power merely, since they must have known that he might at any time have been expelled from his usurped dominion by the fiat of the Almighty; so the dominion of Satan must have been regarded by them in the light of a judicial permission for the punishment of sin, and exhibiting the awful justice and sanctity of the law of God. It would, therefore, necessarily follow, in their reasonings on this subject, that the sufferings of the seed of the woman, expressed by the bruising of his heel, as they were demonstrated to be voluntary on his part by the superior greatness of his nature, and were expressly appointed on the part of God, as appears from the very terms of the first promise, were connected with this exercise of punitive justice, and were designed to remove it. Here, then, the notion of satisfaction and atonement breaks in, and a basis was laid for the rite of expiatory sacrifice, and the conformity of that rite to the doctrine of the first promise is at once seen; it thus became a visible expression of the faith of the fathers in this appointed method of man’s deliverance.

There is nothing in this exposition of the import of the first promise which is so suggested by what we now know on these important subjects, as to be supposed out of the reach of the spiritually minded and reflecting part of the first family; and if so, then this promise may be considered as the basis of Abel’s faith, and its doctrine as visibly embodied in what was peculiar in Abel’s offering. Even if we were not able to refer to a promise sufficiently definite to support such an expression of faith, the former view we have taken would still hold good, that all faith necessarily supposes a previous revelation; and if faith does, by its acts, refer to a particular revelation, then an actual previous revelation of some particular doctrine, object, or view, must necessarily be supposed, or it is not faith, but fancy and presumption.

It is vainly urged against this, by Mr. Davison, that the faith spoken of by St. Paul in Hebrews xi, had for its simple and general object, that “God is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him.” For, though this is supposed as the ground of every act of faith, yet the special acts recorded have each their special object. Even, if it were not so, this general principle itself is not to be so generally and indefinitely interpreted, as Mr. Davison would have it, who tells us that the first creed was “that God is a rewarder,” and that the other articles were given by successive and distant revelations. This is a partial and delusive statement; for, from this very text, which surely Mr. Davison had no right to curtail, another article is to be assigned to the first creed, namely, that God is not merely a rewarder, but a
rewarder of those “that diligently seek him.” Even with respect to the first, as Mr. Law justly observes, “God cannot be considered as a rewarder of mankind in any other sense than as he is a fulfiller of his promises made to mankind in the covenant of Messiah. For God could not give, nor man receive, any rewards or blessings, but in and through one Mediator, Christ Jesus.” (Confutation of Warburton.) But we may add, that the rewarding mentioned by the apostle is connected with “seeking” him. Only to such he was or is a reward “who diligently seek him,” and this seeking or worshipping God supposes some appointed instituted method of approaching him, and which, therefore, must be regarded by an acceptable faith, and recognized by its external acts. This is not mere inference, for both Cain and Abel believed that “God is, and that he is a rewarder;” and they both sought him; but they sought him differently, and to Abel only and to his offering, that is, to his mode of “seeking” God, his Maker had respect. But farther, the whole chapter shows that, beside this general principle, the acts of faith there recorded reposed on antecedent revelations, either general or specific, which accorded with them. Noah’s faith respected the promise of his preservation in the ark; Abraham’s, that he should have a son, that his seed should possess the earthly Canaan, and he himself the heavenly Canaan; Moses’s faith, in the first instance recorded of it, respected the promises of spiritual and eternal blessings to those who should renounce the “pleasures of sin for a season,” and in the second, the promise of God to deliver Israel, and to fulfil the promise made to Abraham; and so also in the other instances given, the faith constantly respected some particular revelation from God. From all this, it will follow, that the apostle, in this chapter, did not intend to say that the object of faith, in any age whatever was exclusively, that God is a rewarder of whom they seek him, but that the elders who obtained the “good report” had faith in the word and promises of God, and for that had been honoured and rewarded. He lays down two principles, it is true, which must be assumed before any special act of faith can be exercised — “That God is,” or there could be no object of trust; and that he rewards them that “diligently seek him,” or there could be no motive to prayer, or to ask his interposition in any case; but these principles being admitted, then every word and promise of God becomes an object of faith to good men, who derive from this habit of trusting in God, on the authority of his own engagements, that courage and constancy by which they are distinguished, and are crowned with those rewards which he has always attached to faith.
And here, also, we may observe, that the notion stated above, that the mere belief by these ancient patriarchs that God is, and “that he is a rewarde,” could not be at all apposite to the purpose for which this recital of the faith of the elders was addressed to the Hebrews. The object of it was clearly to induce the Jews who believed, not “to cast away their confidence,” their faith in Christ. But what adaptation to this end can we discern in the dry statement that Abel and Enoch believed that God is, and that he is “a rewarde?” Had the Hebrews renounced Christ, and turned Jews again, they would still have believed these two points of doctrine. There are but two views of this recital of the instances of ancient faith which can harmonize it with the apostle’s argument and design. The first is to consider him as adducing this list of worthies as examples of a steady faith in all that God had then revealed to man, and of the happy effects which followed. The connection of this with his argument will then be obvious; for, by these examples, he urges the Hebrews to persevere in believing all that God had, “in these last days,” revealed of his Son, Jesus Christ, in disregard of the dangers and persecutions to which they were exposed on that account; because thus they would share in the “good report” and in the rewards of the “elders” of their own Church, and imitate the honourable piety of their ancestry. This is enough for our argument. But there is a second view, not to be slightly passed over, Which is, that these instances of ancient faith are adduced by the apostle to prove that all the “elders” of the patriarchal and Jewish Churches had faith in THE CHRIST TO COME, and that, therefore, the Hebrews would be the imitators of their faith and the partakers of its rewards in “holding fast their confidence,” their faith in the same Christ who had already come, and whom they had received as such. Nor is even this stronger view difficult to be made out; for, though the different acts and exercises of faith ascribed to them have respect to different promises and revelations, some spiritual, some temporal, and some mixed, yet may we trace in all of them a respect, more or less immediate, to the leading object of all faith, the Messiah himself. We have seen that Abel’s faith had respect to the method of man’s justification, through the sufferings of the seed of the woman. As that seed was appointed to remedy the evils brought into the world by the serpent, it is clear that eternal life could only be expected with reference to him, and Enoch’s lofty faith in a future heavenly state consequently looked to him then, like ours now, as “the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him,” — a conclusion, as to this patriarch, which is rendered stronger by his prophecy of Christ’s coming to judgment” with ten thousand of his
saints.” Noah’s faith had immediate respect to the promise of God to preserve him in the ark; but it cannot be disconnected from his faith in the first promise and other revelations of the bruising of the head of the serpent by Messiah, a promise which had not been accomplished, and which, if he believed God to be faithful, he must have concluded could not fall to the ground, and that his preservation, in order to prevent the human race from extinction, and to bring in the seed of the woman, in the fulness of time, was connected with it. His faith in God, as his deliverer, was bound up, therefore, we may almost say necessarily, with his faith in the Redeemer, and the one was the evidence of the other; for which reason, principally, it probably was, that the apostle says “that he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” All the acts of Abraham’s faith had respect, immediately or ultimately, to the promised seed. The possession of Canaan by his posterity, from whom the Messiah was to spring, — the enjoyment of eternal life for himself, which was the final effect of his justification by faith in the seed in whom all nations were to be blessed, — the transaction as to Isaac, when he believed that God would raise him from the dead, because he believed that the promise could not fail which had declared that the Messiah should spring from Isaac, — “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The faith of Isaac, in blessing, or prophesying of the condition of Jacob and Esau, had still reference to the Messiah, who was to descend from Jacob, not Esau, and the lot of whose posterity was regulated accordingly. The same observation may be made as to Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, and Joseph’s making mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and giving commandment concerning his bones: both related to the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, and both were complicated with the relation of that event to, and the peculiarity stamped upon Israel, by the expected coming of Messias. When Moses, by faith, full of the hopes of immortality, renounced the temptations of the Egyptian court, the reproach he endured is called “the reproach of Christ,” the apostle thus plainly intimating, that it was through the expected Messiah that he looked for the hope of eternal life,” the recompense of the reward.” His faith, as leader of the hosts of Israel, was connected with the promises of God to give them possession of the land of Canaan as their patrimony, as that was with the advent of the Messiah among them “in the fulness of time.” The faith of Rahab may appear more remotely connected with the promise of Messiah: but the connection may still be traced. She believed in the God of Israel as the true God; but by entertaining and preserving the spies, she also intimated her faith in the promise of God to give the
descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan for their inheritance, which
design she could only know from the promises made to Abraham, either
traditionally from him, who had himself long resided in Canaan, or by
information from the spies; and if she had this knowledge in either way, it
is not difficult to suppose her informed, also, as to *the seed* promised to
Abraham, in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. I incline
to think, that the faith of Rahab had respect not so much to any
information she received from the spies, as to traditions derived from
Abraham. Whether she stood, by her descent, in any near relation to those
with whom Abraham had more immediately conversed, or whether
Abraham had very publicly testified in Canaan God’s design to establish his
posterity there, and to raise up from among them the holy seed, the
Messiah, I will not pretend to determine; but there are two reasons which,
at least, make it probable that Abraham gave a *public* testimony to
religious truth during his residence in Canaan. The first is, his residence in
tents; thereby “*declaring plainly,*” says the Apostle Paul, “that he sought a
better country, even a heavenly;” that is, declaring it to the Canaanites, or
the action would have had no meaning, declaring this doctrine to the
people of his own age. The second is, that the same apostle gives it as a
reason for the preservation of Rahab, that she believed, while those “that
believed not” perished, meaning plainly the rest of the Canaanites. Now,
what were they to believe, and why were they guilty for not believing? The
only rational answer to be given is, that they had had the means of knowing
the designs of God, as to Abraham and his posterity, from whom the
promised Messiah was to spring; and that, not crediting the testimony
given first by Abraham, and which was afterward confirmed by the
wonders of Egypt, but setting themselves against the designs of God, they
“perished” judicially, while Rahab, on account of her faith in these
revelations, was preserved.

With respect to “Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and
Daniel, and Samuel,” they were judges, kings, and conquerors. They had a
lofty faith in the special promises of success, which God was pleased to
make to them; but that faith, also, sprung from, and was supported by, the
special relation in which their nation stood to Jehovah; they were the seed
of Abraham; they held their land by the grant of the Most High; they were
all taught to look for the rising of the mighty prince Messiah among them,
and their faith in special promises of success, could not but have respect to
all these covenant engagements of God with their people, and may be
considered as in no small degree grounded upon them, and, in its special acts, as an evidence that they had this faith in the deeper and more comprehensive promises. Certain it is, that one of them mentioned in this list of warriors, David, does, in the very songs in which he celebrates his victories, almost constantly blend them with the conquests of Messiah; which is itself a marked and eminent proof of the connection which was constantly kept up in the minds of the pious governors of Israel between the political fortunes of their nation and the promises which respected the seed of Abraham. As to the prophets, also mentioned by the apostle, they were constantly made the channels of new revelations as to the Messiah, and their faith, therefore, had an immediate reference to him; and for the sufferers in the cause of religious truth, so honourably recorded, the martyrs of the Old Testament who had “trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, were stoned, sawn asunder,” &c, they are all represented as supported by their hope of immortality and a resurrection; blessings which, from the first, were acknowledged to come to man only through the appointed Redeemer. Thus the faith of all had respect to Christ, either more directly or remotely; and, if farther proof were necessary, all that has been said is crowned by the concluding sentence of the apostle — “and these all having obtained a good report, through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect;” which “better thing,” whether it mean the personal appearance of Messiah, or their reception into heaven by a resurrection, which God determined should not take place as to the Church separately, but in a body, proves that not only did their faith look back to special promises of succour, deliverance, and other blessings; but was constantly looking forward to Christ, and to the blessings of a resurrection and eternal life, which he was to bestow. This, he affirms, too, was the case with ALL whom he had mentioned — “these ALL DIED in the faith;” but in what faith did they die? not the faith they had in the promises of the various deliverances mentioned in the chapter; those special acts of faith were past, and the special promises to which they were directed were obtained long before death: they died in the faith of unaccomplished promises — the appearance of Messiah, and the obtaining of eternal life through him.

Enough has been said to prove, that the sacrifice of Abel was expiatory, and that it conformed, as an act of faith, to some anterior revelation. If that revelation were only that which is recorded in the first promise, on which some remarks have been offered, Abel’s faith accorded with its general
indication of the doctrine of vicarious suffering; but his visibly representing
his faith in these doctrines, by an animal sacrifice, is not to be resolved into
the invention and device of Abel, though he himself should be assumed to
have been the first to adopt this rite, unless we suppose him to have been
under special direction. It is very true, and a point not to be at any time lost
sight of, that the open and marked acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice was a
Divine confirmation of the mode of approaching him by animal sacrifice;
and seems to have been intended as instructive and admonitory to the
world, and to have invested this mode of worship with a renewed and more
signal stamp of Divine appointment than heretofore. That in this light it
was considered by the apostle, appears plainly deducible from his words,
“and by it, (his sacrifice,) he being dead, yet speaketh.” By words more
emphatic he could not have marked the importance of that act, as an act of
public and sanctioned instruction. Abel “spoke” to all succeeding ages, and
continues to speak, not by his personal righteousness, not by any other
circumstance whatever, but by his sacrifice, (for with θυσιας understood,
must αυτης agree;) and in no way could he, except by his sacrifice as
distinct from that of Cain, speak to future ages, and as that sacrifice taught
how sinful guilty men were to approach God, and was a declaration of the
necessity of atonement for their sins. We should think this a sufficient
answer to all who complain of the want of an express indication of the
Divine appointment of animal expiatory sacrifice in the first family. The
indication called for is here express, since this kind of sacrifice was
accepted, and an offering, not animal and not expiatory, was as publicly
rejected; and since, also, Abel, as we may conclude from the apostle’s
emphatic words, did not act in this affair merely as a private man; but as
one who was, by his acts, to instruct and influence others — “by it he,
being dead, yet,” even to this day, “speaketh.”

Decidedly, however, as this circumstance marked out a sanctioned method
of approaching God, we think that Abel rather conformed to a previously
appointed sacrificial institution than then, for the first time, offered an
animal and expiatory sacrifice, though it should be supposed to be under a
Divine direction. For Cain could not have been so blamable had he not
violated some rule, some instituted practice, as to the mode of worship;
and, after all that has been said, the clothing of our first parents with the
skins of beasts, cannot so well be accounted for as by supposing those
skins to have been taken from animals offered in sacrifice.
But whether this typical method of representing the future atonement first took place with Abel, or previously with Adam, a Divine origin must be assigned to it. The proof of this has been greatly anticipated in the above observations, which have been designed to establish the expiatory character of Abel’s offering; but a few additional remarks on this subject may not be useless.

The human invention of primitive animal sacrifice is a point given up by Mr. Davison, and other writers on the same side, if such sacrifices can be proved expiatory. The human invention of eucharistic offerings they can conceive; and Mr. Davison thinks he can find a natural explanation of the practice of offering animal sacrifice, if considered as a confession of guilt; but for “that condition of animal sacrifice, its expiatory atoning power,” he observes, “I confess myself unable to comprehend how it can ever be grounded on the principles of reason, or deduced from the light of nature. There exists no discernible connection between the one and the other. On the contrary, nature has nothing to say for such an expiatory power, and reason every thing against it. For that the life of a brute creature should ransom the life of a man; that its blood should have any virtue to wash away his sin, or purify his conscience, or redeem his penalty; or that the involuntary sufferings of a being, itself unconscious and irrational, should have a moral efficacy to his benefit or pardon, or be able to restore him with GOD, these are things repugnant to the sense of reason, incapable of being brought into the scale of the first ideas of nature, and contradictory to all genuine religion, natural and revealed. For as to the remission of sin, it is plainly altogether within the prerogative of GOD, an act of his mere mercy; and since it is so, every thing relating to the conveyance and the sanction, the profession, and the security of it, can spring only from his appointment.”

But this being allowed, and nothing can be more obvious, then it follows, that the patriarchal sacrifices, if proved to be expiatory, as the means of removing wrath from offenders, and of conveying and sanctioning pardon, must be allowed to have had Divine institution, and the notion of their being of human device, must, in consequence, be given up. In proof of this, we have seen that Abel’s justification was the result of his faith, and that this faith was connected with that in his sacrifice which distinguished it from the offering of Cain; and thus its expiatory character is established by its having been the means to him of the remission of sin; and the appointed medium of the “conveyance” and “security” of the benefit. We have also
seen, that Noah’s burnt offering was connected with the averting of the
wrath of God from the future world, so that not even its wickedness should
lead him again “to destroy all flesh” by a universal flood; that the sacrifices
of the friends of Job were of the same expiatory character; and that the
reason for the prohibition of blood was, under both dispensations, the
patriarchal and the Mosaic, the same. To these may be added two passages
in Exodus, which show that animal sacrifices, among the patriarchs, were
offered for averting the Divine displeasure, and that this notion of sacrifice
was entertained by the Israelites, previous to the giving of the law. “Let us
go, I pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the
Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword,”
Exodus 5:3. “Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that
we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God,” Exodus 10:25, 26. The
remark of Dr. Richie (Pec. Doc.) is here pertinent. “In these two passages
Moses and Aaron speak of sacrificing not as a new and uncommon thing,
but as a usual mode of worship, with which Pharaoh was as well
acquainted as themselves, consequently a thing that was not a late or new
invention.” And in pursuance of the same argument it may be noted, that
Moses, even in the law, nowhere speaks of expiatory sacrifice as a new
institution, a rite which was henceforward to be considered as bearing a
higher character than formerly; but as a thing familiar to the people. Now
such an intimation would, doubtless, have been necessary on the very
ground just stated, the repugnancy of animal sacrifices, considered as
expiatory, to nature and reason; but to prepare them for such a change, for
an institution so repugnant to the former class and order of their notions on
this subject, there is nothing said by Moses, no intimation of an alteration
in the character of sacrifice is given; but a practice manifestly familiar is
brought under new and special rules, assigned to certain persons as the
sacrificers, and to certain places, and appropriated to the national religion,
and the system of a theocratical government. Whence, then, did this
familiarity with the notion of expiatory sacrifice arise among the Israelites?
If the book of Genesis were written previously to the law, and they
collected the notion from that, then this is proof that they understood the
patriarchal sacrifices to be expiatory; and if, as others think, that book was
not written the first in the series of the Pentateuch, but the last, they had
the notion from tradition and custom.

Though we think that the evidence of Scripture is of sufficient clearness to
establish the Divine origin of the antediluvian sacrifices; and with Hallet,
(in Hebrews 11:4,) regard the public Divine acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice as amounting to a *demonstration* of their institution by the authority of God, the argument drawn from the *natural incongruity* of sacrificial rites, on which so many writers have forcibly dwelt, ought not to be overlooked. It comes in to confirm the above deductions from Scripture, and though it has been sometimes attacked with great ingenuity, it has never been solidly refuted. “It is evident,” says Delany, (*Revelation Examined,* ) “that unprejudiced reason never could antecedently dictate, that destroying the best of our fruits and creatures could be an office acceptable to God, but quite the contrary. Also, that it did not prevail from any demand of nature is undeniable, for I believe that no man will say that we have any natural instinct or appetite to gratify in spilling the blood of an innocent, inoffensive creature upon the earth, or burning his body upon an altar. Nor could there be any temptation from appetite to do this in those ages, when the whole sacrifice was consumed by fire, or when, if it were not, yet men wholly abstained from flesh.”

The practice cannot be resolved into *priestcraft,* for no order of priests was then instituted; and if men resolve it into *superstition,* they must not only suppose that the first family were superstitious, but, also, that God, by his acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice, gave his sanction to a superstitious and irrational practice; and if none will be so bold as this, there remains no other resource, than to contend for its *reasonableness,* in opposition to the argument just quoted from Delany; and to aid the case by assuming, also, that it was the dictate of a delicate and enlightened sentimentalism. This is the course taken by Mr. Davison, who has placed what others have urged with the same intent, in the most forcible light, so that, in refuting him, we refute all. To begin with “the more simple forms of oblation;” those offerings of the fruits of the earth, which have been termed eucharistical, “reason,” says Mr. Davison, “seems to recognize them at once; they are the tokens of a commemorative piety, rendering to the Creator and supreme Giver a portion of his gifts, in confession of his original dominion in them, and of his continued favour and beneficence.” But this is very far from being a rational account of even simple thank offerings of fruits; supposing such offerings to have been really made in those primitive times. Of this, in fact, we have no evidence, for we read only of one oblation of this kind, that of Cain, and it was not accepted by God. But waiving that objection, and supposing such offerings to have formed a part of the primitive worship, from whence, we may ask, did men obtain the notion, that in such
acts they gave back to the supreme Giver some portion of his gifts? It is not, surely, assumed by the advocates of this theory, that the first men were like those stupid idolaters of following ages, who thought that the deities themselves feasted upon the oblations brought to their temples. On the contrary, their views of God were elevated and spiritual, and whenever such a Being is acknowledged, it is clear, that the notion of giving back anything to him, can only be a rational one, when he has appointed something to be done in return for his gifts, or to be appropriated to his service; which leads us at once to the doctrine of a Divine institution. The only rational notion of a return to God as an acknowledgment for his layouts, when notions of his spirituality and independence are entertained, is that of gratitude, and thanksgiving, and obedience. These form “a reasonable service;” but when we go beyond these, we may well be at a loss to know “what we can give unto him.” If he requires more than these, as acknowledgments of our dependence and his goodness, how should we know that he requires more, unless we had some revelation on the subject? And if we had a general revelation, importing that something more would be acceptable, how should we be able to fix upon one particular thing, as the subject of such an oblation, more than another? A Divine institution would invest such offerings with a symbolical, or a typical character, or both; and then they would have a manifest reason; but, assuredly, independent of that, they would rest upon no rational ground whatever; there could be no discernible connection between the act and the end, in any case where the majesty and spirituality of God were recognized. Mr. Davison assumes that, though “the prayer or the oblation cannot purchase the favour of God, it may make us fitter objects of his favour.” But, we ask, even if we should allow that prayer makes us fitter objects of his favour, how we could know even this without revelation; or, if we could place this effect to the account of prayer by something like a rational deduction, how we could get the idea, that to approach a spiritual Being, with a few handfuls of fruit gathered from the earth, and to present them in addition to our prayers, should render us the “fitter objects” of the Divine beneficence? There is no rational connection between the act and the end, on which to establish the conclusion.

Reason failing here, recourse is had to sentiment.

“In the first dawn of the world, and the beginnings of religion, it is reasonable to think that the direction of feeling and duty was more exclusively toward God. The recent creation of the world, the
revelations in paradise, and the great transactions of his providence, may well be thought, to have wrought a powerful impression on the first race, and to have given them, though not a purer knowledge, yet a more intimate and a more intense perception, of his being and presence. — The continued miracle of the actual manifestations of God would enforce the same impressions upon them. These having less scope of action in communion with their fellow creatures, in the solitude of life around them, in the great simplicity of the social state, and the consequent destitution of the objects of the social duties; their religion would make the acts of devotion its chief monuments of moral obligation. Works of justice and charity could have little place. Works of adoration must fill the void. And it is real action, not unembodied sentiment, which the Creator has made to be the master principle of our moral constitution. From these causes some boldness in the form of a representative character, some ritual clothed with the imagery of a symbolical expression, would more readily pass into the first liturgy of nature. Not simple adoration, not the naked and unadorned oblations of the tongue; but adoration invested in some striking and significative form, and conveyed by the instrumentality of material tokens, would be most in accordance with the strong energies of feeling, and the insulated condition of the primitive race.” (Primitive Sac.)

Two or three observations will be sufficient to dissipate all these fancy pictures.

1. It is not true, that the “recent creation of the world, the revelations in paradise,” &c, made that great moral impression upon the first men which is here described. That impression did not keep our first parents from sin; much less did it produce this effect upon Cain and his descendants; nor upon “the sons of God,” the race of Seth, who soon became corrupt; and so wickedness rapidly increased, until the measure of the sin of the world was filled up.

2. It is equally unfounded, that in that state of society “works of justice and charity could have little place, and that works of adoration must fill the void;” for the crimes laid to the charge of the antediluvians are wickedness, and especially violence, which is opposed both to justice and to charity; and it is impossible to suppose any state of society existing, since the fall, in which both justice and charity were not virtues of daily requirement, and
that in their constant and vigorous exercise. Cain, for instance, needed both, for he grossly violated both in hating and murdering his brother.

3. That strongly active devotional sentiment which Mr. Davison supposes to exist in those ages, which required something more to embody and represent it than prayer and praise, and which with so much plastic energy is assumed to have clothed itself “with the imagery of a symbolical expression,” is equally contradicted by the facts of the case. There was no such excess of the devotional principle. On Mr. Davison’s own interpretation of the “more abundant sacrifice,” more in quantity, one of the two brothers, first descended from the first pair, was deficient in it; the rapidly spreading wickedness of man shows that the religious sentiment was weak and not powerful; it is not seen even in the perverted forms of idolatry and superstition, for neither is charged upon the antediluvians, but moral wickedness only; and instead of their having “a more intense perception of the being and presence of God,” as Mr. Davison imagines for them, Moses declares “the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man to be only evil continually,” and that even long before the flood, and while men were alive who had conversed with Adam. Thus pass away the fancies on which this theory is built; nor is that of Bishop Warburton better supported, who resolves these early oblations into a representation by action, arising out of the “defects and imperfections of the primitive language;” for of these defects and imperfections there is not only not the least evidence, but the irresistible inference from the narrative of Moses is, that a language was in use in the first family sufficiently copious for all subjects of religion, as well as for the common intercourse of life. This notion also farther involves the absurdity and contradiction, that when man was created in perfection, he should not be endowed with the power of embodying his thoughts in language.

If, then, the presentation of the mere fruits of the earth to God as thank offerings and acknowledgments of dependence, cannot be reasonably accounted for without supposing a Divine institution, the difficulty is increased when animal oblations are added to these offerings, and considered also as merely eucharistical. All the difficulties just mentioned lie with equal force against such a designation of them, with these additional considerations,
1. That the putting beasts to death is an act farther removed from the idea of a mere oblation, since nothing would, without a revelation, appear less acceptable to a merciful and benevolent being.

2. A moral objection would also interpose. Man’s dominion of the creatures was from God; but it was to be exercised, like his power of every other kind, upon his responsibility. Wanton cruelty to animals, must, of necessity, have been considered a moral evil. To inflict pain and death upon even the noxious animals, without so clear a necessity as should warrant it, and without its being necessary to the “subduing” of the earth, could not be thought blameless, much less upon those innoxious animals which, from the beginning, were the only subjects of sacrifice. This would be felt the more strongly before flesh had been permitted to man for food, and when, so to speak, a greater sacredness was thrown around the life of the domestic animals than afterward; nor can it appear reasonable, even if we were to allow that a sort of sentimentality might lead man to fix upon the oblation of slain beasts as an expressive ritual to be added to the “Liturgy of Nature;” that, without any authority, any intimation from Heaven that such sacrifices would be well pleasing to GOD, men could conclude that a mere sentimental notion of ceremonial fitness, and giving “boldness to the representative character” of worship, would be a sufficient moral reason to take of their flocks and herds, and shed their blood and burn their flesh upon altars. Mr. Davison endeavours to meet the objection to the natural incogruity of animal sacrifices as acts of worship, by distinguishing between the two conditions of animal sacrifice, “the guilt of the worshipper and the expiation of his sin.” Expiatory sacrifice, we have seen, he gives up, as not for a moment to be referred to human invention, but thinks that there was no natural incongruity in the offering of animals as a mere acknowledgment of guilt, and as a confession of sin and the desert of death. But still, if we could trace any connection between this symbolical confession and the real case of man, which is difficult, if not impossible, what could lead him to the idea that more than simple confession of sin by the lips, and the penitent feelings of the heart, would be acceptable to God, if he had received no revelation on the subject? and if this, like the former, were a device of mere ceremonial sentimentalism, it was still too frail a ground to justify his putting the inferior creatures to death, without warrant from their Creator and Preserver. It is also equally unfortunate for this theory, and, indeed, wholly fatal to it, that the distinction of clean and unclean beasts existed, as we have already seen, before the flood. Upon
what, then, was this distinction founded? Not upon their qualities as good for food or otherwise, for animals were not yet granted for food; and the death of one animal would therefore have been just as appropriate as a symbol of gratitude, or as an acknowledgment of the desert of death, as another, — a horse as a heifer, a dog as a lamb. Nay, if animals were intended to represent the sinner himself, unclean and ferocious animals would have been fitter types of his fallen and sinful state; and that they were to be clean, harmless, and without spot, shows that they represented some other. The distinction of clean and unclean, however, did exist in that early period, and it is only to be accounted for by referring it to a sacrificial selection, and that upon Divine authority.

To the human invention of sacrifice, the objection of “will worship” has also been forcibly and triumphantly urged. “Who hath required this at your hands?” “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” This has the force of an axiom, which, if it ought not to be applied too rigidly to the minutiae of forms of worship when they connect themselves with authorized leading acts, yet must have a direct application to a worship which, in its substance and leading circumstance, was eminently sacrificial, if it be regarded as wholly of human device. “Thus,” says Hallet, “Abel must have worshipped God in vain, if his sacrificing had been merely a commandment of his father Adam, or an invention of his own;” and he justly asks, “why we do not now offer up a bullock, a sheep, or a pigeon, as a thank offering after any remarkable deliverance, or as an evidence of our apprehensions of the demerit of sin?” The sure reason is, because we cannot know that God will accept such “will worship,” and so conclude that we should herein worship God “in vain.”

The Divine institution of expiatory sacrifice being thus carried up to the first ages, and to the family of the first sinning man, we perceive the unity of the three great dispensations of religion to man, the PATRIARCHAL, the LEVITICAL, and the CHRISTIAN, in the great principle, “and without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” But one religion has been given to man since his fall, though gradually communicated. “This may be best denominated THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION, for its exclusive object, however modified externally, is to satisfy GOD’S justice, through the instrumentality of the woman’s predicted seed; to restore fallen man to the Divine image of holiness, by the agency of the gracious Spirit; and thus,
without compromising any one of God’s attributes, to reconcile an apostate race to their offended Creator.” (Faber’s Horæ Mos.)

We have now adduced the Scriptural evidence of the atonement made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world; a doctrine not speculative and indifferent, but vital to the whole scheme of Christianity; a doctrine which tends to produce the most awful sense of sin, and to afford the most solemn motive to repentance; which at once excites the most sublime views of the justice and mercy of GOD, and gives the most affecting exhibition of the compassion and love of Christ; which is the only ground of faith in the pardoning love of GOD, and the surest guard against presumption; and which, by opening access to God in prayer, keeps before man a safe and secure refuge amidst the troubles of life, and in the prospect of eternity. It is the only view, too, of the death of Christ which interprets the Holy Scriptures into a consistent and unequivocal meaning. Their language is wholly constructed upon it, and, therefore, can only be interpreted by it; it is the key to their style, their allusions, their doctrines, their prophecies, their types. All is confused and delusive without it; all clear, composed, and ordered, when placed under its illumination. To Christ under his sacrificial character, as well as in his regal claims, “give all the prophets witness;” and in this testimony all the services of the tabernacle, and the rights of the patriarchal age concur. Christ, as “the Lamb of GOD, was slain from the foundation of the world;” and when the world shall be no more, he will appear before his glorified saints, as “the Lamb newly slain,” shedding upon them the unabated efficacy of his death for ever. Nor is it a doctrine to be rejected without imminent peril. — “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you;” words which, as Whitby justly observes, “clearly declare the necessity of faith in his body given, and his blood shed for the remission of sins, in order to justification and salvation.”
CHAPTER 23. — BENEFITS DERIVED TO MAN FROM THE ATONEMENT — JUSTIFICATION.

When we speak of benefits received by the human race, in consequence of the atonement of Christ, the truth is, that man, having forfeited good of every kind, and even life itself, by his transgression, all that remains to him more than evil in the natural world, and in the dispensations of general and particular providence, as well as all spiritual blessings put within his reach by the Gospel, are to he considered as the fruits of the death and intercession of Christ, and ought to be gratefully acknowledged as such. We enjoy nothing in our own right, and receive all from the hands of the Divine mercy. We now, however, speak in particular of those benefits which immediately relate to, or which constitute what in Scripture is called our salvation; by which term is meant the deliverance of man from the penalty, dominion, and pollution of his sins; his introduction into the Divine favour in this life; and his future and eternal felicity in another.

The grand object of our redemption was to accomplish this salvation; and the first effect of Christ’s atonement, whether anticipated before his coming, as “the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,” or when effected by his passion, was to place God and man in that new relation, from which salvation might be derived to the offender.

The only relation in which an offended sovereign and a guilty subject could stand, in mere justice, was the relation of a judge and a criminal capitally convicted. The new relation effected by the death of Christ, is, as to God, that of an offended sovereign having devised honourable means to suspend the execution of the sentence of death, and to offer terms of pardon to the condemned; and, as to man, that as the object of this compassion, he receives assurance of the placableness of God, and his readiness to forgive all his offences, and may, by the use of the prescribed means, actually obtain this favour.

To this is to be added another consideration. God is not merely disposed to forgive the offences of men upon their suit and application; but an affecting activity is ascribed in Scripture to the compassion of God. The atonement of Christ having made it morally practicable to exercise mercy, and having removed all legal obstructions out of the way of reconciliation, that mercy
pours itself forth in ardent and ceaseless efforts to accomplish its own purposes, and not content with waiting the return of man in penitence and prayer, “God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;” that is to say, he employs various means to awaken men to a due sense of their fallen and endangered condition, and to prompt and influence them (sometimes with mighty efficacy) to seek his favour and grace, in the way which he has himself ordained in his revealed word.

The mixed and chequered external circumstances of men in this present life is a providential arrangement which is to be attributed to this design; and, viewed under this aspect, it throws an interesting light upon the condition of mankind, unknown to the wisest among these nations which have not had the benefits of revealed religion, except that some glimpses, in a few cases, may have been afforded of this doctrine by the scattered and broken rays of early tradition. Nor has this been always adverted to by those writers who have enjoyed the full manifestations of Divine truth in the Scriptures. By many, the infliction of labour, and sorrow, and disappointment upon fallen man, and the shortening of the term of human life, are considered chiefly, if not exclusively, as measures adopted to prevent evil, or of restraining its overflow in society. Such ends are, doubtless, by the wisdom of God, thus effected to a great and beneficial extent; but there is a still higher design. These dispensations are not only instruments of prevention, but designed means of salvation, preparatory to, and co-operative with those agencies, by which that result can only be directly produced. The state of man shows, that he is under a chequered dispensation, in which justice and forbearance, mercy and correction, have all their place, and in which there is a marked adaptation to his state as a reprieved criminal; a being still guilty, but within the reach of hope. The earth is cursed; but it yields its produce to man’s toil; life is prolonged in some instances and curtailed in others, and is uncertain to all; we have health and sickness; pleasures and pains; gratifications and disappointment; but as to all, in circumstances however favoured, dissatisfaction and restlessness of spirit are still felt; a thirst which nothing earthly can allay, a vacancy which nothing in our outward condition can supply. There is a manifestation of mercy to save, as well as of wisdom to prevent, and the great end of the whole is explained by the inspired record. “Lo all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to keep back his soul from the pit.” His “goodness” is designed to lead us “to repentance,” his rod to teach us wisdom. “In the day of adversity consider.”
Another benefit granted for the same end, is the revelation of the will of God, and the declaration of his purposes of grace as to man’s actual redemption. These purposes have been declared to man, with great inequality we grant, a mystery which we are not able to explain; but we have the testimony of God in his own word, though we cannot in many cases trace the process of the revelation, that in no case, that in no nation, “has he left himself without witness.” Oral revelations were made to the first men; these became the subject of tradition, and were carried into all nations, though the mercy of God, in this respect, was abused by that wilful corruption of his truth of which all have been guilty. To the Jews he was pleased to give a written record of his will; and the possession of this, in its perfect evangelical form, has become the distinguished privilege of all Christian nations, who are now exerting themselves to make the blessing universal, a result which probably is not far distant. By this direct benefit of the atonement of Christ, the law under which we are all placed is exhibited in its full, though reproving, perfection; the character of “Him with whom we have to do” is unveiled; the history of the redeeming acts of our Saviour is recorded; his example, his sufferings, his resurrection, and intercession, the terms of our pardon, the process of our regeneration, the bright and attractive path of obedience, are all presented to our meditations, and, surmounting the whole, is that “immortality which has been brought to light by the Gospel.” Having the revelation, also, in this written form, it is guarded against corruption, and, by the multiplication of copies in the present day, it has become a book for family reading, and private perusal and study; so that neither can we, except wilfully, remain ignorant of the important truths it contains, nor can they be long absent from the attention of the most careless; from so many quarters are they obtruded upon them.

To this great religious advantage we are to add the institution of the Christian ministry, or the appointment of men, who have been themselves reconciled to God, to preach the word of reconciliation to others, to do this publicly, in opposition to all contempt and persecution, in every place where they may be placed, and to which they can have access: to study the word of God themselves, faithfully and affectionately to administer it to persons of all conditions; and thus, by a constant activity, to keep the light of truth before the eyes of men, and to impress it upon their consciences.

These means are all accompanied with the influence of the Holy Spirit; for it is the constant doctrine of the Scriptures, that men are not left to the
mere influence of a revelation of truth, and the means of salvation; but are graciously excited and effectually aided in all their endeavours to avail themselves of both. Before the flood, the Holy Spirit is represented as “striving” with men, to restrain them from their wickedness, and to lead them to repentance. This especially was his benevolent employ, as we learn from St. Peter, during the whole time that “the ark was preparing,” the period in which Noah fulfilled his ministry as “preacher of righteousness” to the disobedient world. Under the law, the wicked are said to “grieve” and “resist” the Holy Spirit; and good men are seen earnestly supplicating his help, not only in extraordinary cases, and for some miraculous purpose, but in the ordinary course of religious experience and conflict. The final establishment and the moral effects flowing from Messiah’s dominion, are ascribed, by the prophets, to the pouring out of the Spirit, as rain upon the parched ground, and as the opening of rivers in the desert; and that the agency of the Spirit is not confined, in the New Testament, to gifts and miraculous powers, and their effects in producing mere intellectual conviction of the truth of Christianity, but is directed to the renovation of our nature, and the carrying into full practical effect the redeeming designs of the Gospel, is manifest from numerous passages and arguments to be found in the discourses of Christ and the writings of his apostles. In our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus, he declares that the regenerate man is “born of the Spirit.” He promises to send the Spirit “to convince (or reprove) the world of sin.” It is by the Spirit that our Lord represents himself as carrying on the work of human salvation, after his return to heaven, and in this sense promises to abide with his disciples for ever, and to be with them “to the end of the world.” In accordance with this, the apostles ascribe the success of their preaching, in producing moral changes in the hearts of men, to the influence of the Spirit. So far from attributing this to the extraordinary gifts with which the Spirit had furnished them, St. Paul denies that this efficacy was to be ascribed either to himself or Apollos, though both were thus richly endowed; and he expressly attributes the “increase,” which followed their planting and watering, to God. The Spirit is, therefore, represented as giving life to the dead souls of men; the moral virtues are called “fruits of the Spirit;” and to be “led by the Spirit,” is made the proof of our being the sons of GOD.

Such is the wondrous and deeply affecting doctrine of Scripture. The fruit of the death and intercession of Christ, is not only to render it consistent with a righteous government to forgive sin, but to call forth the active
exercise of the love of God to man. His “good Spirit,” the expressive appellation of the third person of the blessed trinity in the Old Testament, visits every heart, and connects his secret influences with outward means, to awaken the attention of man to spiritual and eternal things, and win his heart to GOD. \footnote{16}

To this operation, this “working of God in man,” in conjunction with the written and preached word, and other means of religious instruction and excitements, is to be attributed that view of the spiritual nature of the law under which we are placed, and the extent of its demands, which produces conviction of the fact of sin, and at once annihilates all self righteousness, and all palliations of offence; which withers the goodly show of supposititious virtues, and brings the convicted transgressor, whatever his character may be before men, and though, in comparison of many of his fellow creatures, he may have been much less sinful, to say before God, “Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee.” The penalty of the law, death, eternal death, being at the same time apprehended, and meditated upon, the bondage of fear, and the painful anticipations of the consequences of sin follow, and thus he is moved by a sense of danger, to look out for a remedy; and this being disclosed in the same revelation, and unfolded by the same Spirit, from whose secret influence he has received this unwonted tenderness of heart, this “broken and contrite spirit,” he confesses his sins before God, and appears like the publican in the temple, smiting upon his breast, exclaiming, “God be merciful to me a sinner:” — thus at once acknowledging his own offence and unworthiness, and flying for refuge to the mercy of his offended God proclaimed to him in Christ. That which every such convinced and awakened man needs is mercy, the remission of his sins, and consequent exemption from their penalty. It is only this which can take him from under the malediction of the general law which he has violated; only this which can bring him into a state of reconciliation and friendship with the Lawgiver, whose righteous displeasure he has provoked. This act of mercy is, in the New Testament, called justification, and to the consideration of this doctrine we must now direct our attention.

On the nature of justification, its extent, and the mode in which it is attained, it is not necessary to say, that various opinions have been asserted and defended by theologians; but before we advert to any of them, our care shall be to adduce the natural and unperverted doctrine of Scripture on a
subject which it is of so much importance to apprehend clearly, in that light in which it is there presented.

The first point which we find established by the language of the New Testament is, that justification, the pardon and remission of sins, the non-imputation of sin, and the imputation of righteousness, are terms and phrases of the same import. The following passages may be given in proof:

Luke 18:13, 14, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” Here the term “justified” must mean pardoned, since the publican confessed himself “a sinner,” and asked ‘mercy” in that relation.

Acts 13:38, 39, “Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Here, also, it is plain that forgiveness of sins and justification mean the same thing, one term being used as explanatory of the other.

Romans 3:25, 26, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” To remit sins and to justify are here also represented as the same act; consequent upon a declaration of the righteousness of God, and upon our faith.

Romans 4:4-8, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness; even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” The quotation from David, introduced by the apostle, by way of illustrating his doctrine of the justification of the ungodly, by “counting his faith for righteousness,” shows clearly, that he considered “justification,” “the imputing of righteousness,” “the forgiveness of iniquities,” the “covering of sin,” the “non-imputation of sin,” as of the same import; acts substantially equivalent one to another, though under somewhat different views, and therefore expressed by terms
respectively convertible; — this variety of phrase being adopted, probably, to preserve the idea which runs throughout the whole Scripture, that in the remission or pardon of sin, Almighty God acts in his character of Ruler and Judge, showing mercy upon terms satisfactory to his justice, when he might in rigid justice have punished our transgressions to the utmost. The term justification especially is judiciary, and taken from courts of law and the proceedings of magistrates; and this judiciary character of the act of pardon is also confirmed by the relation of the parties to each other, as it is constantly exhibited in Scripture. God is an offended Sovereign; man is an offending subject. He has offended against public law, not against private obligations; and the act therefore by which he is relieved from the penalty, must be magisterial and regal. It is, also, a farther confirmation that in this process Christ is represented as a public Mediator and Advocate.

The importance of acquiring and maintaining this simple and distinct view of justification, that it is the remission of sins, as stated in the passages above quoted, will appear from the following considerations: —

1. We are taught that pardon of sin is not an act of prerogative, done above law; but a judicial process, done consistently with law. For in this process there are three parties. God, as Sovereign; “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?” Christ, as Advocate; not defending the guilty, but interceding for them; “It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,” Romans 8:33, 34. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,” 1 John 2:1. The third party is man, who is, by his own confession, “guilty,” “a sinner,” “ungodly;” for repentance in all cases precedes this remission of sins, and it both supposes and confesses offence and desert of punishment. God is Judge in this process, not, however, as it has been well expressed “by the law of creation, and of works, but by the law of redemption and grace. Not as merely just, though just; but as merciful. Not as merciful in general, and ex nuda voluntate, without any respect had to satisfaction; but as propitiated by the blood of Christ, and having accepted the propitiation made by his blood. Not merely propitiated by his blood, but moved by his intercession, which he makes as our Advocate in heaven; not only pleading the propitiation made and accepted, but the repentance and faith of the sinner, and the promise of the Judge before whom he pleads.” (Lawson’s Theo-politica.) Thus as pardon or justification does not take place but upon propitiation, the mediation and
intercession of a third party, and on the condition on the part of the guilty, not only of repentance, but of “faith” in Christ’s “blood,” which, as before established, means faith in his sacrificial death, it is not an act of more mercy, or of prerogative; but one which consists with a righteous government, and proceeds on grounds which secure the honours of the Divine justice.

2. We are thus taught that justification has respect to particular individuals, and is to be distinguished from “that gracious constitution of God, by which, for the sake of Jesus Christ, he so far delivers all mankind from the guilt of Adam’s sin, as to place them, notwithstanding their natural connection with the fallen progenitor of the human race, in a salvable state. Justification is a blessing of a much higher and more perfect character, and is not common to the human race at large, but experienced by a certain description of persons in particular.” (Bunting’s Sermon on Justification.) Thus some of our older divines properly distinguish between sententia legis and sententia judicis, that is, between legislation and judgment; between the constitution, whatever it may be, under which the sovereign decides, whether it be rigidly just or softened by mercy, and his decisions in his regal and judicial capacity themselves. Justification is, therefore, a decision under a gracious legislation, “the law of faith;” but not this legislation itself. “For if it be an act of legislation, it is then only promise, and that looks toward none in particular; but to all to whom the promise is made, in general, and pre-supposeth a condition to be performed. But justification pre-supposeth a particular person, a particular cause, a condition performed, and the performance, as already past, pleaded; and the decision proceeds accordingly.” (Lawson’s Theo-politica.) Justification becomes, therefore, a subject of personal concern, personal prayer, and personal seeking, and is to be personally experienced; nor can any one be safe in trusting to that general gracious constitution under which he is placed by the mercy of God in Christ, since that is established in order to the personal and particular justification of those who believe, but must not be confounded with it.

3. Justification, being a sentence of pardon, the Antinomian notion of eternal justification becomes a manifest absurdity. For if it be a sentence, a decision on the case of the offender, it must take place in time; for that is not a sentence which is conceived in the breast of the Judge. A sentence is pronounced, and a sentence pronounced and declared from eternity, before man was created, when no sin had been committed, no law published, no
Saviour promised, no faith exercised, when, in a word, no being existed but God himself, is not only absurd, but impossible, for it would have been a decision declared to none, and therefore not declared at all: and if, as they say, the sentence was passed in eternity, but manifested in time, it might from thence be as rightly argued that the world was created from eternity, and that the work of creation in the beginning of time, was only a manifestation of that which was from everlasting. It is the guilty who are pardoned — “he justifieth the ungodly;” guilt, therefore, precedes pardon: while that remains, so far are any from being justified, that they are “under wrath,” in a state of “condemnation,” with which a state of justification cannot consist, for the contradiction is palpable; so that the advocates of this wild notion must either give up justification in eternity, or a state of condemnation in time. If they hold the former, they contradict common sense; if they deny the latter, they deny the Scriptures.

4. Justification, being the pardon of sin, this view of the doctrine guards us against the notion, that it is an act of God by which we are made actually just and righteous. “This is sanctification, which is, indeed, the immediate fruit of justification; but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God does for us through his Son; the other, what God works in us by his Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found, wherein the terms justified and justification are used in so wide a sense as to include sanctification also, yet in general use they are sufficiently distinguished from each other both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers.” (Wesley’s Sermons.)

5. Justification, being the pardon of sin by judicial sentence of the offended Majesty of heaven, under a gracious constitution, the term affords no ground for the notion, that it imports the imputation or accounting to us the active and passive righteousness of Christ, so as to make us both relatively and positively righteous.

On this subject, which has been fruitful of controversy, our remarks must be somewhat more extended.

The notion, that justification includes not only the pardon of sin, but the imputation to us of Christ’s active personal righteousness, though usually held only by Calvinists, has not been received by all divines of this class; but, on the contrary, by some of them, both in ancient and modern times, it has been very strenuously opposed, as well as by the advocates of that more moderate scheme of election defended by Camero in France, and by
Baxter in England. Even Calvin himself has said nothing on this subject, but which Arminius, in his Declaration before the States of Holland, declares his readiness to subscribe to; and Mr. Wesley, in much the same view of the subject as Arminius, admits the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us upon our believing, provided it be soberly interpreted.

There are, in fact, three opinions on this subject, which it is necessary to distinguish in order to obtain clear views of the controversy.

The first is a part of the high Calvinistic scheme, and lays at the foundation of Antinomianism, and is, in consequence, violently advocated by those who adopt that gross corruption of Christian faith. It is, that Christ so represented the elect that his righteousness is imputed to us as ours; as if we ourselves had been what he was, that is, perfectly obedient to the law of GOD, and had done what he did as perfectly righteous.

The first objection to this opinion is, that it is nowhere stated in Scripture that Christ’s personal righteousness is imputed to us. Not a text can be found which contains any enunciation of this doctrine; and those which are adduced, such as “the Lord our righteousness,” and “Christ who is made unto us righteousness,” are obviously pressed into the service of this scheme by a paraphrastic interpretation, for which there is no authority in any other passages which speak of our redemption. But to these texts we shall return in the sequel.

2. The notion here attached to Christ’s representing us is wholly gratuitous. In a limited sense it is true, that Christ represented us; that is, suffered in our stead, that we might not suffer; “but not absolutely as our delegate,” says Baxter, justly; “our persons did not, in a law sense, do in and by Christ what he did, or possess the habits which he possessed, or suffer what he suffered.” (Gospel Defended.) The Scripture doctrine is, indeed, just the contrary. It is never said, that we suffered in Christ, but that he suffered for us; so also it is never taught that we obeyed in Christ, but that, through his entire obedience to a course of subjection and suffering, ending in his death, our disobedience is forgiven.

3. Nor is there any weight in the argument, that as our sins were accounted his, so his righteousness is accounted ours. Our sins were never so accounted Christ’s as that he did them, and so justly suffered for them. This is a monstrous notion, which has been sometimes pushed to the verge
of blasphemy. Our transgressions are never said to have been imputed to him in the *fact*, but only that they were laid upon him in the *penalty*. To be God’s “beloved Son in whom he was always well pleased,” and to be reckoned, imputed, accounted a sinner, *de facto*, are manifest contradictions.

4. This whole doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s personal moral obedience to believers, as their own personal moral obedience, involves a fiction and impossibility inconsistent with the Divine attributes. “The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth; neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham.” (Wesley.) But a contradiction is involved in another view. If what our Lord was and did is to be accounted to us in the sense just given, then we must be accounted never to have sinned, because Christ never sinned, and yet we must ask for pardon, though we are accounted from birth to death, to have fulfilled God’s law in Christ: or if they should say, that when we ask for pardon we ask only for a revelation to us of our eternal justification or pardon, the matter is not altered, for what need is there of pardon, in time or eternity, if we are accounted to have perfectly obeyed God’s holy law; and why should we be accounted also to have suffered, in Christ, the penalty of sins which we are accounted never to have committed?

5. Another objection to the accounting of Christ’s personal acts as done by us is, that they were of a loftier character than can be supposed capable of being accounted the acts of mere creatures; that, in one eminent instance, neither the act could be required of us, nor the imputation of the act to us; and, in other respects, and as to particular duties, Christ’s personal obedience is deficient, and cannot be therefore reckoned to our account. For the first, Christ was God and man united in one person, a circumstance which gave a peculiar character of fulness and perfection to his obedience, which not even man, in his state of innocence, can be supposed capable of rendering. “He, then, that assumeth this righteousness to himself,” says Goodwin, “and appareleth himself with it, represents himself before God, not in the habit of a just or righteous man, but in the glorious attire of the great Mediator of the world, whose righteousness hath heights and depths in it, a length and breadth which infinitely exceed the proportions of all men whatever. Now, then, for a silly worm to take this robe of immeasurable majesty upon him, and to conceive himself as great in holiness
and righteousness as Jesus Christ, (for that is the spirit that rules in this opinion, to teach men to assume all that Christ did unto themselves, and that in no other way, nor upon any lower terms, than as if themselves had personally done it,) whether this be right, I leave to sober men to consider.” (*Treatise on Justification.*) For the second, I refer to our Lord’s baptism by John. His submission to this ordinance was a part of his personal righteousness, and it is strongly marked as such in his own words addressed to John, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil *all righteousness.*” But no man now is bound to submit to the baptism of John, and the righteousness of doing so, whether personally or by imputation, is superfluous. This may also be applied to many other of the acts of Christ; they were never obligatory upon us, and their imputation to us is impossible or unnecessary. For the third case, the personal obedience of Christ is, as to particular acts, deficient, and our condition could not, therefore, be provided for by this imputation. Suppose us guilty of violating the paternal or the conjugal duties, the duties of servants, or of magistrates, with many others, this theory is, that we are justified by the imputation of Christ’s personal acts of righteousness to us, and that they are reckoned to us, as though we had ourselves performed them. But our Lord, never having stood in any of these relations, never acquired a personal righteousness of this kind to be reckoned as done by us. That which never was done by Christ cannot be imputed, and so it would follow that we can never be forgiven such delinquencies. If it be said, that the imputation of particular acts is not necessary, but that it is sufficient if men have a righteousness imputed to them, which is equivalent to them, it is answered, the strict and peremptory nature of law knows nothing of this doctrine of the equivalency of one act to another. The suffering of an unobliged substitute, where such a provision is admitted, may be an equivalent to the suffering of the offender; but one course of duties cannot be accepted in the place of another when justification is placed on the ground of the actual fulfilment of the law by a delegate in the place of the delinquent, which is the ground on which the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness for justification places it. The law must exact conformity to all its precepts in their place and order, and he that “offends in one is guilty of all.”

6. A crowning and most fatal objection is, that this doctrine shifts the meritorious cause of man’s justification from Christ’s “obedience unto death,” where the Scriptures place it, to Christ’s active obedience to the
precepts of the law; and leaves no rational account of the reason of Christ’s vicarious sufferings. To his “blood” the New Testament writers ascribe our redemption, and “faith in his blood” is as clearly held out as the instrumental cause of our justification; but by this doctrine the attention and hope of men are perversely turned away from his sacrificial death to his holy life, which, though necessary, both as an example to us, and also so to qualify his sacrifice, that his blood should be that of “a lamb without spot,” is nowhere represented as that on account of which men are pardoned.

Piscator, though a Calvinist, thus treats the subject in scholastic form. “If our sins have been expiated by the obedience of the life of Christ, either a perfect expiation has been thus made for all of them, or an imperfect one for some of them. The first cannot be asserted, for then it would follow that Christ had died in vain; for as he died to expiate our sins, he would not have accounted it necessary to offer such an expiation for them, if they had been already expiated by the obedience of his life. And the latter cannot be maintained, because Christ has yielded perfect obedience to the law of God, wherefore, if he have performed that for the expiation of our sins, he must necessarily, through that obedience, have expiated all of them perfectly.” Again, “If Christ, by the obedience of his life, had rendered satisfaction to God for our sins, it would follow, as a consequence, that God is unjust, who has made an additional demand to receive satisfaction through the obedience of death, and thus required to have the same debt paid twice.” Again, “If Christ, by his obedience to the law, has merited for us the forgiveness of sins, the consequence will be, that the remission of sins was effected without the shedding of blood; but without shedding of blood no remission is effected, as appears from Hebrews 9:22; therefore Christ has not merited for us the remission of sins by the obedience which he performed to the law.” To the same effect, also, is a passage in Goodwin’s Treatise on Justification, written while he was yet a Calvinist. “If men be as righteous as Christ was in his life, there was no more necessity of his death for them, than there was either of his own death, or the death of any other, for himself. If we were perfectly just or righteous in him, or with him, in his life, then the just would not have died for the unjust, but he would have died for the just, for whom there was no necessity he should die. This reason the apostle expressly delivers, Galatians 2:21, ‘If righteousness be by the law, then Christ died in vain.’ I desire the impartial reader to observe narrowly the force of this inference made by the Holy Ghost. If righteousness, or justification, be by
the law, then Christ died in vain. Men cannot here betake themselves to their wonted refuge, to say, that by the law, is to be understood the works of the law as performed by a man’s self in person. For if by the word law in this place, we understand the works of the law as performed by Christ, the consequence will rise up with the greater strength against them. If righteousness were by the works of the law, as performed by Christ, that is, if the *imputation* of them were our complete righteousness, the death of Christ for us had been in vain, because the righteousness of his life imputed, had been a sufficient and complete righteousness for us.”

The same writer, also, powerfully argues against the same doctrine from its confounding the two covenants of works and grace.

“It is true, many that hold the way of imputation are nothing ashamed of this consequent, the confounding the two covenants of God with men, that of works with that of grace. These conceive that God never made more covenants than one with man; and that the Gospel is nothing else but a gracious aid from God to help man to perform the covenant of works: so that the life and salvation which are said to come by Christ, in no other sense come by him, but as he fulfilled that law of works for man which men themselves were not able to fulfil: and by *imputation*, as by a deed of gift, he makes over his perfect obedience and fulfilling of the law to those that believe; so that they, in right of this perfect obedience, made theirs by *imputation*, come to inherit life and salvation, according to the strict tenor of the covenant of works — ‘Do this and live.’

“But men may as well say, there was no second Adam, really differing from the first; or that the spirit of bondage is the same with the Spirit of adoption. If the second covenant of grace were implicitly contained in the first, then the meaning of the first covenant, conceived in those words, ‘Do this and live,’ must be, do this, either by thyself, or by another, and live. There is no other way to reduce them to the same covenant.

“Again, if the first and second covenant were in substance the same, then must the conditions in both be the same. For the conditions in a covenant are as essential a part of it as any other belonging to it. Though there be the same parties covenanting, and the same things covenanted for; yet if there be new articles of agreement, it is really another covenant. Now if the conditions be
the same in both those covenants, then to do this, and to believe, faith and works, are the same; whereas the Scripture, from place to place, makes the most irreconcilable opposition between them. But some, being shy of this consequence, hold the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (in the sense opposed) and yet demur upon an identity of the two covenants. Wherefore, to prove it, I thus reason: Where the parties covenanting are the same, and the things covenanted for the same, and the conditions the same, there the covenants are the same. But if the righteousness of the law imputed to us, be the condition of the new covenant, all the three, persons, things, conditions, are the same. Therefore the two covenants, first and second, the old and the new, are the same; because as to the parties covenanting, and the things covenanted for, it is agreed, on both sides, they are the same.

“If it be objected, that the righteousness of the law imputed from another, and wrought by a man’s self, are two different conditions; and that, therefore, it doth not follow, that the covenants are the same: to this I answer, the substance of the agreement will be found the same notwithstanding; the works, or righteousness of the law are the same, by whomsoever wrought. If Adam had fulfilled the law, as Christ did, he had been justified by the same righteousness, wherewith Christ himself was righteous. If it be said, that imputation in the second covenant, which was not in the first, makes a difference in the condition; I answer,

1. Imputation of works, or of righteousness, is not the condition of the new covenant, but believing. If imputation were the condition, then the whole covenant would lie upon God, and nothing be required on the creature’s part; for imputation is an act of God, not of men.

2. If it were granted, that the righteousness, or the works of the law imputed from Christ, were that whereby we are justified, yet they must justify, not as imputed, but as righteousness, or works of the law. Therefore imputation makes no difference in this respect. Imputation can be no part of that righteousness by which we are justified, because it is no conformity with any law, nor with any part or branch of any law, that man was ever bound to keep. Therefore it can be no part of that righteousness by which he is
justified. So that the condition of both covenants will be found the same, (and consequently both covenants the same,) if justification be maintained by the righteousness of Christ imputed.”

To the work last quoted the reader may be referred as a complete treatise on the subject, and a most masterly refutation of a notion, which he and other Calvinistic divines, in different ages, could not fail to perceive was most delusive to the souls of men, directly destructive of moral obedience, and not less so of the Christian doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and justification by “faith in his blood.” It is on this ground that men who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, contend, that being invested with the perfect righteousness of Christ, God cannot see any sin in them; and, indeed, upon their own principles, they reason conclusively. Justice has not to do with them, but with Christ; it demands perfect obedience, and Christ has rendered that perfect obedience for them, and what he did is always accounted as done by them. They are, therefore, under no real obligation of obedience; they can fear no penal consequences from disobedience; and a course of the most flagrant vice, may consist with an entire confidence in the indefeasible favour of God, with the profession of sonship and discipleship, and the hope of heaven. These notions many shamelessly avow; and they have been too much encouraged in their fatal creed, by those who have held the same system substantially, though they abhor the bold conclusions which the open Antinomian would draw from it.

The doctrine on which the above remarks have been made, is the first of the three opinions which have been held on the subject of the imputation of righteousness in our justification. The second is the opinion of Calvin himself, and those of his followers, who have not refined so much upon the scheme of their master as others, and with them many Arminians have also, in some respects, agreed; not that they have approved the terms in which this opinion is usually expressed; but because they have thought it, under a certain interpretation, right, and one which would allow them, for the sake of peace, to use either the phrase, “the imputation of the righteousness of Christ,” or “the imputation of faith for righteousness,” which latter they consider more Scriptural, and therefore interpret the former so as to be consistent with it.

The sentiments of Calvin on this subject may be collected from the following passages in the third book of his Institutes: —
“We simply explain justification to be an acceptance, by which God receives us into his favour and esteems us as righteous persons, and we say it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.” “He must certainly be destitute of a righteousness of his own, who is taught to seek it out of himself. This is most clearly asserted by the apostle when he says, ‘He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ We see that our righteousness is not in ourselves but in Christ. ‘As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’ What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting that we are accounted righteous only because his obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own?”

In these passages, the wording of which seems at first sight to favour the opinion above refuted, there is, however, this marked difference, that there is no separation made between the active and passive righteousness of Christ, his obedience to the precepts of the moral law, and his obedience to its penalty; so that one is imputed in our justification for one purpose, and the other for another; one to take the place of our obligation to obey, the other of our obligation to suffer; but the obedience of Christ is considered as one, as his holy life and sacrificial death considered together, and forming that righteousness of Christ which, being imputed to us, we are “reputed righteous before God, and not of ourselves.” This is farther confirmed by the strenuous manner in which Calvin proves, that justification is simply the remission, or non-imputation of sin,

“Whom, therefore, the Lord receives into fellowship with him, him he is said to justify, because he cannot receive any one into fellowship with himself without making him from a sinner to be a righteous person. This is accomplished by the remission of sins. For if they whom the Lord hath reconciled to himself be judged according to their works, they will still be found actually sinners, who, notwithstanding, must be absolved and free from sin. It appears, then, that those whom God receives, are made righteous no otherwise than as they are purified by being cleansed from all their defilements by the remission of sins; so that such a righteousness may, in one word, be denominated a remission of sins. Both these points are fully established by the language of Paul, which I have already cited. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the
world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.’ Then he adds, ‘He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ The terms righteousness and reconciliation are here used by St. Paul indiscriminately, to teach us that they are mutually comprehended in each other. And he states the manner of obtaining this righteousness to consist in our transgressions not being imputed to us; wherefore we can no longer doubt how God justifies, when we hear that he reconciles us to himself by not imputing our sins to us.” “So Paul, in preaching at Antioch, says, ‘Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified.’ The apostle thus connects ‘forgiveness of sins’ with ‘justification,’ to show that they are identically the same.” (Institutes, lib. 3, cap. 11.)

This simple notion of justification as the remission of sins could not have been maintained by Calvin had he held the notion of a distinct imputation of Christ’s active righteousness; for it has always followed from that notion, that they who have held it represent justification as consisting of two parts, first, the forgiveness of sins, and then the imputation of Christ’s moral obedience, so that he who is forgiven may be considered personally righteous, and thus, when both meet, he is justified.

The view taken by Calvin of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness in justification, is obviously, that the righteousness of Christ, that is, his entire obedience to the will of his Father both in doing and suffering, is, as he says, “accepted for us, as though it were our own;” so that, in virtue of it upon our believing, we are accounted righteous, not personally, but by the remission, or non-imputation of our sins. Thus, he observes on Acts 13:38, 39, “The justification which we have by Christ in the Gospel, is not a justification with righteousness, properly so called, but a justification from sin, and from the guilt of sin and condemnation due to it. So when Christ said to men and women in the Gospel, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ then he justified them — the forgiveness of their sins was their justification.”

Calvin, however, like many of his followers, who adopt no views on this subject substantially different from their master, uses figurative terms and phrases, which somewhat obscure his real meaning, and give much
countenance to the Antinomian doctrine; but then, so little, it has been
thought, can be objected to the opinion of Calvin, in the article of imputed
righteousness, in the main, that many divines, opposed to the Calvinian
theory generally, have not hesitated, in substance, to assent to it, reserving
to themselves some liberty in the use of the terms in which it is often
enveloped, either to modify, explain, or reject them.

Thus Arminius: — “I believe that sinners are accounted righteous solely by
the obedience of Christ; and that the righteousness of Christ is the only
meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers,
and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But
since God imputes the righteousness of Christ to none except believers, I
conclude, that, in this sense, it may be well and properly said, to a man
who believes, faith is imputed for righteousness, through grace, because
God hath set forth his Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in
his blood. Whatever interpretation may be put upon these expressions,
none of our divines blame Calvin, or consider him to be heterodox on this
point; yet my opinion is not so widely different from his, as to prevent me
employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things
which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes.”
(Nicholl’s Arminius.)

So also Mr. Wesley, in his sermon, entitled, “The Lord our
Righteousness,” almost repeats Arminius’s words; but though these
eminent divines seem to agree substantially with Calvin, it is clear that, in
their interpretation of the phrase, the “imputed righteousness of Christ,” he
would not entirely follow them. “As the active and passive righteousness of
Christ were never in fact separated from each other, so we never need
separate them at all. It is with regard to both these conjointly, that Jesus is
called ‘the Lord our righteousness.’ But when is this righteousness
imputed? When they believe. In that very hour the righteousness of Christ
is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes.
But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this; all
believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them,
or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but
wholly for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. But
perhaps some will affirm, that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. St.
Paul affirms this, therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for
righteousness to every believer, namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ;
but this is exactly the same thing which has been said before; for by that
expression I mean neither more nor less than that we are justified by faith, not by works, or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the sake of what Christ had done and suffered.” (Sermons.)

In this sermon, which is one of peace, one in which he shows how near he was willing to approach those who held the doctrine of Calvin on this subject, the author justly observes, that the terms themselves, in which it is often expressed, are liable to abuse, and intimates, that they had better be dispensed with. This every one must feel; for it is clear that such figurative expressions, as being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and appearing before God as invested in it, so that no fault can be laid to our charge, are modes of speech, which, though used by Calvin and his followers of the moderate school, and by some evangelical Arminians, who mainly agree with them on the subject of man’s justification, are much more appropriate to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness, as held by the higher Calvinists, and by Antinomians, than to any other. The truth of the case is, that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is held by such Calvinists in a *proper* sense, by evangelical Arminians in an *improper* or accommodated sense; and that Calvin and his real followers, though nearer to the latter than the former, do not fully agree with either. If the same phrases, therefore, be used, they are certainly understood in different senses, or, by one party at least, with limitations; and if it can be shown, that neither is the “imputation of Christ’s righteousness,” in any good sense expressed or implied in Scripture, and that the phrases, being clothed and invested with his righteousness, are not used with any reference to justification, it seems preferable, at least when we are investigating truth, to discard them at once, and fully to bring out the testimony of Scripture on the doctrine of imputation.

The question then will be, not whether the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is to be taken in the sense of the Antinomians, which has been sufficiently refuted; but whether there is any Scripture authority for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as it is understood by Calvin, and admitted, though with some hesitancy, and with explanations, by Arminius and some others.

With Calvin the notion of imputation seems to be, that the righteousness of Christ, that is, his entire obedience to the will of his Father, both in doing and suffering, is, upon our believing, imputed, or accounted to us, or accepted for us,” as though it were OUR OWN.” From which we may
conclude, that he admitted some kind of transfer of the righteousness of Christ to our account, and that believers are considered so to be in Christ, as that he should answer for them in law, and plead his righteousness in default of theirs. All this, we grant, is capable of being interpreted to a good and Scriptural sense; but it is also capable of a contrary one. The opinion of some professedly Calvinistic divines; of Baxter and his followers; and of the majority of evangelical Arminians, is, as Baxter well expresses it, that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us in the sense “of its being accounted of God the valuable consideration, satisfaction, and merit, (attaining God’s ends,) for which we are (when we consent to the covenant of grace) forgiven and justified, against the condemning sentence of the law of innocency, and accounted and accepted of God to grace and glory.” (Breviate of Controversies.) So also Goodwin: “If we take the phrase of imputing Christ’s righteousness improperly, viz. for the bestowing, as it were, of the righteousness of Christ, including his obedience, as well passive as active, in the return of it, i.e. in the privileges, blessings, and benefits purchased by it, so a believer may be said to be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed. But then the meaning can be no more than this: God justifies a believer for the sake of Christ’s righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own. Such an imputation of the righteousness of Christ as this, is no way denied or questioned.” (On Justification.)

Between these opinions, as to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ it will be seen, that there is a manifest difference, which difference arises from the different senses in which the term imputation is taken. The latter takes it in the sense of accounting or allowing to the believer the benefit of the righteousness of Christ, the other in the sense of reckoning or accounting the righteousness of Christ as ours; that is, what he did and suffered is regarded as done and suffered by us. “It is accepted,” says Calvin, “as though it were our own;” so that though Calvin does not divide the active and passive obedience of Christ, nor make justification any thing more than the remission of sin, yet his opinion easily slides into the Antinomian notion, and lays itself open to several of the same objections, and especially to this, that it involves the same kind of fiction, that what Christ did or suffered, is in any sense whatever, considered by him who knows all things as they are, as being done or suffered by any other person, than by him who did or suffered it in fact.

For this notion, that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed as to be accounted our own, there is no warrant in the word of God; and a slight
examination of those passages, which are indifferently adduced to support either the Antinomian or the Calvinistic view of the subject, will suffice to demonstrate this.

Psalm 32:1: “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” The covering of sin here spoken of, is by some considered to be the investment of the sinner with the righteousness or obedience of Christ. But this is entirely gratuitous, for the forgiveness of sin, even by the legal atonements, is called, according to the Hebrew idiom, (though another verb is used,) to cover sin; and the latter part of the sentence is clearly a parallelism to the former. This is the interpretation of Luther and of Calvin himself. To forgive sin, to cover sin, and not to impute sin, are in this psalm all phrases obviously of the same import, and no other kind of imputation but the non-imputation of sin is mentioned in it. And, indeed, the passage will not serve the purpose of the advocates of the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness, on their own principles; for sin cannot be covered by the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness, since they hold that it is taken away by the imputation of his death, and that the office of Christ’s active righteousness is not to take away sin; but to render us personally and positively holy by imputation and the fiction of a transfer.

Jeremiah 23:6, and 33:16: “And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.” This passage also proves nothing to the point, for it is neither said that the righteousness of the Lord shall be our righteousness, nor that it shall be imputed to us for righteousness, but simply, that the name by which he shall be called: or acknowledged, shall be the Lord our Righteousness, that is, the Author and Procurer of our righteousness or justification before God. So he is said to be “the Resurrection,” “our Life,” “our Peace,” &c, as the author of these blessings; for who ever dreamt that Christ is the life, the resurrection, the peace of his people by imputation? or that we live by being accounted to live in him, or are raised from the dead by being accounted to have risen in him?

“Some,” says Goodwin, “have digged for the treasure of imputation in Isaiah 45:24, ‘Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.’ But, first, neither is there here the least breathing of that imputation so much wandered after, nor do I find any intimation given of any such business by any sound expositor. Secondly, the plain and direct
meaning of the place is, that when God should communicate the knowledge of himself, in his Son, to the world, his people should have this sense of the means of their salvation and peace, that they receive them of the free grace of God, and not of themselves, or by the merit of their own righteousness. And Calvin’s exposition is to this effect: — “Because righteousness and strength are the two main points of our salvation, the faithful acknowledge God to be the author of both.”

With respect to all those passages which speak of the Jewish or Christian Churches, or their individual members being “clothed with garments of salvation,” “robes of righteousness,” “white linen, the righteousness of the saints,” or of “putting on Christ;” a class of texts on which, from their mere sound, the advocates of imputed righteousness ring so many changes, the use which is thus made of them shows either great inattention to the context, or great ignorance of the principles of criticism: — the former, because the context will show that either those passages relate to temporal deliverances, and external blessings; or else, not to justification, but to habitual and practical sanctification, and to the honours and rewards of the saints in glory: — the latter, because nothing is more common in language than to represent good or evil habits by clean or filthy, by soiled or resplendent vestments, by nakedness or by clothing; and this is especially the case in the Hebrew language, because it was the custom of the Jews, by changing their garments to express the changes in their condition. They put on sackcloth, or laid aside their upper robe, (which is, in Scripture style, called making themselves naked,) or rent their garments, when personal or national afflictions came upon them; and they arrayed themselves in white and adorned apparel, in seasons of festivity, and after great deliverances. In all these figurative expressions there is, however, nothing which countenances the notion that Christ’s righteousness is a robe thrown upon sinful men, to hide from the eye of justice their natural squalidness and pollution, and to give them confidence in the presence of God. No interpretation can be more fanciful and unfounded.

Romans 3:21, 22, “But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.” The righteousness of God here is, by some, taken to signify the righteousness of Christ imputed to them that believe. But the very text makes it evident, that by “the righteousness of God,” the righteousness of the Father is meant, for he is distinguished from “Jesus Christ,” mentioned immediately
afterward; and by the righteousness of God, it is also plain, that his rectoral justice in the administration of pardon, is meant, which, of course, is not thought capable of imputation. This is made idubitable by the verse which follows, “to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.”

The phrase, the righteousness of God, in this and several other passages in St. Paul’s writings, obviously means God’s righteous method of justifying sinners through the atonement of Christ, and instrumentally, by faith. This is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel scheme, the fulness at once of its love and its wisdom, that “the righteousness of God is manifested without law;” and that without either an enforcement of the penalty of the violated law upon the personal offender; which would have cut him off from hope; or without making his justification to depend upon works of obedience to the law, (which was the only method of justification admitted by the Jews of St. Paul’s day,) and which obedience was impossible, and therefore hopeless; he can yet, in perfect consistency with his justice and righteous administration, offer pardon to the guilty. No wonder, therefore, that the apostle, who discourses professedly on this subject, should lay so great a stress upon it, and that his mind, always full of a subject so great and glorious, should so often advert to it incidentally, as well as in his regular discourses on the justification of man in the sight of God. Thus he gives it as a reason why he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, that “therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith,” Romans 1:17. Thus, again, in contrasting God’s method of justifying the ungodly with the error of the Jews, by whom justification was held to be the acquittal of the righteous or obedient, he says, “for they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God,” Romans 10:3. The same contrast we have in Philippians 3:9, “Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” In all these passages the righteousness of God manifestly signifies, his righteous method of justifying them that believe in Christ. No reference at all is made to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to such persons, and much less is any distinction set up between his active and passive righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:30, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and
redemption.” Here, also, to say that Christ is “made unto us righteousness,” by imputation, is to invent and not to interpret. This is clear, that he is made unto us righteousness only as he is made unto us “redemption,” so that if we are not redeemed by imputation, we are not justified by imputation. The meaning of the apostle is, that Christ is made to us, by an appointment of God, the sole means of instruction, justification, sanctification, and eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” To be made sin, we have already shown, signifies to be made an offering for sin; consequently, as no imputation of our sins to Christ is here mentioned, there is no foundation for the notion, that there is a reciprocal imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us. The text is wholly silent on this subject, for it is wholly gratuitous to say, that we are made the righteousness of God in or through Christ, by imputation or reckoning to us what he did or suffered as our acts or sufferings. The passages we have already adduced will explain the phrase, “the righteousness of God” in this place. This righteousness, with respect to our pardon, is God’s righteous method of justifying, through the atonement of Christ, and our being made or becoming this righteousness of God in or by Christ, is our becoming righteous persons through the pardon of our sins in this peculiar method, by renouncing our own righteousness, and by “submitting to this righteousness of God.”

Romans 5:18, 19, “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. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” That this passage, though generally depended upon in this controversy, as the most decisive in its evidence in favour of the doctrine of imputation, proves nothing to the purpose may be thus demonstrated. It proves nothing in favour of the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness. For,

1. Here is nothing said of the active obedience of Christ, as distinguished from his obedient suffering and which might lead us to attribute the free gift of justification to the former, rather than to the latter.

2. If the apostle is supposed to speak here of the active obedience of Christ, as distinguished from his sufferings, his death is of course excluded
from the work of justification. But this cannot be allowed, because the apostle has intimated, in the same chapter, that we are “justified by his blood,” Romans 5:9, and, therefore; it cannot be allowed that he is speaking of the active obedience of Christ, as distinguished from his passive.

3. As the apostle has unequivocally decided, that we are justified by the blood of Christ, or, in other words, “that we are justified through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood,” (a thing which the doctrine under examination supposes to be impossible,) there is reason to conclude that he speaks here of his passive, rather than of his active obedience. “If, indeed, his willingness to suffer for our sins were never spoken of as an act of obedience, such an observation might have the appearance of a mere expedient to get rid of a difficulty. But if, on the other hand, this should prove to be the very spirit and letter of Scripture, the justness of it will be obvious. Hear, then, our Lord himself on this subject. ‘Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father,’ John 10:17, 18. This, then, was the commandment to which he rendered willing obedience, when he said, ‘O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done,’ Matthew 26:42. ‘The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?’ John 18:11. In conformity with this, the apostle applies to him the following words: ‘Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. By (his performance of) which will we are sanctified; through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,’ Hebrews 10:5, 10. ‘Being found in fashion as a man, (says St. Paul,) he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,’ Philippians 2:8. Such was his obedience, an obedience unto the death of the cross. And by this his obedience unto the death of the cross, shall many be constituted righteous, or be justified. Where, then, is the imputation of his active obedience for justification?” (Hare on Justification.)

It proves nothing in favour of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness considered as one, and including what he did and suffered, in the sense of its being reputed our righteousness, by transfer or by fiction of law. For
though the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity is supposed to be taught in this chapter, and the imputation of Christ’s obedience in one or other of the senses above given, is argued from this particular text, the examination of the subject will show that the right understanding of the imputation of Adam’s sin wholly overthrows both the Antinomian and Calvinistic view of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. This argument is very ably developed by Goodwin. (Treatise on Justification.)

“Because the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, is frequently produced to prove the imputation of Christ’s righteousness; I shall lay down, with as much plainness as I can, in what sense the Scriptures countenance that imputation. The Scriptures own no other imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, than of Christ’s righteousness to those that believe. The righteousness of Christ is imputed, or given to those that believe, not in the letter or formality of it, but in blessings, privileges, and benefits purchased of God by the merit of it. So the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, not in the letter and formality of it, (which is the imputation commonly urged,) but in the demerit of it, that is in the curse or punishment due to it. Therefore, as concerning this imputation of Adam’s sin, I answer,

“First, the Scripture nowhere affirms, either the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, or of the righteousness of Christ to those that believe; neither is such a manner of speaking any ways agreeable to the language of the Holy Ghost: for in the Scriptures, wheresoever the term IMPUTING, is used, it is only applied to, or spoken of something of the same persons, to whom the imputation is said to be made, and never, to my remembrance, to, or of any thing of another’s. So, Romans 4:3, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was IMPUTED to him for righteousness,’ that is, his own believing was imputed to him, not another man’s. So, verse 5, but ‘to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is IMPUTED to him for righteousness.’ So again, Psalm 106:30, 31, ‘Phineas stood up and executed judgment, and that (act of his) ‘was IMPUTED to him for righteousness,’ that is, received a testimony from God of being a righteous act. So again, 2 Corinthians 5:19, ‘not IMPUTING their trespasses,’ (their own trespasses,) ‘unto them.’
“Secondly, When a thing is said simply to be *imputed*, as sin, folly, and so *righteousness*, the phrase is not to be taken concerning the bare acts of the things, as if (for example) to impute sin to a man, signified this, to repute the man, (to whom sin is *imputed,*) to have committed a sinful act, or, as if to *impute* folly, were simply to charge a man to have done foolishly: but when it is applied to things that are evil, and attributed to persons that have power over those, to whom the imputation is made, it signifieth, the charging the guilt of what is imputed upon the head of the person to whom the imputation is made, with an intent of inflicting some condign punishment upon him. So that to impute sin (in Scripture phrase) is to charge the guilt of sin upon a man with a purpose to punish him for it. Thus Romans 5:13, sin is said, ‘not to be *IMPUTED* where there is no law.’ The meaning cannot be, that the act which a man doth, whether there be a law or no law, should not be imputed to him. The law doth not make any act to be imputed, or ascribed to a man, which might not as well have been imputed without it. But the meaning is, that there is no guilt charged by God upon men, nor any punishment inflicted for any thing done by them, but only by virtue of the law prohibiting. In which respect the law is said to be the *strength of sin*, because it gives a condemning power against the doer, to that which otherwise would have had none. 1 Corinthians 15:56. So again, Job 24:12, when it is said, ‘God doth not lay folly to the charge of them, (i.e. *impute* folly to them,) that make the souls of the slain to cry out,’ the meaning is, not that God doth not repute them to have committed the acts of oppression, or murder. For supposing they did such things, it is impossible but God should repute them to have done them: but that God doth not visibly charge the guilt of these sins upon them, or inflict punishment for them. So, 2 Samuel 19:19, when Shimei prayeth David not to *IMPUTE* *wickedness unto him*, his meaning is, not to desire David not to think he had done wickedly in railing upon him, (for himself confesseth this in the very next words,) but not to inflict the punishment which that wickedness deserved. So when David himself pronounceth the man *blessed to whom the Lord IMPUTETH not sin*, his meaning is, not that there is any man, whom the Lord would not repute to have committed those acts of sin, which he has committed; but that such are blessed on whom God will not charge the demerit of their sins in the punishment due
to them. So yet again, (to forbear farther citations,) 2 Corinthians 5:19, when God is said, ‘not to IMPUTE their sins unto men,’ the meaning is, not that God should not repute men to have committed such and such sins against him; but that he freely discharges them from the punishment due to them. By all which testimonies from Scripture, concerning the constant use of the term imputing, or imputation, it is evident that proposition, ‘that the transgression of the law is imputable from one person to another,’ hath no foundation in Scripture.

“And, therefore, thirdly and lastly, to come home to the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, I answer,

“First, that either to say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to his posterity (of believers) or the sin of Adam to his, are both expressions, at least, unknown to the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures. There is neither word, nor syllable, nor letter, nor tittle of any such thing to be found there. But that the faith of him that believeth, is imputed for righteousness, are words which the Holy Ghost useth.

“But, secondly, because I would make no exceptions against words, farther than necessity enforceth, I grant, there are expressions in Scripture concerning both the communication of Adam’s sin with his posterity, and the righteousness of Christ with those that believe, that will fairly enough bear the term of imputation, if it be rightly understood, and according to the use of it in Scripture upon other occasions. But as it is commonly taken and understood by many, it occasions much error and mistake.

“Concerning Adam’s sin or disobedience, many are said to be ‘made sinners by it,’ Romans 5:19. And so ‘by the obedience of Christ,’ it is said (in the same place) ‘that many shall be made righteous.’ But if men will exchange language with the Holy Ghost, they must see that they make him no loser. If, when they say, ‘Adam’s sin is imputed to all unto condemnation,’ their meaning be the same with the Holy Ghost’s, when he saith, ‘that by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners,’ there is no harm done: but it is evident by what many speak, that the Holy Ghost and they are not of one mind, touching the imputation or communication of Adam’s sin with his posterity, but that they differ as much in meaning, as in words. If when they say, ‘Adam’s sin is
imputed to all unto condemnation,’ their meaning be this, that the
guilt of Adam’s sin is charged upon his whole posterity, or that the
punishment of Adam’s sin redounded from his person to his whole
posterity, a main part of which punishment lieth in that original
defilement wherein they are all conceived and born, and whereby
they are made truly sinners before God; if this be the meaning of the
term imputation, when applied to Adam’s sin, let it pass. But if the
meaning be, that that sinful act, wherein Adam transgressed when
he ate the forbidden fruit, is, in the letter and formality of it,
imputed to his posterity, so that by this imputation all his posterity
are made formally sinners, this is an imputation which the Scripture
will never justify.”

The last text necessary to mention is Romans 4:6, “Even as David
declareth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness
without works.” Here again the expositors of this class assume, even
against the letter of the text and context, that the righteousness which God
is said to impute is the righteousness of Christ. But Calvin himself may
here be sufficient to answer them. “In the fourth chapter of the Romans the
apostle first mentions an imputation of righteousness, and immediately
represents it as consisting in remission of sins. David, says he, describeth
the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness
without works, saying, ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,’
&c. He there argues, not concerning a branch, but the whole of
justification; he also adduces the definition of it given by David, when he
pronounces those to be blessed who receive the free forgiveness of their
sins, whence it appears that this righteousness is simply opposed to guilt.”
(Institut. lib. iii, cap. 11.) The imputation of righteousness in this passage
is, in Calvin’s view, therefore, the simple, non-imputation of sin, or, in
other words, the remission of sins.

In none of these passages, is there, then, any thing found to countenance
even that second view of imputation, which consists in the accounting the
righteousness of Christ in justification to be our righteousness. It is only
imputed in the benefit and effect of it, that is, in the blessings and privileges
purchased by it; and though we may use the phrase, the imputed
righteousness of Christ, in this latter sense, qualifying our meaning like
Parœus, who says, “In this sense imputed righteousness is called the
righteousness of Christ, by way of merit or effect, because it is procured
for us by the merit of Christ, not because it is subjectively or inherently in
Christ;” yet since this manner of speaking has no foundation in Scripture, and must generally lead to misapprehensions, it will be found more conducive to the cause of truth to confine ourselves to the language of the Scriptures. According to them, there is no fictitious accounting either of what Christ did or suffered, or of both united, to us, as being done and suffered by us, through our union with him, or through his becoming our legal representative; but his active and passive righteousness, advanced in dignity by the union of the Divine nature and perfection, is the true meritorious cause of our justification. It is that great whole which constitutes his “merits;” that is the consideration, in view of which the offended but merciful Governor of the world, has determined it to be a just and righteous, as well as a merciful act, to justify the ungodly; and, for the sake of this perfect obedience of our Lord to the will of the Father, an obedience extending unto “death, even the death of the cross,” to every penitent sinner who believes in him, but considered still in his own person as “ungodly,” and meriting nothing but punishment, “his faith is imputed for righteousness;” it is followed by the remission of his sins and all the benefits of the evangelical covenant.

This imputation of FAITH for righteousness is the third opinion which we proposed to examine.

That this is the doctrine taught by the express letter of Scripture no one can deny, and, as one well observes, “what that is which is imputed for righteousness in justification, all the wisdom and learning of men is not so fit or able to determine, as the Holy Ghost, speaking in Scripture, he being the great secretary of heaven, and privy to all the counsels of GOD.”

“Abraham believed GOD and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,” Romans 4:3. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness,” verse 5. “We say that faith was imputed to him for righteousness,” verse 9. “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,” verses 22-24.

The testimony of the apostle, then, being so express on this point, the imputation of faith for righteousness must be taken to be the doctrine of the New Testament, unless, indeed we admit, with the advocates of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, that faith is here used metonymically for the object of faith, that is, the righteousness of Christ.
The context of the above passages, however, is sufficient to refute this, and makes it indubitable that the apostle uses the term faith in its proper and literal sense. In verse 5, he calls the faith of him that believeth, and which is imputed to him for righteousness, “HIS faith;” but in what sense could this be taken if St. Paul meant by “his faith,” the object of his faith, namely, the righteousness of Christ? And how could that be his before the imputation was made to him? Again, in verse 5, the faith spoken of is opposed to works: “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.” Finally, in verse 22, the faith imputed to us is described to be our “believing in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead,” so that the apostle has, by these explanations, rendered it impossible for us to understand him as meaning anything else by faith, but the act of believing. To those who will, notwithstanding this evidence from the context, still insist upon understanding faith, in these passages, to mean the righteousness of Christ, Baxter bluntly observes, “If it be not faith indeed that the apostle meaneth, the context is so far from relieving our understandings, that it contributeth to our unavoidable deceit or ignorance. Read over the texts, and put but ‘Christ’s righteousness’ every where instead of the word ‘faith,’ and see what a scandalous paraphrase you will make. The Scripture is not so audaciously to be corrected.” Some farther observations will, however, be necessary for the clear apprehension of this doctrine.

We have already seen, in establishing the Christian doctrine of the atonement, that the law of God inflicts the penalty of death upon every act of disobedience, and that all men have come under that penalty.

That men, having become totally corrupt, are not capable of obedience in future. That if they were, there is nothing in the nature of that future obedience to be a consideration for the forgiveness of past offences, under a righteous government. It follows, therefore, that, by moral obedience, or attempted and professed moral obedience, there can be no remission of sins, that is, no deliverance from the penalty of offences actually committed. This is the ground of the great argument of the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. He proves both Jews and Gentiles under sin; that the whole world is guilty before God; and by consequence under his wrath, under condemnation, from which they could only be relieved by the Gospel.
In his argument with the Jews the subject is farther opened. They sought justification by “works of law.” If we take “works” to mean obedience both to the moral and ceremonial law it makes no difference; for, as they had given up the typical character of their sacrifices, and their symbolical reference to the death of Messiah, the performance of their religious rites was no longer an expression of faith; it was brought down to the same principle as obedience to the moral law, a simple compliance with the commands of God. Their case, then, was this, they were sinners on conviction of their law, and by obedience to it they sought justification, ignorant both of its spiritual meaning and large extent, and unmindful, too, of this obvious principle, that no acts of obedience, even if perfect, could take away past transgression. The apostle’s great axiom on this subject is, that “by works of law, no man can be justified,” and the doctrine of justification, which he teaches, is the opposite of theirs. It is, that men are sinners; that they must confess themselves such, and join to this confession a true repentance. That justification is a gratuitous act of God’s mercy, a procedure of pure “grace,” not of “debt.” That in order to the exercise of this grace, on the part of God, Christ was set forth as a propitiation for sin, that his death, under this character, is a “demonstration of the righteousness of God” in the free and gratuitous remission of sins; and that this actual remission or justification, follows upon believing in Christ, because faith under this gracious constitution and method of justification, is accounted to men for righteousness; in other words, that righteousness is imputed to them upon their believing, which imputation of righteousness is, as he teaches us, in the passages before quoted, the forgiveness of sins; for to have faith counted or imputed for righteousness is explained by David, in the psalm which the apostle quotes, (Romans iv,) to have sin forgiven, covered, and not imputed. That this was no new doctrine, he shows also from the justification of Abraham. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness,” Romans 4:3. “Know ye, therefore, that they which are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So these which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham,” Galatians 3:7-9.

On the one hand, therefore, it is the plain doctrine of Scripture that man is not, and never was in any age, justified by works of any kind, whether moral or ceremonial; on the other, that he is justified by the imputation and
accounting of “faith for righteousness.” On this point, until the Antinomian corruption began to infest the reformed Churches, the leading commentators, from the earliest ages, were very uniform and explicit. That when faith is said to be imputed to us for righteousness, the word is taken literally, “and not tropically, was,” says Goodwin; “the common interpretation anciently received and followed by the principal lights of the Church of God; and for fifteen hundred years together (as far as my memory will assist me) was never questioned or contradicted. Neither did the contrary opinion ever look out into the world, till the last age. So that it is but a calumny brought upon it, (unworthy the tongue or pen of any sober man,) to make either Arminius or Socinus the author of it. And for this last hundred years and upward, from Luther’s and Calvin’s times, the stream of interpreters agrees therewith.

“Tertullian, who wrote about the year 194, in his fifth book against Marcion, says, ‘But how the children of faith? or of whose faith, if not of Abraham’s? For if Abraham believed God, and that was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he thereby deserved the name of a father of many nations, we, also, by believing God, are justified as Abraham was.’ Therefore Tertullian’s opinion directly is, that the faith which is said to be imputed to Abraham for righteousness, is faith properly taken, and not the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith.

“Origen who lived about the year 203, in his fourth book upon the Romans, chap. iv, verse 3, says, ‘It seems, therefore, that in this place also, whereas many faiths (that is, many acts of believing) of Abraham had gone before, now all his faith was collected and united together, and so was accounted unto him for righteousness.’

“Justin Martyr, who lived before them both, and not long after the Apostle John’s time, about the year 130, in his disputation with Trypho the Jew, led them both to that interpretation. ‘Abraham carried not away the testimony of righteousness, because of his circumcision, but because of his faith. For before he was circumcised, this was pronounced of him, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Chrysostom, upon Galatians 3, says, ‘For what was Abraham the worse for not being under the law? Nothing at all. For his faith was sufficient unto him for righteousness.’ If Abraham’s faith was
sufficient unto him for righteousness, it must needs be imputed by God for righteousness unto him; for it is this imputation from God that must make that sufficiency of it unto Abraham. That which will not pass in account with God for righteousness, will never be sufficient for righteousness unto the creature.

“St. Augustine, who lived about the year 390, gives frequent testimony to this interpretation. Upon Psa. 148, ‘For we by believing have found that which they (the Jews) lost by not believing. For Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.’ Therefore his opinion clearly is, that it was Abraham’s faith, or believing properly taken, that was imputed unto him for righteousness, and not the righteousness of Christ. For that faith of his, which was so imputed, he opposeth to the unbelief of the Jews, whereby they lost the grace and favour of God. Now the righteousness of Christ is not opposed to unbelief, but faith properly taken. Again, writing upon Psalm lxx, ‘For I believe in him that justifieth the ungodly, that my faith may be imputed unto me for righteousness.’ The same father yet again, in his tract of Nature and Grace: ‘But if Christ died not in vain, the ungodly is justified in him alone: to whom, believing in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.’

“Primasius, about the year 500, writes upon Romans 4:3, ‘Abraham’s faith by the gift of God was so great, that both his former sins were forgiven him, and this faith of his alone preferred in acceptation before all righteousness.’

“Bede, who lived somewhat before the year 700, upon Romans 4:5, observes, ‘What faith, but that which the apostle in another place fully defineth? neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, availeth any thing, but faith which worketh by love; not any faith, but that faith which worketh by love.’ Certainly that faith, which Paul defineth to be a faith working by love, cannot be conceived to be the righteousness of Christ; and yet this faith it was, in the judgment of this author, that was imputed unto Abraham for righteousness.

“Haymo, about the year 840, on Romans 4:3, writes, ‘Because he believed God, it was imputed unto him for righteousness, that is,
unto remission of sins, because by that faith, wherewith he believed, he was made righteous.’

“Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1090, upon Romans 4:3, ‘That he (meaning Abraham) believed so strongly, was by God imputed for righteousness unto him; that is, &c, by his believing he was imputed righteous before God.’

“From all these testimonies it is apparent, that the interpretation of this scripture which we contend for, anciently obtained in the Church of God, and no man was found to open his mouth against it, till it had been established for above a thousand years. Come we to the times of reformation; here we shall find it still maintained by men of the greatest authority and learning.

“Luther on Galatians 3:6, ‘Christian righteousness is an affiance of faith in the Son of God, which affiance is imputed unto righteousness for Christ’s sake.’ And in the same place, not long after, ‘God for Christ’s sake, in whom I have begun to believe, accounts this (my) imperfect faith, for perfect righteousness.’

“Bucer, upon Romans 4:3, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, that is, he accounted this faith for righteousness unto him. So that by believing he obtained this, that God esteemed him a righteous man.’

“Peter Martyr declares himself of the same judgment, upon Romans 4:3, ‘To be imputed for righteousness in another sense, that by which we ourselves are reckoned in the number of the righteous. And this Paul attributes to faith only.’

“Calvin has the same interpretation upon Romans 4:3, ‘Wherefore Abraham, by believing, doth only embrace the grace tendered unto him, that it might not be in vain. If this be imputed unto him for righteousness, it follows, that he is no otherwise righteous, but as trusting or relying upon the goodness of God, he hath boldness to hope for all things from him.’ Again, upon verse 5, ‘Faith is imputed for righteousness, not because it carrieth any merit from us, but because it apprehends the goodness of God.’ Hence it appears, that he never thought of a tropical or metonymical sense in the word faith; but that he took it in the plain, ready, and grammatical signification.
“Musculus contends for this imputation, also, in his common place of justification, sect. 5, ‘This faith should be in high esteem with us; not in regard of the proper quality of it, but in regard of the purpose of God, whereby he hath decreed, for Christ’s sake, to impute it for righteousness unto those that believe in him.’ The same author upon Galatians 3:6: ‘What did Abraham that should be imputed unto him for righteousness, but only this, that he believed God?’ Again, ‘But when he firmly believed God promising, that very faith was imputed to him, in the place of righteousness, that is, he was of God reputed righteous for that faith, and absolved from all his sins.’

“Bullinger gives the same interpretation, upon Romans iv, ‘Abraham committed himself unto God by believing, and this very thing was imputed unto him for righteousness.’ And so, upon Galatians 3:6, ‘It was imputed unto him for righteousness, that is, that very faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness, while he was yet uncircumcised.’

“Gaulter comes behind none of the former, in avouching the grammatical against the rhetorical interpretation, upon Romans 4:3, ‘Abraham believed God, and he, viz. God, imputed unto him this faith for righteousness.’

“Illyricus forsakes not his fellow interpreters in this point, upon Romans 4:3, ‘That same believing was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Pellicanus, in like manner, says, upon Genesis 20:6, ‘Abraham simply believed the word of God, and required not a sign of the Lord, and God imputed that very faith unto Abraham himself for righteousness.’

“Hunnius, another divine, sets to his seal, on Romans 4:3, ‘The faith whereby Abraham believed God promising, was imputed unto him for righteousness.’

“Beza, upon the same scripture, says, ‘Here the business is, concerning that which was imputed unto him, viz. his faith.’

“Junius and Tremellius are likewise of the same mind, on Genesis 15:6, ‘God esteemed (or accounted) him for righteous
though wanting righteousness, and reckoned this in the place of righteousness, that he embraced the promise with a firm belief.”

(Vide Goodwin on Justification.)

Our English divines have generally differed in their interpretations, as they have embraced or opposed the Calvinistic system; but among the more moderate of that school there have not been wanting many who have bound their system to the express letter and obvious meaning of Scripture, on this point; not to mention either those who have adopted that middle scheme generally, but not with exactness attributed to Baxter, or the followers of the remonstrants.

When, however, we say, that faith is imputed for righteousness, in order to prevent misapprehension, and fully to answer the objections raised on the other side, the meaning of the different terms of this proposition ought to be explained. They are RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, and IMPUTATION.

To explain the first, reference has sometimes been made to the three terms used by the Apostle Paul, δικαιωμα, δικαιωσις, and δικαιοσυνη; of which, says Baxter, “the first usually signifies the practical or preceptive matter, that is, righteousness; the second, active, efficient justification; the third, the state of the just, qualitative or relative, or ipsam justitiam.” Others have made these distinctions a little different; but not much help is to be derived from them, and it is much more important to observe, that the apostle often uses the term δικαιοσυνη, righteousness, in a passive sense for justification itself. So in Galatians 2:21, ‘If righteousness (justification) come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Galatians 3:21, “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness (justification) should have been by the law.” Romans 9:30, “The Gentiles have attained to righteousness, (justification,) even the righteousness (justification) which is by faith.” And in Romans 10:4, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;” where, also, we must understand righteousness to mean justification.

Romans 5:18, 19, will also show, that with the apostle, “to make righteous,” and “to justify,” signify the same thing; for “justification of life,” in the 18th verse, is called in the 19th, being “made righteous.” To be accounted righteous is, then, in the apostle’s style, where there has been personal guilt, to be justified; and what is accounted or imputed to us for righteousness, is accounted or imputed to us for our justification.
The second term of the above proposition which it is necessary to explain, is **FAITH**. The true nature of justifying faith will be explained below; all that is here necessary to remark is, that it is not every act of faith, or faith in the general truths of revelation, which is imputed for righteousness, though it supposes **them all**, and is the completion of them all. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; but it is not our faith in creation, which is imputed to us for righteousness. So in the case of Abraham; he not only had faith in the truths of the religion, of which he was the teacher and guardian, but had exercised affiance, also, in some particular promises of God, before he exhibited that great act of faith, which was “counted to him for righteousness,” and which made his justification the pattern of the justification of sinful men in all ages. But having received the promise of a son, from whom the Messiah should spring, in whom all nations were to be blessed; and, “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” Romans 4:19-23. His faith had Messiah for its great and ultimate object, and in its nature it was an entire affiance in the promise and faithfulness of God, with reference to the holy seed. So the object of that faith which is imputed to us for righteousness is Christ; Christ as having made atonement for our sins, (the remission of our sins, as expressly taught by St. Paul, being obtained by “faith in his blood;””) and it is in its nature an entire affiance in the promise of God to this effect, made to us through his atonement, and founded upon it. Faith being thus understood, excludes all notion of its meritoriousness. It is not faith, generally considered, which is imputed to us for righteousness; but faith (trust) in an atonement offered by another in our behalf; by which trust in something without us, we acknowledge our own insufficiency, guilt, and unworthiness, and directly ascribe the merit to that in which we trust, and which is not our own, namely, the propitiation of the blood of Christ.

The third term is **IMPUTATION**. The original verb is well enough translated to impute, in the sense of **to reckon**, **to account**; but, as we have stated above, it is never used to signify imputation in the sense of accounting the actions of one person to have been performed by another.
A man’s sin or righteousness is imputed to him, when he is considered as actually the doer of sinful or of righteous acts, in which sense the word *repute* is in more general use; and he is, in consequence, reputed a vicious or a holy man. A man’s sin or righteousness is imputed to him in its legal consequence, under a government by rewards and punishments; and then to impute sin or righteousness, signifies, in a legal sense, to reckon and to account it, to acquit or condemn, and forthwith to punish, or to exempt from punishment. Thus Shimei entreats David, that he would “not impute folly to him,” that is, that he would not punish his folly. In this sense, too, David speaks of the blessedness of the man, to whom the Lord” imputeth not sin,” that is, whom he forgives, so that the legal consequence of his sin shall not fall upon him. This non-imputation of sin, to a sinner, is expressly called the “imputation of righteousness, *without works;”* the imputation of righteousness is, then, the non-punishment, or pardon of sin; and if this passage be read in its connection, it will also be seen, that by “imputing” faith for righteousness, the apostle means precisely the same thing. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is counted for righteousness;”* even as David, also, describeth the man to whom God *imputeth righteousness* without works, saying, blessed is the man whose *iniquities are forgiven*, and whose sins are covered, blessed is the man to whom the Lord “*imputeth not sin.”* This quotation from David would have been nothing to the apostle’s purpose, unless he had understood the forgiveness of sins, and the imputation of righteousness, and the non-imputation of sin, to signify the same thing as “counting faith for righteousness,” with only this difference, that the introduction of the term “faith,” marks the manner in which the forgiveness of sin is obtained. To impute faith for righteousness, is nothing more than to be justified by faith, which is also called by St. Paul, “being made righteous,” that is, being placed by an act of free forgiveness, through faith in Christ, in the condition of righteous men, in this respect, that the penalty of the law dues not lie against them, and that they are restored to the Divine favour.

From this brief, but, it is hoped, clear explanation of these terms, righteousness, faith, and imputation, it will appear, that it is not quite correct in the advocates of the Scripture doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness, to say, that our faith in Christ is accepted in the place of personal obedience to the law, except, indeed, in this loose sense, that our faith in Christ as effectually exempts us from punishment, as if we had been
personally obedient. The Scriptural doctrine is rather, that the death of Christ is accepted in the place of our personal punishment, on condition of our faith in him; and, that when faith in him is actually exerted, then comes in, on the part of God, the act of imputing, or reckoning righteousness to us; or, what is the same thing, accounting faith for righteousness, that is, pardoning our offences through faith, and treating us as the objects of his restored favour.

To this doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness, the principal objections which have been made, admit of an easy answer.

The first is that of the papists, who take the term justification to signify the making men morally just or righteous; and they, therefore, argue, that as faith alone is not righteousness in the moral sense, it would be false, and, therefore, impossible, to impute it for righteousness. But, as we have proved from Scripture, that justification simply signifies the pardon of sin, this objection has no foundation.

A second objection is, that if faith, that is, believing, is imputed for righteousness, then justification is by works, or by somewhat in ourselves. In this objection, the term works is equivocal. If it mean works of obedience to the moral law, the objection is unfounded, for faith is not a work of this kind; and if it mean the merit of works of any kind, it is equally without foundation, for no merit is allowed to faith, and faith, in the sense of exclusive affiance, or trusting in the merits of another, shuts out, by its very nature, all assumption of merit to ourselves, or there would be no need of resorting to another’s merit; but if it mean, that faith or believing is the doing of something, in order to our justification, it is, in this view, the performance of a condition, a sine qua non, which is not only not forbidden by Scripture, but required of us, — “this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;” “he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth shall not be damned.” And so far is this considered by the Apostle Paul, as prejudicing the free grace of God in our justification, that he makes our justification by faith, the proof of its gratuitous nature, “for by grace are ye saved, through faith.” “Therefore. it is by faith, that it might be through grace.”

A third objection is, that the imputation of faith for righteousness gives occasion to boasting, which is condemned by the Gospel. The answer to this is,
1. That the objection lies with equal strength against the theory of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, since faith is required in order to that imputation.

2. Boasting of our faith is cut off by the consideration, that this faith itself is the gift of God.

3. If it were not, yet the blessings which follow upon our faith, are not given with reference to any worth or merit which there may be in our believing, but are given with respect to the death of Christ, from the bounty and grace of God.

4. St. Paul was clearly of the contrary opinion, who tells us that “boasting is excluded by the law of faith:” the reason of which has been already stated, that trust in another for salvation does, ipso facto, attribute the power, and consequently the honour of saving, to another, and denies both to ourselves.

Since, then, we are “justified by faith,” our next inquiry must be, somewhat more particularly, into the specific quality of that faith, which .... by the appointment of God, leads to this important change in our relations to the Being, whom we have offended, so that our offences are freely forgiven, and we are restored to his favour.

On the subject of justifying faith, so many distinctions have been set up, so many logical terms and definitions are found in the writings of systematic divines, and often, as Baxter has it, “such quibbling and jingling of a mere sound of words,” that the simple Christian, to whom this subject ought always to be made plain, has often been grievously perplexed, and no small cause has been given for the derision of infidels. On this, as on other points, we appeal “to the law and testimony,” to Christ and his apostles, who are, at once, the only true authorities, and teachers of the greatest simplicity.

We remark, then,

1. That in Scripture faith is presented to us under two leading views. The first is that of assent or persuasion; the second, that of confidence or reliance. That the former may be separated from the latter, is also plain, though the latter cannot exist without the former. Faith, in the sense of intellectual assent to truth, is allowed to be possessed by devils. A dead inoperative faith, is also supposed, or declared, to be possessed by wicked
men, professing Christianity; for our Lord represents persons coming to
him at the last day, saying,” Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name,”
&c, to whom he will say, “Depart from me, I never knew you,” and yet the
charge, in this case, does not lie against the sincerity of their belief, but
against their conduct as “workers of iniquity.” As this distinction is taught
in Scripture, so it is also observed in experience, that assent to the truths of
revealed religion may result from examination and conviction, while yet the
spirit and conduct may be unrenewed and wholly worldly.

On the other hand, that the faith which God requires of men always
comprehends confidence or reliance, as well as assent or persuasion, is
equally clear. The faith by which “the elders obtained a good report” was
of this character; it united assent to the truth of God’s revelation, to a
noble confidence in his promises. “Our fathers trusted in Thee, and were
not confounded.” We have a farther illustration in our Lord’s address to his
disciples upon the withering away of the fig tree, “Have faith in God.” He
did not question whether they believed the existence of God, but exhorted
them to confidence in his promises, when called by him to contend with
mountainous difficulties. “Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you, that
whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou
cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that
these things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he
saith.” It was in reference to his simple confidence in Christ’s power, that
our Lord so highly commended the centurion, Matthew 8:10, and said,
“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” And all the instances of
faith in the persons miraculously healed by Christ, were also of this kind: it
was belief in his claims, and confidence in his goodness and power.

The faith in Christ, which in the New Testament is connected with
salvation, is clearly of this nature; that is, it combines assent with reliance,
belief with trust. “Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name,” that is, in
dependence upon my interest and merits, “he shall give it you.” Christ was
preached both to Jews and Gentiles as the object of their trust, because he
was preached as the only true sacrifice for sin; and they were required to
renounce their dependence upon their own accustomed sacrifices, and to
transfer that dependence to his death and mediation, — and “in his name
shall the Gentiles trust.” He is set forth as a propitiation, “through faith in
his blood;” which faith can neither merely mean assent to the historical fact
that his blood was shed by a violent death, nor mere assent to the general
document that his blood had an atoning quality; but as all expiatory offerings
were trusted in as the means of propitiation both among Jews and Gentiles, that faith or trust was now to be exclusively rendered to the blood of Christ, heightened by the stronger demonstrations of a Divine appointment.

To the most unlettered Christian this then will be most obvious, that that faith in Christ which is required of us, consists both of assent and trust; and the necessity of maintaining these inseparably united will farther appear by considering, that it is not a blind and superstitious trust in the sacrifice of Christ, like that of the heathens in their sacrifices, which leads to salvation; nor the presumptuous trust of wicked and impenitent men, who depend on Christ to save them in their sins; but such a trust as is exercised according to the authority and direction of the word of God, so that to know the Gospel in its leading principles, and to have a cordial belief in it, is necessary to that more specific act of faith which is called reliance, or in systematic language, fiducial assent, of which cometh salvation. The Gospel, as the scheme of man’s salvation, supposes that he is under law; that this law of God has been violated by all; and that every man is under sentence of death. — Serious consideration of our ways, confession of the fact, and sorrowful conviction of the evil and danger of sin, will follow the gift of repentance, and a cordial belief of the testimony of God, and we shall thus turn to God with contrite hearts, and earnest prayers and supplications for his mercy. This is called “repentance toward God;” and repentance being the first subject of evangelical preaching, and then the belief of the Gospel, it is plain that Christ is only immediately held out in this Divine plan of our redemption as the object of trust in order to forgiveness to persons in this state of penitence, and under this sense of danger. The degree of sorrow for sin, and alarm upon this discovery of our danger as sinners, is nowhere fixed in Scripture; only it is supposed every where, that it is such as to lead men to inquire earnestly “what shall I do to be saved?” and to use all the appointed means of salvation, as those who feel that their salvation is at issue; that they are in a lost condition, and must be pardoned or perish. To all such persons, Christ, as the only atonement for sin, is exhibited as the object of their trust, with the promise of God, “that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Nothing is required of such but this actual trust in, and personal apprehension or taking hold of the merits of Christ’s death as a sacrifice for sin; and upon their thus believing they are justified, their faith is “counted for righteousness.”
This appears to be the plain Scriptural representation of this doctrine and we may infer from it.

1. That the faith by which we are justified is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the Gospel, which leaves the heart unmoved and unaffected by a sense of the evil and danger of sin, and the desire of salvation, though it supposes this assent: nor,

2. Is it that more lively and cordial assent to, and belief in the doctrine of the Gospel, touching our sinful and lost condition, which is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, and from which springeth repentance, though this must precede it; nor,

3. Is it only the assent of the mind to the method by which God justifies the ungodly by faith in the sacrifice of his Son, though this is an element of it; but it is a hearty concurrence of “the will and affections with this plan of salvation, which implies a renunciation of every other refuge,” “and an actual trust in the Saviour, and personal apprehension of his merits: such a belief of the Gospel by the power of the Spirit of God as leads us to come to Christ, to receive Christ, to trust in Christ, and to commit the keeping of our souls into his hands, in humble confidence of his ability and his willingness to save us.” (Bunting’s Sermon on Justification.)

This is that qualifying condition to which the promise of God annexes justification; that without which justification would not take place; and in this sense it is that we are justified by faith; not by the merit of faith, but by faith instrumentally as this condition, for its connection with the benefit arises from the merits of Christ, and the promise of God. “If Christ had not merited, God had not promised; if God had not promised, justification had never followed upon this faith; so that the indissoluble connection of faith and justification is from God’s institution, whereby he hath bound himself to give the benefit upon performance of the condition. Yet there is an aptitude in this faith to be made a condition, for no other act can receive Christ as a priest propitiating, and pleading the propitiation, and the promise of God for his sake to give the benefit. As receiving Christ and the gracious promise in this manner, it acknowledgeth man’s guilt, and so man renounceth all righteousness in himself, and honoureth God the Father, and Christ the Son, the only Redeemer. It glorifies God’s mercy and free grace in the highest degree. It acknowledgeth on earth, as it will be perpetually acknowledged in heaven, that the whole salvation of sinful man, from the beginning to the last degree thereof, whereof there shall be no end, is from
God’s freest love, Christ’s merit and intercession, his own gracious promise, and the power of his own Holy Spirit.” (Lawson.)

Justification by faith alone is thus clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures; and it was this great doctrine brought forth again from the Scriptures into public view, and maintained by their authority, which constituted one of the main pillars of the reformation from popery; and on which no compromise could be allowed with that corrupt Church which had substituted for it the merit of works. Melancthon, in his Apology for the Augsburg Confession, thus speaks: — “To represent justification by faith only has been considered objectionable, though Paul concludes that ‘a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;’ ‘that we are justified freely by his grace,’ and ‘that it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.’ If the use of the exclusive term only is deemed inadmissible, let them expunge from the writings of the apostles the exclusive phrases, ‘by grace,’ ‘not of works,’ ‘the gift of God,’ and others of similar import.”

“We are accounted righteous before God,” says the eleventh Article of the Church of England, “only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, not for our works and deservings;” and again, in the Homily on Salvation, “St. Paul declares nothing upon the behalf of man, concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, which, nevertheless, is the gift of God and not man’s only work without God. And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but only shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether.”

It is an error, therefore, to suppose, as many have done, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is peculiarly a Calvinistic one. It has, in consequence, often been attacked under this mistake, and confounded with the peculiarities of that system, by writers of limited reading, or perverting ingenuity. It is the doctrine, as we have seen, not of the Calvinistic confessions only, but of the Lutheran Church, and of the Church of England. It was the doctrine of the Dutch Remonstrants, at least of the early divines of that party; and though among many divines of the Church of England, the errors of popery on the subject of justification have had their influence, and some, who have contended for justification by faith alone, have lowered the Scriptural standard of believing, the doctrine itself has often been very ably maintained by its later non-Calvinistic divines. Thus justification by faith alone: faith which excludes all works, both of the
ceremonial and moral law; all works performed by Gentiles under the law of nature; all works of evangelical obedience, though they spring from faith; has been defended by Whitby, in the preface to his notes on the Epistle to the Galatians though he was a decided anti-Calvinist. The same may be said of many others; and we may, finally, refer to Mr. Wesley, who revived, by his preaching and writings, an evangelical Arminianism in this country; and who has most clearly and ably established this truth in connection with the doctrine of general redemption, and God’s universal love to man.

“By affirming that faith is the term or condition of justification, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. ‘He that believeth not is condemned already,’ and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but the ‘wrath of God abideth on him.’ As ‘there is no other name given under heaven, than that of Jesus of Nazareth,’ no other merit whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin; so there is no other way of obtaining a share in his merit, than by faith in his name. So that, as long as we are without this faith, we are ‘strangers to the covenant of promise, we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world.’

Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have, I speak of those unto whom the Gospel is preached; for ‘what have I to do to judge them that are without?’ Whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not; he is still a child of wrath, still under the curse, till he believe in Jesus.

“Faith, therefore, is the necessary condition of justification. Yea, and the only necessary condition thereof. This is the second point carefully to be observed; that the very moment God giveth faith (for it is the gift of God) to the ‘ungodly, that worketh not,’ that ‘faith is counted to him for righteousness.’ He hath no righteousness at all antecedent to this, not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But ‘faith is imputed to him for righteousness,’ the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not. But as ‘he made Christ to be a sin offering for us,’ that is, treated him as a sinner, punished him for our sins; so he counteth us righteous, from the time we believe in him; that is, he doth not punish us for our sins, yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.
“Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition, that faith is the only condition of justification, must arise from not understanding it. — We mean thereby this much, that it is the only thing, without which no one is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have every thing else, without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so on the other, though he be supposed to want every thing else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell fire: suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm, that any more is indispensably required, before that sinner can be justified?” (Wesley’s Sermons.)

To the view of justifying faith we have attempted to establish, namely, the entire trust and reliance of an awakened and penitent sinner, in the atonement of Christ alone, as the meritorious ground of his pardon, some objections have been made, and some contrary hypotheses opposed, which it will be necessary to bring to the test of the word of God.

The general objection is, that it is a doctrine unfavourable to morality. This was the objection in St. Paul’s day, and it has been urged through all ages ever since. It proceeds, however, upon a great misapprehension of the doctrine; and has sometimes been suggested by that real abuse of it, to which all truth is liable by men of perverted minds and corrupted hearts. Some of these have pretended, or deceived themselves into the conclusion, that if the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ only be relied upon, however presumptuously, the sins which they commit will be forgiven; and that there is no motive at least from fear of consequences, to avoid sin. Others observing this abuse, or misled, probably, by incautious statements of sincere persons on this point, have concluded this to be the logical consequence of the doctrine, however innocently it may sometimes be held. Attempts have, therefore, been made to guard the doctrine, and from these, on the other hand, errors have arisen. The Romish Church contends for justification by inherent righteousness, and makes faith a part of that righteousness. Others contend, that faith signifies obedience; others place justification in faith and good works united; others hold that faith
gives us an interest in the merit of Christ, to make up the deficiency of a sincere but imperfect obedience; others think that true faith is in itself essentially, and, per se, the necessary root of obedience.

The proper answer to the objection, that justification by faith alone leads to licentiousness, is, that “though we are justified by faith alone,” the faith by which we are justified is not alone in the heart which exercises it. In receiving Christ, as the writers of the reformation often say, “faith is sola, yet not solitaria.” It is not the trust of a man asleep and secure, but the trust of one awakened and aware of the peril of eternal death, as the wages of sin; it is not the trust of a man ignorant of the spiritual meaning of God’s holy law; but of one who is convinced and “slain” by it; not the trust of an impenitent, but of a penitent man; the trust of one, in a word, who feels, through the convincing power of the word and Spirit of God, that he is justly exposed to wrath, and in whom this conviction produces a genuine sorrow for sin, and an intense and supreme desire to be delivered from its penalty and dominion. Now that all this is substantially, or more particularly, in the experience of all who pass into this state of justification through faith, is manifest from the seventh and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, in which the moral state of man is traced in the experience of St. Paul as an example, from his conviction for sin by the law of God, revealed to him in its spirituality, to his entrance into the condition and privileges of a justified state. We see here, guilt, fear, a vain struggle with bondage, poignant distress, self despair, readiness to submit to any effectual mode of deliverance which may be offered, acceptance of salvation by Christ, the immediate removal of condemnation, dominion over sin, with all the fruits of regeneration, and the lofty hopes of the glory of GOD. So far, then, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone from leading to a loose and careless conduct, that that very state of mind in which alone this faith can be exercised, is one which excites the most earnest longings and efforts of mind to be free from the bondage of sin, as well as from its penalty; and to be free from its penalty in order that freedom from its bondage may follow. As this is proved by the seventh chapter of the epistle referred to, so the former part of the eighth, which continues the discourse, (unfortunately broken by the division of the chapters,) shows the moral state which is the immediate result of “being in Christ Jesus,” through the exercise of that faith which alone, as we have seen, can give us a personal interest in him. “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” This is the first result of
the pardon of sin, a consequent exemption from condemnation. The next is manifestly concomitant with it, — “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit,” which is now in its fulness imparted to them; and by which, being regenerated, they are delivered from the bondage before described, and “walk” after his will, and under his sanctifying influence. This brings us precisely to the answer which the apostle himself gives to the objection to which we are referring, in the sixth chapter — “What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid; how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?” The moral state of every man who is justified, is here described to be, that he is “dead to sin.” Not that justification strictly is a death unto sin, or regeneration; but into this state it immediately brings us, so that, though they are properly distinguished in the order of our thoughts, and in the nature of things, they go together; he to whom “there is no condemnation,” walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and he who experiences the “abounding of the grace of God” in his pardon, is “dead to sin,” and cannot, therefore, continue therein. This is the effect of the faith that justifies; from that alone, as it brings us to Christ our deliverer, our entire deliverance from sin can follow; and thus the doctrine of faith becomes exclusively the doctrine of holiness, and points out the only remedy for sin’s dominion.

It is true, that some colour would be given to the contrary opinion, were it to be admitted, that this act of faith, followed by our justification, did indefeasibly settle our right to eternal blessedness by a title not to be vitiated by any future transgression; but this doctrine, which forms a part of the theory of the Calvinists, we shall, in its place, shew to be unscriptural. It is enough here to say, that it has no connection with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, though so often ignorantly identified with it. Our probation is not terminated by our pardon. Wilful sin will infallibly plunge us again into condemnation, with heightened aggravations and hazards; and he only retains this state of favour who continues to believe with that same faith which brings back to him, not only the assurances of God’s mercy, but the continually renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone, as stated in the Scriptures, needs not, therefore, any of those guards and cautions which we have enumerated above, and which all involve serious errors, which it may not be useless to point out.
1. The error of the Romish Church is to confound justification and sanctification. So the council of Trent declares, that “justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification of the inner man; and that the only formal cause of justification is the righteousness of God, not that whereby he is just, but that by which he makes us just;” that is, inherently so. That justification and sanctification go together, we have seen; but this is not what is meant by the council. Their doctrine is, that man is made just or holy, and then justified. The answer to this has been already given. God “justifieth the ungodly;” and the Scriptures plainly mean by justification, not sanctification, but simply the remission of sin, as already established. The passages, also, above quoted, show that those who hold this doctrine reverse the order of the Scriptures. The sanctification which constitutes a man inherently righteous, is concomitant with justification, but does not precede it. Before “condemnation” is taken away, he cries out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death;” when “there is now no condemnation,” he “walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” In the nature of things, too, justification and sanctification are distinct. The active sanctification of the Spirit, taken in itself, either habitually or actually, and as inherent in us, can in nowise be justification, for justification is the remission of sins. God gave this Spirit to angels, he gave it to Adam in the day of creation, and this Spirit did sanctify, and now doth sanctify the blessed angels, yet this sanctification is not remission. Sanctification cannot be the formal cause of justification, any more than justification can be the formal cause of glorification; for however all these may be connected, they are things perfectly distinct and different in their nature. “There be two kinds of Christian righteousness,” says Hooker, “the one without us, which we have by imputation; the other in us, which consisteth of faith, hope, and charity, and other Christian virtues. God giveth us both the one justice and the other; the one by accepting us for righteous in Christ, the other by working Christian righteousness in us.” (Discourse of Justification.)

2. To the next opinion, that justifying faith, in the Christian sense, includes works of evangelical obedience, and is not, therefore, simple affiance or fiducial assent, the answer of Whitby is forcible: — “The Scripture is express and frequent in the assertion, that believers are justified by faith, in which expression either faith must include works, or evangelical obedience, or it doth not: if it doth not, we are justified by faith alone; and that it doth not formally include works of evangelical righteousness appears,
1. From the plain distinction which the Scripture puts between them, when it informs us that faith works by love, is shown forth by our works, and exhorts us to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge; and,

2. Because it is not reasonable to conceive, that Christ and his apostles, making use of a word which had a known and fixed import, should mean more by this word than what it signified in common use, as sure they must have done, had they included in the meaning of the word the whole of our evangelical righteousness.” (Preface to Galatians.)

To this we may add, that in every discourse of St. Paul, as to our justification, faith and works are opposed to each other; and farther, that his argument necessarily excludes works of evangelical obedience. For as it clearly excludes all works of ceremonial law, so also all works of obedience to the moral law; and that not with any reference to their degree, as perfect or imperfect, but with reference to their nature as works; so then, for this same reason must all works of evangelical obedience be excluded from the office of justifying, for they are also moral works, works of obedience to the same law, which is in force under the Gospel; and however they may be performed; whether by the assistance of the Spirit, or without that assistance; whether they spring from faith or any other principle, these are mere circumstances which alter not the nature of the acts themselves, they are works still, and are opposed by the apostle to grace and faith. “And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more (of) grace, otherwise work is no more work,” Romans 11:6.

3. A third notion which has been adopted to guard the doctrine of justification by faith is, that faith apprehends and appropriates the merits of Christ to make up for the deficiency of our imperfect obedience. There must, therefore, be a sincere endeavour after obedience, and in this the required guard is supposed to lie; but to secure justification where obedience is still imperfect though sincere, requires faith.

It is a sufficient refutation of this theory, that no intimation is given of it in Scripture, and it is indeed contradicted by it. Either this sincere and imperfect obedience has its share in our justification, or it has not; if it has, we are justified by works and faith united, which has just been disproved; if
it has not, then we are justified by faith alone, in the manner before explained.

4. The last error referred to is that which represents faith as, per se, the necessary root of obedience: so that justification by faith alone may be allowed; but then the guard against abuse is said to lie in this, that true faith is itself so eminent a virtue, that it naturally produces good works.

The objection to this statement lies not indeed so much to the substantial truth of the doctrine taught by it, or to what is perhaps intended by most of those who so speak, for similar modes of expression we find in the writings of many of the elder divines of the reformation, who most strenuously advocated justification by faith alone; but to the view under which it is presented. Faith, when genuine, is necessarily the “root and mother of obedience;” good works of every kind, without exception, do also necessarily spring from it; but though we say necessarily, yet we do not say naturally. The error lies in considering faith in Christ as so eminently a virtue, so great an act of obedience, that it must always argue a converted and renewed state of mind wherever it exists, from which, therefore, obedience must flow. We have, however, seen that regeneration does not precede justification; that till justification man is under bondage, and that he does not “walk after the Spirit,” until he is so “in Christ Jesus;” that to him “there is now no condemnation;” yet faith, all acknowledge, must precede justification, and it cannot, therefore, presuppose a regenerate state of mind. The truth, then, is, that faith does not produce obedience by any virtue there is in it, per se; nor as it supposes a previous renewal of heart; but as it unites to Christ, gives us a personal interest in the covenant of God’s mercy, and obtains for us, as an accomplished condition, our justification, from which flow the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the regeneration of our nature. The strength of faith lies not, then, in what it is in itself, but in what it interests us in; it necessarily leads to good works, because it necessarily leads to justification, on which immediately follows our “new creation in Christ Jesus to good works, that we may walk in them.”

There are yet a few theories on the subject of justification to be stated and examined, which, however, the principles already established will enable us briefly to dismiss.

That of the Romish Church, which confounds sanctification with justification, has been already noticed. The influence of this theory may be
traced in the writings of some leading divines of the English Church, who were not fully imbued with the doctrines of the reformers on this great point, such as Bishop Taylor, Archbishop Tillotson, and others, who make regeneration necessary to justification; and also in many divines of the Calvinistic nonconformist class, who make regeneration, also, to precede: justification, though not like the former, as a condition of it.

The source of this error appears to be twofold.

It arises, first, from a loose and general notion of the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration; and, secondly, from confounding that change which true evangelical repentance doubtless implies, with regeneration itself. A few observations will dissipate these erroneous impressions.

As to those previous changes of mind and conduct, which they often argue from as proving a new state of mind and character, they are far from marking that defined and unequivocal state of renovation, which our Lord expresses by the phrases “born again,” and “born of the Spirit,” and which St. Paul evidently explains by being “created anew,” “a new creation;” “living after the Spirit,” and “walking in the Spirit.” In the established order in which God effects this mighty renovation of a nature previously corrupt, in answer to prayers directed to him, with confidence in his promises to that effect in Christ Jesus, there must be a previous process, which divines have called by the expressive names of “awakening,” and “conviction;” that is, the sleep of indifference to spiritual concerns is removed, and conviction of the sad facts of the case of a man who has hitherto lived in sin, and under the sole dominion of a carnal and earthly mind, is fixed in the judgment and the conscience. From this arises an altered and a corrected view of things; apprehension of danger; desire of deliverance; abhorrence of the evils of the heart and the life; strong efforts for freedom, resisted however by the bondage of established habits and innate corruptions; and a still deeper sense in consequence, of the need not only of pardon, but of that almighty and renewing influence which alone can effect the desired change. It is in this state of mind, that the prayer becomes at once heartfelt and appropriate, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

But all this is not regeneration; it is rather the effect of the full and painful discovery of the want of it; nor will “fruits meet for repentance,” the effects of an alarmed conscience, and of a corrected judgment; the efforts to be right, however imperfect; which are the signs, we also grant, of sincerity,
prove more than that the preparatory process is going on under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Others may endeavour to persuade a person in this state of mind that he is regenerate, but the absence of love to God as his reconciled Father; the evils which he detests having still, in many respects, the dominion over him; the resistance of his heart to the unaccustomed yoke, when the sharp pangs of his convictions do not, for the moment, arm him with new powers of contest; his pride; his remaining self righteousness; his reluctance to be saved wholly as a sinner, whose repentance and all its fruits, however exact and copious, merit nothing; all assure him, that even should he often feel that he is “not far from the kingdom of God,” he has not entered it; that his burden is not removed; that his bonds are not broken; that he is not “walking in the Spirit;” that he is at best but a struggling slave, not “the Lord’s free man.” But there is a point which, when passed, changes the scene. He believes wholly in Christ; he is justified by faith; he is comforted by the Spirit’s “witnessing with his spirit,” that he is now a child of God; he serves God from filial love; he has received new powers; the chain of his bondage is broken, and he is delivered; he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; he is “dead to sin, and cannot continue longer therein;” and the fruits of the Spirit are in him — “love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance.” He is now, and not till now, in a REGENERATE STATE, as that state is described in the Scriptures. Before he was a seeker, now he has obtained what he sought; and he obtains it concomitantly with justification. Still indeed it may be said, that, call this previous state what you will, either regeneration or repentance, it is necessary to justification; and, therefore, justification is not by faith alone. We answer, that we can not call it a regenerated state, a being “born of the Spirit,” for the Scriptures do not so designate it; and it is clear, that the fruits of the Spirit do not belong to it; and, therefore, there is an absence, not of the work of the Spirit, for all has its origin there, but of that work of the Spirit by which we are “born again” strictly and properly. Nor is the connection of this preparatory process with justification of the same nature as that of faith with justification. It is necessary, it is true, as hearing the word is necessary, for “faith cometh by hearing;” and it is necessary as leading to prayer, and to faith, for prayer is the language of discovered want, and faith in another, in the sense of trust, is the result of self diffidence, and self despair; but it is necessary remotely, not immediately. This distinction is clearly and accurately expressed by Mr. Wesley. (Farther Appeal, &c.) “And yet I allow you this, that although
both repentance and the fruits thereof, are, in some sense, necessary before justification, yet neither the one nor the other is necessary in the same sense, nor in the same degree with faith. Not in the same degree; for in whatever moment a man believes, in the Christian sense of the word, he is justified; his sins are blotted out; his faith is counted to him for righteousness. But it is not so at whatever moment he repents, or brings forth any or all the fruits of repentance. Faith alone, therefore justifies, which repentance alone does not; much less any outward work; and consequently none of these are necessary to justification in the same degree as faith. Nor in the same sense; for none of these has so direct and immediate relation to justification as faith. This is proximately necessary thereto; repentance and its fruits, remotely, as these are necessary to the increase and continuance of faith. And even in this sense, these are only necessary on supposition that there is time and opportunity for them; for in many instances there is not; but God cuts short his work, and faith prevents the fruits of repentance. So that the general proposition is not overthrown, but clearly established by these concessions, and we conclude still, both on the authority of Scripture and the Church, that faith alone is the proximate condition of justification.” (Sermons.)

If regeneration, in the sense in which it is used in Scripture, and not loosely and vaguely, as by many divines, both ancient and modern, is then a concomitant of justification, it cannot be a condition of it; and as we have shown, that all the changes which repentance implies, fall short of regeneration, repentance is not an evidence of a regenerate state; and thus the theory of justification by regeneration is untenable.

A second theory, not indeed substantially different from the former, but put into different phrase, and more formally laboured, is that of Bishop Bull, which gave rise to the celebrated controversy of his day, upon the publication of his Harmonia Apostolica; and it is one which has left the deepest impress upon the views of the clergy of the English Church. and contributed more than any thing else to obscure her true doctrine, as contained in her articles and homilies, on this leading point of experimental theology. This theory is professedly that of justification by works, with these qualifications, that the works are evangelical, or such as proceed from faith; that they are done by the assistance of the Spirit of God; and that such works are not meritorious, but a necessary condition of justification. To establish this hypothesis, it was necessary to avoid the force of the words of St. Paul, and the learned prelate just mentioned,
therefore, reverses the usual practice of commentators, which is to reconcile St. James to St. Paul on the doctrine of justification; and assuming that St. James speaks clearly and explicitly, and St. Paul, on this point, things “hard to be understood;” he interprets the latter by the former, and reconciles St. Paul to St. James. According then to this opinion, St. James explicitly asserts the doctrine of justification of sinful men before God by the works which proceed from faith in Christ: St. Paul, therefore, when he denies that man can be justified by works, refers simply to works of obedience to the Mosaic law; and by the faith which justifies, he means the works which spring from faith. Thus the two apostles are harmonized by Bishop Bull.

The main pillar of this scheme is, that St. James teaches the doctrine of justification before God by works springing from faith in Christ; and as it is necessary in a discourse on justification, to ascertain the meaning of this apostle, in the passages referred to, both because his words may appear to form an objection to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which we have established; and, also, on account of the misleading statements which are found in many of the attempts which have been made to reconcile the two apostles, this may be a proper place for that inquiry; the result of which will show, that Bishop Bull and the divines of that school, have as greatly mistaken St. James as they have mistaken St. Paul.

We observe then,

1. That to interpret St. Paul by St. James, involves this manifest absurdity, that it is interpreting a writer who treats professedly, and in a set discourse, on the subject in question, the justification of a sinful man before God, by a writer who, if he could be allowed to treat of that subject with the same design, does it but incidentally. This itself makes it clear, that the great axiomata, the principles of this doctrine, must be first sought for in the writer who enters professedly, and by copious argument, into the inquiry.

But,

2. The two apostles do not engage in the same argument, and for this reason, that they are not addressing themselves to persons in the same circumstances. St. Paul addresses the unbelieving Jews, who sought justification by obedience to the law of Moses, moral and ceremonial; proves that all men are guilty, and that neither Jew nor Gentile can be justified by works of obedience to any law, and that therefore justification
must be by faith alone. On the other hand, St. James, having to do, in his epistle with such as professed the Christian faith and justification by it, but erring dangerously about the nature of faith, affirming that faith, in the sense of opinion or mere belief of doctrine, would save them, though they should remain destitute of a real change in the moral frame and constitution of their minds, and give no evidence of this in a holy life, it became necessary for him to plead the renovation of man’s nature, and evangelical obedience, as the necessary fruits of real or living faith. The question discussed by St. Paul is, whether works would justify; that by St. James is, whether a dead faith, the mere faith of assent would save.

3. St. Paul and St. James do not use the term justification in the same sense. The former uses it as we have seen, for the pardon of sin, the accepting and treating as righteous one who is guilty but penitent. But, that St. James does not speak of this kind of justification is most evident, from his reference to the case of Abraham. “Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” Does St. James mean, that Abraham was then justified in the sense of being forgiven? Certainly not; for St. Paul, when speaking of the justification of Abraham, in the sense of his forgiveness before God, by the imputation of his faith for righteousness, fixes that event many years previously, even before Isaac was born, and when the promise of a seed was made to him; for it is added by Moses when he gives an account of this transaction, <011506>Genesis 15:6, “And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.” If then, St. James speaks of the same kind of justification, he contradicts St. Paul and Moses, by implying that Abraham was not pardoned and received into God’s favour, until the offering of Isaac. If no one will maintain this, then the justification of Abraham, mentioned by St. James, it is plain, does not mean the forgiveness of his sins, and he uses the term in a different sense to St. Paul.

4. The only sense, then, in which St. James can take the term justification, when he says that Abraham was “justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar,” is, that his works manifested or proved that he was justified, proved that he was really justified by faith, or, in other words, that the faith by which he was justified, was not dead and inoperative, but living and active. This is abundantly confirmed by what follows. So far is St. James from denying that Abraham was justified by the imputation of his faith for righteousness, long before he offered up his son Isaac, that he expressly allows it by quoting the passage, <011506>Genesis 15:6,
in which this is said to have taken place at least twenty-five years before; and he makes use of his subsequent works in the argument, expressly to illustrate the vital and obedient nature of the faith by which he was at first justified. “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect, and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, ‘Abraham believed God,’ (in a transaction twenty-five years previous,) ‘and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.’” This quotation of James, from Genesis 15:6, demands special notice. “And the scripture,” he says, “was fulfilled, which saith,” &c. Whitby paraphrases, “was again fulfilled;” some other commentators say it “was twice fulfilled,” in the transaction of Isaac, and at the previous period to which the quotation refers. These comments are, however, hasty, darken the argument of St. James, and have, indeed, no discernible meaning at all. For do they mean that Abraham was twice justified, in the sense of being twice pardoned; or that his justification was begun at one of the periods referred to, and finished twenty-five years afterward? These are absurdities; and if they will not maintain them, in what sense do they understand St. James to use the phrase, “and the scripture was fulfilled?” The scripture alluded to by St. James is that given above, “and he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.” When was the first fulfilment of this scripture, of which they speak? It could not be in the transaction of Abraham’s proper justification, through his faith in the promise respecting “his seed,” as mentioned, Genesis 15:6, for that scripture is an historical narration of the fact of that, his justification. The fact, then, was not a fulfilment of that part of Scripture, but that part of Scripture a subsequent narration of the fact. The only fulfilment, consequent, that it had, was in the transaction adduced by St. James, the offering of Isaac; but if Abraham had been, in the proper sense, justified then, that event could be no fulfilment, in their sense, of a scripture which is a narrative of what was done twenty-five years before, and which relates only to what God then did, namely, “count the faith of Abraham to him for righteousness.” The only senses in which the term “fulfil” can be taken in this passage are, that of accomplishment, or that of illustration and establishment. The first cannot apply here, for the passage is neither typical nor prophetic, and we are left, therefore, to the second; “and the scripture was fulfilled,” illustrated, and confirmed, which saith, “Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” It was established and confirmed that he was, in truth, a man truly justified of God, and that the faith by which he was justified was living and operative.
5. As St. James does not use the term justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sin, when he speaks of the justification of Abraham by works, so neither can he use it in this sense in the general conclusion which he draws from it; “Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” The ground on which he rests this general inference is the declarative justification of Abraham, which resulted from his lofty act of obedience, in the case of Isaac, and which was eminently itself an act of obedient faith; and the justification of which he speaks in the general conclusion of the argument, must, therefore, be taken in the same sense. He speaks not of the act of being justified before God, and the means by which it is effected; but of being proved to be in a manifest and Scripturally approved state of justification. “Ye see, then, that by works a man is” shown to be in a “justified” state; or how his profession of being in the Divine favour is justified and confirmed “by works, and not by faith only,” or mere doctrinal faith; not by the faith of mere intellectual assent, not by the faith which is dead, and unproductive of good works.

Lastly, so far are the two apostles from being in opposition to each other, that, as to faith as well as works, they most perfectly agree. St. James declares, that no man can be saved by mere faith. But, then, by faith he means, not the same faith to which St. Paul attributes a saving efficacy. His argument sufficiently shows this. He speaks of a faith which is “alone” and “dead,” St. Paul of the faith which is never alone, though it alone justifieth; which is not solitaria, though it is sola in this work. as our old divines speak; the faith of a penitent, humbled man, who not only yields speculative assent to the scheme of Gospel doctrine, but flies with confidence to Christ, as his sacrifice and Redeemer, for pardon of sin and deliverance from it; the faith, in a word, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and that by which a true believer enters into and lives the spiritual life, because it vitally unites him to Christ, the fountain of that life — “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

There is then no foundation in the Epistle of St. James for the doctrine of justification by works, according to Bishop Bull’s theory. The other arguments by which this notion has been supported, are refuted by the principles which have been already laid down, and confirmed from the word of God.
A third theory has, also, had great influence in the Church of England, and is to this day explicitly asserted by some of its leading divines and prelates. It acknowledges that, provided faith be understood to be sincere and genuine, men are justified by faith only, and in this they reject the opinion just examined; but then they take faith to be mere belief, assent to the truth of the Gospel, and nothing more. This is largely defended by Whitby in his preface to the Galatians, which, in other respects ably shows that justification is in no sense by works, either natural, Mosaic, or evangelical. The faith by which we are justified, he describes to be “a full assent to, or firm persuasion of mind concerning the truth of what is testified by God himself respecting our Lord Jesus Christ,” and in particular, “that he was Christ the Son of God.” “This was the faith which the apostles required in order to baptism;” “by this faith men were put into the way of salvation, and if they persevered in it, would obtain it.”

Nearly the same view is taught by the present bishop of Winchester, in his Refutation of Calvinism, and his Elements of Theology, and it is, probably, the opinion of the great body of the national clergy not distinguished as evangelical, though with many it is also much mingled with the scheme of Bishop Bull. “Faith and belief,” says Bishop Tomline, “strictly speaking mean the same thing.” If, then, a penitent heathen or Jew, convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Saviour of the world, “having understood that baptism was essential to the blessings of the new and merciful dispensation, of the Divine authority of which he was fully persuaded, would eagerly apply to some one of those who were commissioned to baptize; his baptism, administered according to the appointed form to a true believer, would convey justification; or in other words, the baptized person would receive remission of his past sins, would be reconciled to God, and be accounted just and righteous in his sight.” (Refutation of Calvinism, chap. 3.) “Faith, therefore, including repentance for former offences, was, as far as the person himself was concerned, the sole requisite for justification; no previous work was enjoined; but baptism was invariably the instrument, or external form by which justification was conveyed.” (Refutation of Calvinism, chap. 3.)

The confusedness and contrariety of this scheme will be obvious to the reader.

It will not be denied to Dr. Whitby, that the apostles baptized upon the profession of a belief in the Messiahship and Sonship of our Lord; nor is it
denied to Bishop Tomline, that when baptism, in the case of true penitents, was not only an outward expression of the faith of assent; but accompanied by a solemn committal of the spiritual interests of the baptized to Christ, by an act of confidence, the power to do which, was, no doubt, often given as a part of the grace of baptism, justification would follow; the real question is, whether justification follows mere assent. This is wholly contradicted by the argument of St. James; for if dead faith, by which he means mere assent to doctrine, is no evidence of a justified state, it cannot be justifying; which I take to be as conclusive an argument as possible. For St. James does not deny faith to him who has faith without works; if then he has faith, the apostle can mean by faith nothing else certainly than assent or belief: “Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well;” and as this faith, according to him is “alone,” by faith he means mere assent of the intellect. This argument shows, that those theologians are unquestionably in error, who make justification the result of mere assent to the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, or doctrinal belief. And neither Dr. Whitby nor Bishop Tomline are able to carry this doctrine throughout. The former contends, that this assent, when firm and sincere, must produce obedience, but St. James denies neither firmness of conviction, nor sincerity to his inoperative faith, and yet, he tells us, that it remained “alone,” and was “dead.” Beside, if faith justifies only as it produces obedience, it does not justify alone, and the justifying efficacy lies in the virtual or actual obedience proceeding from it, which gives up Whitby’s main position, and goes into the scheme of Bishop Bull. Equally inconsistent is Bishop Tomline. He acknowledges that “belief, or faith, may exist, unaccompanied by any of the Christian graces;” and that “this faith does not justify.” How then will he maintain that justification is by faith alone, in the sense of belief? Again he tells us, that the faith which is the means of salvation, “is that belief of the truth of the Gospel which produces obedience to its precepts, and is accompanied by a firm reliance upon the merits of Christ.” Still farther, that “baptism is the instrument invariably by which justification is conveyed.” (Refutation of Calvinism, chap. 3.) Thus, then, we are first told, that justifying faith is belief or assent; then that various other things are connected with it to render it justifying, such as previous repentance, the power of producing obedience, reliance on the merits of Christ, and baptism! All this confusion and contradiction shows, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in the sense of belief or intellectual assent only, cannot be maintained, and that, in order to avoid the worse than Antinomian consequence, which would follow from the doctrine, its advocates are obliged so to explain,
and qualify, and add, as to make many approaches to that true doctrine against which they hurl both censure and ridicule.

The error of this whole scheme lies in not considering the essence of justifying faith to be trust or confidence in Christ as our sacrifice for sin, which, though Whitby and others of his school, have attempted to ridicule by calling it “a leaning or rolling of ourselves upon him for salvation,” availing themselves of the coarse terms used by scoffers, is yet most manifestly, as we have indeed already seen, the only sense in which faith can be rationally taken, when a sacrifice for sin, a means of reconciliation with God, is its object, and indeed when any promise of God is made to us. It is not surely that we may merely believe that the death of Christ is a sacrifice for sin, that he is “set forth as a propitiation,” but that we may trust in its efficacy; it is not that we may merely believe that God has made promises to us, that his merciful engagements in our favour are recorded; but that we may have confidence in them, and thus be supported by them. This was the faith of the saints of the Old Testament. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” His faith was confidence. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” “Who is among you that feareth the Lord? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” It is under this notion of trust that faith is continually represented to us also in the New Testament. “In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of them that believe.” “For I know whom I have believed, (trusted,) and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” “If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

The fourth theory which we may notice, is that which rejects justification in the present life, and defers its administration to the last day. This has had a few, and but a few abettors, and the principal arguments for it are,

1. That all the consequences of sin are not removed from even believers in the present life, whereas a full remission of sin necessarily implies the full and immediate remission of punishment.
2. That if believers are justified, that is judged in the present life, they must be judged twice, whereas there is but one judgment, which is to take place at Christ’s second coming.

3. That the Scriptures speak of justification at the last day, as when our Lord declares “that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment,” and adds, “by thy words thou shalt (then) be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.”

To all these arguments, which a few words will refute, the general, and, indeed, sufficient answer is, that justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sins, the only import of the term in question, is constantly and explicitly spoken of as a present attainment. This is declared to be the case with Abraham and with David, by St. Paul; it was surely the case with those to whom our Lord said, “thy sins be forgiven thee;” and with her of whom he declared, that having “much forgiven she loved much.” “We have,” says St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” So plain a point needs no confirmation by more numerous quotations; and the only means which the advocates of the theory have resorted to for explaining such passages consistently with their own views, is absurdly, and we may add audaciously, to resolve them into a figure of speech which speaks of a future thing when certain, as present; a mode of interpretation which sets all criticism at defiance.

As to the first argument, we may observe that it assumes, that it is essential to the pardon of sin, that all its consequences should be immediately removed, or otherwise they assert it is no pardon at all. This is to affirm, that to be freed from punishment in another life, and finally, and indeed in a short time, to be freed from the afflictions of this is not a pardon; which no one can surely deliberately affirm. This notion, also, loses sight entirely of the obviously wise ends which are answered by postponing the removal of affliction and diseases from those who are admitted into the Divine favour, till another life; and of the sanctification of all these to their benefit, so that they entirely lose, when they are not the consequence of new offences, their penal character, and become parts of a merciful discipline, “working together for good.”

The second argument assumes, that because there is but one general judgment, there can be no acts of judgment which are private and personal. But the one is in no sense contrary to the other. Justification may,
therefore, be allowed to be a judicial proceeding under a merciful constitution, as before explained, and yet offer no obstruction to a general, public, and final judgment. The latter indeed grows out of the former; for since this offer of mercy is made to all men by the Gospel, they are accountable for the acceptance or refusal of it, which it is a part of the general judgment to exhibit, that the righteousness of God, in the punishment of them “that believe not the Gospel,” may be demonstrated and the ground of the salvation of those who have been sinners, as well as the rest of mankind, may be declared. We may also farther observe, that so far is the appointment of one general judgment from interfering with acts of judgment in the proceedings of the Most High as the governor of men, that he is constantly judging men, both as individuals and nations, and distributing to them both rewards and punishments.

The argument from the justification of men at the last day, proceeds, also, upon a false assumption. It takes justification then and now for the same act; and it supposes it to proceed upon the same principle; neither of which is true.

1. It is not true that it is the same act. The justification of believers in this life, is the remission of sins; but where are we taught that remission of sins is to be attained in the day of judgment? Plainly nowhere, and the whole doctrine of Scripture is in opposition to this notion, for it confines our preparation for judgment to the present life only. When our Lord says, “by thy words thou shalt be justified,” he does not mean “by thy words thy sins shall be forgiven;” and if this is not maintained the passage is of no force in the argument.

2. Justification at the last day, does not proceed upon the same principle, and, therefore, is not to be concluded to be the continuance of the same act, commenced on earth. Justification at the last day is, on all hands, allowed to be by works; but, if that justification mean the pardon of sin, then the pardon of sin is by works and not by faith, a doctrine we have already refuted from the clear evidence of Scripture itself. The justification of the last day is, therefore, not the pardon of sin; for if our sins are previously pardoned, we then need no pardon; if they are not pardoned, no provision for their remission then remains. And as this justification is not *pardon*, neither is it *acquittal*; for, as to those sins of which the wicked have not been guilty, they will not be acquitted of them, because an all-wise God will not charge them with those of which they have not been
guilty, and there can be no acquittal as to those they have committed. Believers will not be acquitted of the sins for which they have obtained forgiveness, because they will not be charged upon them: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” So far from their being arraigned as sinners, that their justification on earth may be formally pleaded for their acquittal at the last day, that the very circumstances of the judgment will be a public recognition, from its very commencement, of their pardon and acceptance upon earth. “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” “They rise to glory, not to shame,” their bodies being made like unto Christ’s “glorious body.” Those that sleep in Christ shall “God bring with him,” in his train of triumph; they shall be set on his “right hand,” in token of acceptance and favour; and of the books which shall be opened, one is “the book of life,” in which their names have been previously recorded. It follows, then, that our justification at the last day, if we must still use that phrase, which has little to support it in Scripture, and might be well substituted for others less equivocal, can only be declarative, approbatory, and remunerative. Declarative, as recognizing, in the manner just stated, the justification of believers on earth; approbatory of their works of faith and love; and remunerative of them, as made graciously rewardable, in their different measures, by the evangelical constitution.

And here it may not be amiss to notice an argument against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and in favour of justification by faith and works, which is drawn from the proceedings of the last day: — “If works wrought through faith are the ground of the sentence passed upon us in that day, then they are a necessary condition of our justification.” This is an argument which has been built much upon, from Bishop Bull to the present day. Its fallacy lies in considering the works of believers as the only, or chief ground of that sentence; that is, the administration of eternal life to them in its different degrees of glory at the coming of Christ. That it is not so, is plain from those express passages of Scripture, which represent eternal life as the fruit of Christ’s atonement, and the gift of God through him. “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works,” &c. “Why,” says an old writer, “might he not have said, by grace are ye saved, through faith and works; it were as easy to say the one as the other.” If our works are the sole ground of that sentence of eternal life, then is the reward of righteousness of debt according to the law of works, and not of grace; but if of grace, then works are not the sole or chief ground of our final reward. If of debt, we
claim in our own right: and the works rewarded must be in every sense our own; but good works are not our own works; we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works;” and derive all the power to do them from him. If, then, we have not the right of reward in ourselves, we have it in another, and thus we again come to another and higher ground of the final sentence than the works wrought even by them that believe, namely, the covenant right which we derive from Christ — right grounded on promise. If then it is asked, in what sense good works are any ground at all of the final sentence of eternal life, we answer, they are so secondarily and subordinately,

1. As evidences of that faith and that justified state from which alone truly good works can spring.

2. As qualifying us for heaven; they and the principles from which they spring constituting our holiness, our “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

3. As rewardable; but still of grace not of debt, of promise not of our own right, since after all we have done, though we had lived and suffered as the apostles to whom the words were first addressed, we are commanded to confess ourselves “unprofitable servants.” In this sense good works, though they have no part in the office of justifying the ungodly, that is, in obtaining forgiveness of sin, are necessary to salvation, though they are not the ground of it. As they are pleasing to God, so are they approved and rewarded by God. “They prevent future guilt, but take away no former guilt, evidence our faith and title to everlasting glory, strengthen our union with Christ because they strengthen faith, confirm our hope, glorify God, give good example to men, make us more capable of communion with God, give some content to our consciences, and there is happiness in the doing of them, and in the remembrance of them when done. Blessed are they who always abound in them, for they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. Yet Bellarmin, though a great advancer of merit, thought it the safest way to put our sole trust not in these good works, but in Christ. It is, indeed, not only the safest, but the only way so to do, if we would be justified before God. True, we shall be judged according to our works, but it doth not follow that we shall be justified by our works. God did never ordain good works, which are the fruits of a sincere faith in Christ, to acquire a right unto the remission of sin and eternal life; but to be
a means by which we may obtain possession of the rewards he hath promised.” (*Lawson’s Theo-Politica.*)

The last theory of justification to which it is necessary to advert, is that comprised in the scheme of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, in his Key to the Apostolic Writings. It is, that all such phrases as to elect, call, adopt, justify, sanctify, &c, are to be taken to express that Church relation into which, by the destruction of the Jewish polity, believing Jews and Gentiles were brought; that they are “antecedent blessings,” enjoyed by all professed Christians, though, unless they avail themselves of these privileges for the purposes of personal holiness, they cannot be saved.

This scheme is, in many respects, delusive and absurd, as it confounds collective privileges with those attainments which from their nature can only be personal. If we allow that with respect to “election,” for instance, it may have a plausibility, because nations of men may be elected to peculiar privileges of a religious kind; yet with respect to the others, as “justification,” &c, the notion requires no lengthened refutation. Justification is, as the Apostle Paul states it, pardon of sin; but are the sins of nations pardoned, because they are professedly Christian? This is a personal attainment, and can be no other, and collective justification, by Church privileges, is a wild dream, which mocks and trifles with the Scriptures. According to this scheme, there is a Scriptural sense in which the most profane and immoral man, provided he profess himself a Christian, may be said to be justified, that is, pardoned; sanctified, that is, made holy; and adopted, that is, made a child of God!
CHAPTER 24. — BENEFITS DERIVED TO MAN FROM THE ATONEMENT — CONCOMITANTS OF JUSTIFICATION.

The leading blessings concomitant with justification, are regeneration and adoption; with respect to which we may observe generally, that although we must distinguish them as being different from each other, and from justification, yet they are not to be separated. They occur at the same time, and they all enter into the experience of the same person; so that no man is justified without being regenerated and adopted, and no man is regenerated and made a son of God, who is not justified. Whenever they are mentioned in Scripture, they, therefore, involve and imply each other; a remark which may preserve us from some errors. Thus, with respect to our heirship, and consequent title to eternal life, in Titus 3:7, it is grounded upon our justification. “For we are justified by his grace, that we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” In 1 Peter 1:3, it is connected with our regeneration. “Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance,” &c. Again, in Romans 8:17, it is grounded upon our adoption — “If children, then heirs.” These passages are a sufficient proof, that justification, regeneration, and adoption, are not distinct and different titles, but constitute one and the same title, through the gift of God in Christ, to the heavenly inheritance. They are attained, too, by the same faith. We are “justified by faith;” and we are the “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Accordingly, in the following passages, they are all united as the effect of the same act of faith. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, (which appellation includes reconciliation and adoption,) even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” or, in other words, were regenerated.

The observations which have been made on the subject, in the preceding chapter, will render it the less necessary to dwell here at length upon the nature and extent of regeneration.

It is that mighty change in man, wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which the dominion which sin has over him in his natural state, and which he deplores and struggles against in his penitent state, is broken and abolished, so that,
with full choice of will and the energy of right affections, he serves God freely, and “runs in the way of his commandments.” “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” “For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the power and the will to do all things which are pleasing to God, both as to inward habits and outward acts, are, therefore, the distinctive characters of this state.

That repentance is not regeneration, we have before observed. It will not bear disputing whether regeneration begins with repentance; for if the regenerate state is only entered upon at our justification, then all that can be meant by this, to be consistent with the Scriptures, is that the preparatory process, which leads to regeneration, as it leads to pardon, commences with conviction and contrition, and goes on to a repentant turning to the Lord. In the order which God has established, regeneration does not take place without this process. Conviction of the evil and danger of an unregenerate state must first be felt. God hath appointed this change to be effected in answer to our prayers, and acceptable prayer supposes that we desire the blessing we ask; that we accept of Christ as the appointed medium of access to God; that we feel and confess our own inability to attain what we ask from another; and that we exercise faith in the promises of God which convey the good we seek. It is clear that none of these is regeneration for they all suppose it to be a good in prospect, the object of prayer and eager desire. True it is, that deep and serious conviction for sin, the power to desire deliverance from it, the power to pray, the struggle against the corruptions of an unregenerate heart, are all proofs of a work of God in the heart, and of an important moral change: but it is not this change, because regeneration is that renewal of our nature which gives us dominion over sin, and enables us to serve God, from love, and not merely from fear, and it is yet confessedly unattained, being still the object of search and eager desire. We are not yet “created anew unto good works,” which is as special and instant a work of God as justification, and for this reason, that it is not attained before the pardon of our sins, and always accompanies it.

This last point may be proved,
1. From the nature of justification itself, which takes away the penalty of sin; but that penalty is not only obligation to punishment, but the loss of the sanctifying Spirit, and the curse of being left under the slavery of sin, and under the dominion of Satan. Regeneration is effected by this Spirit restored to us, and is a consequence of our pardon; for though justification in itself is the remission of sin, yet a justified state implies a change, both in our condition and in our disposition: in our condition, as we are in a state of life, not of death, of safety, not of condemnation; in our disposition, as regenerate and new creatures.

2. From Scripture, which affords us direct proof that regeneration is a concomitant of justification, “If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature.” It is then the result of our entrance into that state in which we are said to be IN CHRIST; and the meaning of this phrase is most satisfactorily explained by Romans 8:1, considered in connection with the preceding chapter, from which, in the division of the chapters, it ought not to have been separated. That chapter clearly describes the state of a person convinced and slain by the law applied by the SPIRIT. We may discover indeed, in this description, certain moral changes, as consenting to the law that it is good; delighting in it after the inward man; powerful desires; humble confession, &c. The state represented is, however, in fact, one of guilt, spiritual captivity, helplessness, and misery; a state of condemnation; and a state of bondage to sin. The opposite condition is that of a man “IN CHRIST JESUS:” to him “there is no condemnation;” he is forgiven; the bondage to sin is broken; he “walks not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT.” To be IN CHRIST, is, therefore, to be justified, and regeneration instantly follows. We see then the order of the Divine operation in individual experience: conviction of sin, helplessness and danger; faith: justification; and regeneration. The regenerate state is, also, called in Scripture sanctification; though a distinction is made by the Apostle Paul between that and being “sanctified wholly,” a doctrine to be afterward considered. In this regenerate, or sanctified state, the former corruptions of the heart may remain, and strive for the mastery; but that which characterizes and distinguishes it from the state of a penitent before justification, before he is “in Christ,” is, that they are not even his inward habit; and that they have no dominion. Faith unites to Christ; by it we derive “grace and peace from God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ,” and enjoy “the communion of the Holy Ghost;” and this Spirit, as the
sanctifying Spirit, is given to us to” abide with us, and to be in us,” and then we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

ADOPTION is the second concomitant of justification, and is a large and comprehensive blessing.

To suppose that the apostles take this term from the practice of the Greeks, Romans, and other nations who had the custom of adopting the children of others, and investing them with all the privileges of their natural offspring, is, probably, a refinement. It is much more likely that they had simply in view the obvious fact, that our sins had deprived us of our sonship, the favour of God, and our right to the inheritance of eternal life; that we had become strangers, and aliens, and enemies, and that, upon our return to God, and reconciliation with him, our forfeited privileges were not only restored, but heightened through the paternal love of God. They could scarcely be forgetful of the affecting parable of the prodigal son; and it is under the same simple view that St. Paul quotes from the Old Testament, “wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty.”

Adoption, then, is that act by which we who were alienated, and enemies, and disinherited, are made the sons of God, and heirs of his eternal glory. “If children then heirs, heir’s of God and joint heirs with Christ;” where it is to be remarked, that it is not in our own right, nor in right of any work done in us, or which we ourselves do, though it be an evangelical work, that we become heirs, but jointly with him, and in his right.

To this state belong freedom from a servile spirit; we are not servants but sons; the special love and care of God our heavenly Father; a filial confidence in him; free access to him at all times and in all circumstances; the title to the heavenly inheritance; and the Spirit of adoption, or the witness of the Holy Spirit to our adoption, which is the foundation of all the comfort we can derive from those privileges, as it is the only means by which we can know that they are ours.

The point stated last requires to be explained more largely, and the more so as it has often been derided as enthusiastic, and often timidly explained away by those whose opinions are in the main correct.
The doctrine is, the inward witness or testimony of the Holy Spirit, to the adoption or sonship of believers, from which flows a comfortable persuasion or conviction of our present acceptance with God, and the hope of our future and eternal glory.

This is taught in several passages of Scripture.

Romans 8:15, 16, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” In this passage it is to be remarked,

1. That the gift of the Spirit spoken of, takes away “fear,” being opposed to the personified spirit of the law, or rather, perhaps, to the Holy Spirit in his convincing agency, called the spirit of bondage, producing “fear,” a servile dread of God as offended.

2. That the “Spirit of God” here mentioned, is not the personified spirit or genius of the Gospel, as some would have it, but “the Spirit itself,” or himself, and hence called in the Galatians, in the text adduced below, “The Spirit of his Son,” which cannot mean the genius of the Gospel.

3. That he inspires a filial confidence in God as our Father, which is opposed to “the fear” produced by the “spirit of bondage.”

4. That he produces this filial confidence, and enables us to call God our Father, by witnessing, bearing testimony with our spirit, “that we are the children of God.”

Galatians 4:4, 5, 6, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

Here, also, are to be noted,

1. The means of our redemption from under (the curse of) the law, the incarnation and sufferings of Christ.

2. That the adoption of sons follows upon our actual redemption from that curse, or, in other words, our pardon.
3. That upon our pardon, the “Spirit of his Son” is “sent forth,” and that “into our hearts,” producing the same effect as that mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, filial confidence in God, — “crying, Abba, Father.” To these are to be added all those passages, so numerous in the New Testament, which express the confidence and the joy of Christians; their friendship with God; their confident access to him as their God; their entire union, and delightful intercourse with him in spirit.

This doctrine has been generally termed the doctrine of assurance and, perhaps the expressions of St. Paul, — “the full assurance of faith,” and “the full assurance of hope,” may warrant the use of the word. But as there is a current and generally understood sense of this term among persons of the Calvinistic persuasion, implying, that the assurance of our present acceptance and sonship, is an assurance of our final perseverance, and of our indefeasible title to heaven: the phrase, a comfortable persuasion, or conviction of our justification and adoption, arising out of the Spirit’s inward and direct testimony, is to be preferred; for this has been held as an indubitable doctrine of Holy Writ by Christians, who by no means receive the doctrine of assurance in the sense held by the followers of Calvin.

There is, also, another reason for the sparing and cautious use of the term assurance, which is, that it seems to imply, though not necessarily, the absence of all doubt, and shuts out all those lower degrees of persuasion which may exist in the experience of Christians. For, as our faith, may not at first, or at all times, be equally strong, the testimony of the Spirit may have its degrees of strength, and our persuasion or conviction be proportionately regulated. Yet, if faith be genuine, God respects its weaker exercises, and encourages its growth, by affording measures of comfort, and degrees of this testimony. Nevertheless, while this is allowed, the fulness of this attainment is to be pressed upon every one that believes, according to the word of God: — “Let us draw near,” says St. Paul to all Christians, “with full assurance of faith.”

It may serve, also, to remove an objection sometimes made to the doctrine, and to correct an error which sometimes pervades the statement of it, to observe that this assurance, persuasion, or conviction, whichever term be adopted, is not of the essence of justifying faith; that is, that justifying faith does not consist in the assurance that I am now forgiven, through Christ. This would be obviously contradictory. For we must believe before we can be justified; much more before we can be assured, in any degree, that we
are justified: and this persuasion, therefore, follows justification; and is one of its results. We believe in order to justification; but we cannot be persuaded of our forgiveness in order to it, for the persuasion would be false. But though we must not only distinguish, but separate this persuasion of our acceptance from the faith which justifies, we must not separate but only distinguish it from justification itself. With that come as concomitants, regeneration, adoption, and as far as we have any information from Scripture, the “Spirit of adoption,” though, as in all other cases, in various degrees of operation.

On the subject of this testimony of the Holy Spirit there are four opinions.

The first is, that it is twofold; a direct testimony to, or “inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me, that I, even I, am reconciled to God;” (Wesley’s Sermons;) and an indirect testimony, arising from the work of the Spirit in the heart and life, which St. Paul calls the testimony of our own spirits; for this is inferred from his expression, And the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,” &c. This testimony of our own spirit, or indirect testimony of the Holy Spirit by and through our own spirit, is considered as confirmatory of the first testimony, and is thus explained by the same writer: — “How am I assured that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit? even by the testimony of my own spirit, ‘by the answer of a good conscience toward God:’ hereby you shall know that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit ruling in the heart, are love, joy, peace; bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering. And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men, and a uniform obedience to all the commands of God.”

The second opinion acknowledges, also, a twofold witness; the witness of the Spirit, which consists in the moral effects produced in him that believes, otherwise called the fruits of the Spirit; and the witness of our own spirits, that is, the consciousness of possessing faith. This they call “the reflex act of faith, by which a person, conscious of believing, reasons in this manner, I know that I believe in Christ, therefore I know that I shall obtain everlasting life.” (Dr. Hill’s Lectures.)

The third opinion is, that there is but one witness, the Holy Spirit, acting concurrently with our own spirits. “The Spirit of God produces those graces in us which are the evidence of our adoption; it is he who, as
occasion requires, illuminates our understandings and assists our memories in discovering and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves. But God’s Spirit doth witness with, not without our spirits and understandings; in making use of our reason in considering and reflecting upon those grounds of comfort, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in us, and from them drawing this comfortable conclusion to ourselves, that ‘we are the sons of God.’” (Bishop Bull.) With this notion is generally connected, that of the entire imperceptibility of the Spirit’s operations as distinguished from the operations of our own mind, “so that we could never have known, unless it had been communicated to us by Divine revelation, that our souls are moved by a Divine power, when we love God and keep his commandments.” (Mant and D’Oyley’s Commentary.)

The following passage from the Rev. Thomas Scott’s Commentary agrees with Bishop Bull in making the witness of the Spirit mediate through our own spirit; and differs chiefly in phraseology. It may be taken as the view of a great part of those called the evangelical clergy of the present day. “The Holy Spirit, by producing in believers the tempers and affections of children, as described in the Scriptures, most manifestly attests their adoption into God’s family. This is not done by any voice, immediate revelation, or impulse, or merely by any text brought to the mind, (for all these are equivocal and delusory,) but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences, as to their uprightness in embracing the Gospel, and giving themselves up to the service of God. So that, while they are examining themselves as to the reality of their conversion, and find Scriptural evidence of it, the Holy Spirit, from time to time shines upon his own work, excites their holy affections into lively exercise, renders them very efficacious upon their conduct, and thus puts the matter beyond doubt; for while they feel the spirit of dutiful children toward God, they become satisfied concerning his paternal love to them.”

A fourth opinion allows the direct witness of the Spirit, as stated above; but considers it only the special privilege of a few favoured persons; of which notion it is a sufficient refutation, that the apostle, in the texts before quoted, speaks generally of believers, and restrains not the attainment from any who seek it. He places it in this respect on the ground of all other blessings of the new covenant.
Of the four opinions just adduced, the first only appears to express the true sense of the word of God; but that the subject may be fully exhibited, we may observe,

1. That by all sober divines it is allowed, that some comfortable persuasions, or, at least, hope of the Divine favour, is attainable by true Christians, and is actually possessed by them, except under the influence of bodily infirmities, and in peculiar seasons of temptation, and that all true faith is, in some degree, (though to what extent they differ,) personal and appropriating.

“The third part of repentance is faith, whereby we do apprehend and take hold upon the promises of God, touching the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins; which promises are sealed up unto us, with the death and blood shedding of his Son Jesus Christ. For what should it avail and profit us to be sorry for our sins, to lament and bewail that we have offended our most bounteous and merciful Father, or to confess and acknowledge our offences and trespasses, though it be done never so earnestly, unless we do steadfastly believe, and be fully persuaded, that God, for his Son Jesus Christ’s sake, will forgive us all our sins, and put them out of remembrance and from his sight? Therefore, they that teach repentance without a lively faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ, do teach none other but Judas’s repentance.” (Homily on Repentance.)

“Faith is not merely a speculative but a practical acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ, — an effort and motion of the mind toward God; when the sinner, convinced of sin, accepts with thankfulness the proffered terms of pardon, and in humble confidence applying individually to himself the benefit of the general atonement, in the elevated language of a venerable father of the Church, drinks of the stream which flows from the Redeemer’s side. The effect is, that in a little, he is filled with that perfect love of God which tasteth out fear, — he cleaves to God with the entire affection of the soul.” (Bishop Horsley.)

“It is the property of saving faith that it hath a force to appropriate and make Christ our own. Without this, a general remote belief would have been cold comfort. ‘He loved me, and gave himself for me,’ saith St. Paul. What saith St. Chrysostom? ‘Did Christ die only
2. By those who admit, that upon previous contrition and faith in Christ, an act of justification takes place, by which we are reconciled to God, and adopted into his family, a doctrine which has been Scripturally established; it must also be admitted, that this act of mercy on the part of God is entirely kept secret from us, or that, by some means, it is made knowable by us. If the former, there is no remedy at all for doubt, and fear, and tormenting anticipation, which must be great, in proportion as our repentance is deep and genuine; and so there can be no comfort, no freedom, no cheerfulness of spirit in religion, which contradicts the sentiments of all Churches, and all their leading theologians. What is still more important, it contradicts the Scriptures.

To all true believers, the Almighty is represented as the “God of peace and consolation;” as “a Father;” as “dwelling in them and walking in them.” Nay, there is a marked distinction between the assurances of grace and favour made to penitents, and to believers. The declarations as to the former are highly consolatory; but they constantly refer to some future good designed for them by the God before whom they humble themselves, for the encouragement of their seeking prayers, and their efforts of trust. “To that man will I look, (a Hebraism for showing favour,) saith the Lord, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit.” The “weary and heavy laden” are invited to Christ, that he may “give rest unto their souls.” The apostles exhorted men to repent and be baptized, in order to the remission of sins. But to all who, in the Christian sense, are believers, or who have the faith by which we are justified, the language is much higher. “We have peace with God.” “We joy in God by whom we have received the atonement.” They are exhorted “to rejoice in the Lord always.” “The spirit of bondage” is exchanged for “the Spirit of adoption.” They are “Christ’s.” They are “children, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” They “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” They are “always confident, knowing, that while at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord, but that when absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord.”

3. If then we come to know that this great act of forgiveness has taken place in our favour; that it is vouchsafed to us in particular, and know this with that degree of conviction, which lays a sufficient ground of comfort and joy, the simple question is, by what means the knowledge of this is
attained by us? The general promise of pardon alone is, in all the schemes just stated, acknowledged to be insufficient for this purpose; for since that promise is suspended upon conditions, they all profess to explain the means by which we may conclude that we are actually and personally interested in the benefit of the general promise, the conditions being on our part personally fulfilled. The first opinion attributes this to a double testimony, a direct one of the Holy Spirit to our minds, and an indirect one of the same Spirit, through our own minds, and founded upon his moral work in them: or, what is the same thing, the testimony of our own spirit. This twofold testimony we think clearly established by the texts above quoted. For the first, “the Spirit itself,” and the “Spirit of his Son,” is manifestly the Spirit of God: his office is to give testimony, and the object of the testimony is to declare that we are the sons of God. When also the apostle in Romans 8:16, says that this Spirit bears witness “with” our spirit, he makes our own minds witnesses with him to the same fact, though in a different manner. For though some writers will have the compound to be used here for the simple form of the verb, and render it “to witness to our spirit;” and instances of this use of the compound verb do occur in the New Testament; yet it agrees both with the literal rendering of the word, and with other passages to conjoin this testimony of the Holy Spirit with those confirmatory proofs of our adoption which arise from his work within us, and which may, upon examination of our state, be called the testimony of our own mind or conscience. To this testimony the Apostle Paul refers in the same chapter, “They that are after the Spirit, (do mind) the things of the Spirit.” “But ye are not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you: now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” And again, in Galatians, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, &c.

4. Two witnesses, and a twofold testimony is then sufficiently established; but the main consideration is, whether the Holy Spirit gives his testimony directly to the mind, by impression, suggestion, or by whatever other term it may be called, or mediatly by our own spirits, in some such way as is described by Bishop Bull in the extract above given; by “illuminating our understandings and assisting our memories hi discussing and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves,” which arise from “the graces which he has produced in us;” or, as it is expressed by Mr.
Scott, by “shining upon his own work, exciting their affections into lively exercise, rendering them very efficacious upon their conduct,” and “thus puts the matter beyond doubt, for while they feel the spirit of dutiful children toward God, they become satisfied concerning his paternal love to them.”

To this statement of the doctrine we object, that it makes the testimony of the Holy Spirit in point of fact but the testimony of our own spirit; and by holding but one witness contradicts St. Paul, who, as we have seen, holds two. For the testimony is that of our own consciousness of certain moral changes which have taken place; no other is admitted; and therefore it is but one testimony. Nor is the Holy Spirit brought in at all, except to qualify our own spirit to give witness by assisting its “discernment and memory,” according to Bishop Bull, and by “shining upon his own work,” according to Mr. Scott; and so there is but one witness, and that ourselves: for though another may assist a witness to prepare and arrange his evidence, there is still but one deposition, and but one deposer. This is made still stronger, since it is supposed by both these writers, that there is no impression or revelation from the Spirit of the fact of our adoption, and that he does not in any way which we may distinguish from the operation of our own minds, assist us to prepare this evidence; for if this assistance, or shining upon his own work, could be ascertained to be from him distinctly, and with intention to assure us from these moral changes that we are adopted into the family of God, then an immediate collateral impression or revelation would be supposed, which both reject. It follows, therefore, that we have no other ground to conclude those “graces and virtues” which we discern in ourselves to be the work of the Spirit, than the general one, that all good in man is of his production, and our repentance and contrition might as well, on this general ground, be concluded to be the evidence of pardon, although they arise from our consciousness of guilt, and our need of pardon. The argument of this opinion, simply and in fact, is, that the Holy Spirit works moral changes in the heart, and that these are the evidence of our sonship. It goes not beyond this; the Holy Spirit is not excluded by this opinion as the source of good in man, he is not excluded as qualifying our minds to adduce evidence as to certain changes being wrought within us; but he is excluded as a witness, although he is said so explicitly by the apostle to give witness to the fact, not of a moral change, but of our adoption.
5. But farther, suppose our minds to be so assisted by the Holy Spirit as to
discern the reality of his work in us; and in an investigation, whether we are
or are not accepted of God, pardoned by his mercy, and adopted into his
family, we depose this as the evidence of it; to what degree must this work
of the Spirit in us have advanced before it can be evidence of this fact? We
have seen that it were absurd to allege contrition, and penitence, and fear,
as the proofs of our pardon, since they suppose, that we are still under
condemnation; what farther work of the Spirit, then, is the proof? The
reply to this usually is, that though repentance should not be evidence of
pardon, yet, when faith is added this becomes evidence, since God has
declared in his word, that we are “justified by faith,” and “whosoever
believeth shall be saved.”

To this we reply, that though we should become conscious of both
repentance and faith, either by “a reflex act of our own minds,” or by the
assistance of the Spirit “shining upon his own work,” this would be no
evidence of our forgiveness; our spirit would, in that case, witness the fact
of our repenting and believing, but that would be no witness to the fact of
our adoption. Justification is an act of God; it is secret and invisible; it
passes in his own mind; it is declared by no outward sign; and no one can
know, except the Holy Spirit, who knows the mind of God, whether we
are pardoned or not, unless it had been stated in his word, that in every
case pardon is dispensed when repentance and faith have reached some
definite degree, clearly pointed out, so that we cannot fail to ascertain that
they have reached that degree; and, also, unless we were expressly
authorized to be ourselves the judges of this case, and confidently and
comfortably to conclude our justification. For it is not enough that we have
faith. Faith, both as assent and confidence, has every possible degree; it is
capable of mixture with doubt, and self dependence; nor without some
definite and particular characters being assigned to justifying faith, could
we ever, with any confidence, conclude as to our own. But we have no
such particular description of faith; nor are we authorized, any where, to
make ourselves the judges of the fact, whether the act of pardon, as to us,
has passed the mind of God. The apostle, in the passages quoted above,
has assigned that office to the Holy Spirit; but it is in no part of Scripture
appointed to us.

If, then, we have no authority from God to conclude that we are pardoned
when faith, in an uncertain degree, is added to repentance, the whole
becomes a matter of inference; and we argue, that having “repentance and
faith,” we are forgiven; in other words, that these are the sufficient evidences of pardon. But repentance and faith are exercised IN ORDER to pardon; that must, therefore, be subsequent to both, and they cannot, for that reason, be the evidence of it, or the evidence of pardon might be enjoyed before pardon is actually received, which is absurd. But it has been said, “that we have the testimony of God in his word, that when repentance and faith exist, God has infallibly connected pardon with them from the moment they are perceived to exist, and so it may be surely inferred from them.” The answer is, that we have no such testimony. We have, through the mercy of God, the promise of pardon to all who repent and believe; but repentance is not pardon, and faith is not pardon, but they are its prerequisites; each is a sine qua non, but surely not the pardon itself, nor, as we have just seen, can either be considered the evidence of pardon, without an absurdity. They are means to that end; but nothing more: and though God has “infallibly connected” the blessing of pardon with repentance and faith, he has not connected it with any kind of repentance, nor with any kind of faith; nor with every degree of repentance, nor with every degree of faith. How then shall we ever know, whether our repentance and faith are accepted unless pardon actually follow them? And as this pardon cannot be attested by them, for the reason above given, and must, therefore, have an attestation of higher authority, and of a distinct kind, the only attestation conceivable which remains, is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. Either this must be acknowledged, or a painful uncertainty as to the genuineness or the required measure and degree of our repentance and faith, quite destructive of “comfort,” must remain throughout life.

6. But if neither our repentance, nor even a consciousness of faith, when joined with it, can be the evidence of the fact of our adoption: it has been urged, that when all those graces, which are called the fruits of the Spirit, are found in our experience, they, at least, must be sufficient evidence of the fact, without supposing a more direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. The “fruits” thus referred to, are those enumerated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. “But the fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness,” &c. Two things will here be granted, and they greatly strengthen the argument for a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit: — that these fruits are found only in those who have been received, by the remission of their sins, into the Divine favour; and that they are fruits of the Spirit of adoption. The first is proved from the connection of the words
which follow: “And they that ARE CHRIST’S have crucified the flesh,” &c. For to be “Christ’s,” and to be “in Christ,” are phrases, with the apostle, equivalent to being in a state of justification: — “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” The second is proved by the connection of the words with verse 18, “But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law,” for these words are exactly parallel to Galatians 4:5, 6, “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” These are, then, the fruits following upon a state of pardon, adoption, and our receiving the Spirit of adoption. We allow that they presuppose pardon; but then they as clearly presuppose the Spirit of adoption, “sent forth into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father;” that is, they not only presuppose our pardon, but pardon previously attested and made known to us; the persuasion of which conveyed to the mind, not by them, but by the Spirit of adoption, is the foundation of them; at least, of that “love, joy, and peace,” which are mentioned first, and must not be separated, in the argument, from the other. Nor can these “fruits” result from any thing but manifested pardon; they cannot themselves manifest our pardon, for they cannot exist till it is manifested. If we “love God,” it is because we know him as God reconciled: if we have “joy in God,” it is because “we have received the reconciliation;” if we have peace, it is because “being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” God, conceived of as angry, cannot be the object of filial love; pardon unfelt, supposes guilt and fear still to burden the mind, and guilt and “joy” and “peace” cannot exist. But by the argument of those who make these the media of ascertaining the fact of our forgiveness and adoption, we must be supposed to love God, while yet we feel him to be angry with us; to rejoice and have peace, while the fearful apprehensions of the consequences of unremitted sin are not removed; and if this is impossible, then the ground of our love, and joy, and peace, is pardon revealed and witnessed, directly and immediately by the Spirit of adoption.

It has been said, indeed, that love to God may be produced from a consideration of God’s general love to mankind in his Son, and that, therefore, the force of the above argument is broken; but we reply, that, in Scripture, Christians are spoken of as “reconciled to God;” as “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son;” as “children,” “heirs,” &c; and, correspondently with these relations, their love is spoken of as love to God.
as their Father, — love to God as their God in covenant, who calls himself “their God,” and them “his people.” This is the love of God exhibited in the New Testament; and the question is, whether such a love of God as this can spring from a knowledge of his “general love to man,” or whether it arises, under the Spirit’s influence, from a persuasion of his pardoning love to us “individually.” To clear this, we may divide those who hear the Gospel, or Christians by profession, into the following classes: — the carnal and careless; — the despairing; — the penitent, who seek God with hope as well as desire, now discouraged by their fears, and sunk under their load of conscious guilt, and again encouraged by a degree of hope; — and, lastly, those who are “justified by faith, and have peace with God.” The first class know God’s “general love to man;” but it will not be pleaded that they love him. — The second know the “general love of God to man;” but, thinking themselves exceptions from his mercy, cannot love him on that account. — The third admit the same “general love of God to man,” and it is the foundation of their hope; but does this produce love? The view of his mercy in the gift of his Son, and in the general promise, may produce a degree of this emotion, or perhaps more properly of gratitude; but do they love his justice, under the condemnation of which they feel themselves; and his holiness, the awful purity of which makes them afraid? If not, they do not love God as God; that is, as a whole, in all his perfections, the awful as well as the attractive, the alarming as well as the encouraging; which is, doubtless, the character of the love of those who are justified by faith. But, leaving this nicer distinction, the main question is, do they love him as a Father, as their God in covenant; with the love which leads up the affections of “peace and joy,” as well as “gentleness, goodness, and fidelity?” — for in this company, so to speak, the apostle places this grace, where it is a “fruit of the Spirit,” — “the Spirit which they that believed on him should receive.” This is impossible; for these seeking, though hoping penitents, do not regard God as their Father in that special sense in which the word is correlative “to children and heirs;” — they do not regard him as their God in that covenant which says, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” This is what they seek, but have not found; and they cannot love God under relations in which they know, and painfully feel, that he does not yet stand to them. They know his “general love to man,” but not his pardoning love to them; and therefore cannot love him as reconciled to them by the death of his Son. It follows, therefore, that the
last class only, the “justified by faith,” bear that love to God, which is marked by the characters impressed upon it by the apostles. He is their Father, and they love him as his children: he is their God in covenant; and, as they can, in this appropriating sense, call him their God, they love him correspondently, though not adequately. Their love, therefore, rests upon their persuasion of their personal and individual interest in his pardoning, adopting, and covenant-fulfilling mercy to them; and where these benefits are not personally enjoyed, this kind of love to God cannot exist. This, then, we think sufficiently establishes the fact, that the Scriptures of the New Testament, when speaking of the love of believers to God, always suppose that it arises from a persuasion of God’s special love to them as individuals, and not merely from a knowledge of his “general love” to mankind.

Others there are who, in adverting to these fruits of the Spirit, overlook “love, joy, and peace,” and fix their attention only on “gentleness, goodness, meekness, fidelity, and temperance,” as those graces which make up our practical holiness, and thus argue justification from regeneration, which is an unquestionable concomitant of it. The reply to this is, that the fruit of the Spirit is undivided; that all attempts at separating it are, therefore, criminal and delusive; and that where there is not “love, joy, and peace,” we have no Scriptural reason to conclude that there is that gentleness, that goodness, that meekness, &c, of which the apostle speaks, or, in other words, that there is that state of regeneration which the Scriptures describe; at least not ordinarily, for we leave seasons of deep spiritual exercise, and cases of physical depression, to be treated according to their merits. Thus this argument falls to the ground. But the same conclusion is reached in another way. Persons of this opinion would infer forgiveness from holiness; but holiness consists in habits and acts of which love to God is the principle, for we first “love God,” and then “keep his commandments.” Holiness then is preceded by love as its root, and that, as we have seen, by manifested pardon. For this love is the love of a pardoned sinner to God as a Father, as a God in actual covenant, offered on one part, and accepted on the other, and it exists before holiness, as the principle exists before the act and the habit. In the process then of inferring our justified state from moral changes, if we find what we think holiness without love, it is the holiness of a Pharisee without principle. If we join to it the love which is supposed to be capable of springing from God’s general love to man, this is a principle of which Scripture takes no cognizance, and
which at best, if it exist at all, must be a very mixed and defective sentiment, and cannot originate a holiness like that which distinguishes the "new creature." It is not, therefore, a warrantable evidence of either regeneration or justification. But if we find love to God as a God reconciled; as a Father; as a God who "loves us;" it is plain that, as this love is the root of holiness, it precedes it: and we must consider God under these lovely relations on some other evidence than "the testimony of our own spirits," which evidence can be no other than that of the Spirit of God.

Thus it is established, that the witness of the Spirit is direct and not mediate; and the following extracts will show that this is no new or unsanctioned doctrine. Luther "was strengthened by the discourse of an old Augustine monk, concerning the certainty we may have that our sins are forgiven. God likewise gave him much comfort in his temptations, by that saying of St. Bernard, 'It is necessary to believe, first of all, that you cannot have forgiveness but by the mercy of God; and next, that through his mercy, thy sins are forgiven thee.' This is the witness which the Holy Spirit bears in thy heart, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' And thus it is, that according to the apostle, a man is justified freely through faith." (Life of Martin Luther, by John Daniel Herschmid.)

“In the 88th Psalm is contained the prayer of one, who, although he felt in himself that he had not only man, but also God angry toward him; yet he by prayer humbly resorted unto God, as the only port of consolation; and, in the midst of his desperate state of trouble, put the hope of his salvation in him whom he felt his enemy. Howbeit, no man of himself can do this, but the Spirit of God that striketh man’s heart with fear, prayeth for the man stricken and feared, with unspeakable groanings. And when you feel yourself, and know any other oppressed after such sort, be glad; for after that God hath made you know what you be of yourself, he will doubtless show you comfort, and declare unto you what you be in Christ his only Son; and use prayer often, for that is the means whereby God will be sought unto for his gifts.” (Bishop Hooper. See Fox’s Acts and Monuments.)

“It is the proper effect of the blood of Christ to cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God; which, if we find it doth, Christ is come to us as he is to come; and the Spirit is come, and puts his teste, (witness.) And if we have his teste, we
may go our way in peace; we have kept a right feast to him, and to
the memory of his coming. Even so come, Lord Jesus, and come, O
blessed Spirit, and bear witness to our spirit that Christ’s water,
and his blood, we have our part in both; both in the fountain
opened for sin and uncleanness, and in the blood of the New
Testament, the legacy whereof is everlasting life in thy kingdom of
glory.” (Bishop Andrew. Sermon of the sending of the Holy Ghost.)

“The Spirit which God hath given us to assure us that we are the
sons of God, to enable us to call upon him as our Father.” (Hooker.
Sermon of Certainty of Faith.)

“Unto you, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of
his Son into your hearts, to the end ye might know that Christ hath
built you upon a rock immovable, that he hath registered your
names in the book of life.” (Hooker. Sermon on Jude.)

“From adoption flows all Christians’ joy; for the Spirit of adoption
is, first, a witness, Romans 8:16; second, a seal, Ephesians
4:30; third, the pledge and earnest of our inheritance, Ephesians
1:14, setting a holy security on the soul, whereby it rejoiceth even
in affliction, in hope of glory. (Archbishop Usher. Sum and
Substance of Christian Religion.)

“This is one great office of the Holy Ghost, to ratify and seal up to
us the forgiveness of our sins. ‘In whom, after ye believed, ye were
sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,’” &c. (Bishop Brownrigg’s
Sermon on Whitsunday.)

“It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of
sons, to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God toward us,
to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. The love of God
is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given
unto us. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons
of God. And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of
his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. For we have not
received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received
the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit
itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of
God. As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, and receive
from him our regeneration, so we are also assured by the same
Spirit of our adoption; and because being sons, we are also heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, by the same Spirit we have the pledge, or rather the earnest of our inheritance. For he which establisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us in God, who hath also sealed us, and hath given us the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts; so that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Bishop Pearson on the Creed.)

“This is that πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας, that Spirit of adoption which constituteth us the sons of God, qualifying us so to be by dispositions resembling God, and filial affections toward him; certifying us that we are so, and causing us, by a free instinct, to cry, Abba, Father; running into his bosom of love, and flying under the wings of his mercy in all our needs and distresses; whence, as many as are led by the Spirit, they (saith Paul) are the sons of God, and the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.” (Dr. Isaac Barrow’s Sermon on the Gift of the Holy Ghost.)

The second testimony is, that of our own spirits, “and is a consciousness of our having received in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children, that we are inwardly conformed by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.” (Wesley’s Sermons.) But this testimony, let it be observed, is not to the fact of our adoption directly, but to the fact that we have, in truth, received the Spirit of adoption, and that we are under no delusive impressions. This will enable us to answer a common objection to the doctrine of the Spirit’s direct witness. This is, that when the evidence of a first witness must be supported by that of a second, before it can be fully relied on, it appears to be by no means of a “decisive and satisfactory character; and that it might be as well to have recourse at once to the evidence which, after all, seems to sustain the main weight of the cause.” The answer to this is not difficult: if it were, it would weigh nothing against an express text of Scripture, which speaks of the witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of our own spirits. Both must, therefore, be concluded necessary, though we should not see their concomitancy and mutual relation. The case is not, however, involved in entire obscurity. Our own spirits can take no cognizance of the mind of God, as to our actual
pardon, and can bear no witness to that fact. The Holy Spirit only, who knows the mind of God, can be this witness; and if the fact, that God is reconciled to us, can only be known to him, by him only can it be attested to us. It cannot, therefore, be “as well for us to have recourse at once to the evidence of our own spirits;” because, as to this fact, our own spirits have no evidence to give. They cannot give direct evidence of it; for we know not what passes in the mind of the invisible God: they cannot give indirect evidence of the fact; for no moral changes, of which our spirits can be conscious, have been stated in Scripture as the proofs of our pardon; they prove that there is a work of God in our hearts, but they are not proofs of our actual forgiveness. Our own spirits are competent witnesses that such moral effects have been produced in our hearts and character, as it is the office of the Holy Spirit to produce; they prove, therefore, the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, and in us. That competent and infallible witness has borne his testimony that God is become our Father, he has shed abroad his holy comfort, the comfort which arises from the sense of pardon, — and his moral operation within us, accompanying, or immediately following upon this, making us new creatures in Christ Jesus, is the proof that we are in no delusion as to the witness who gives this testimony being, in truth, the Spirit of God.

Of the four opinions on this subject entertained by divines, the first alone is fully conformable to the Scriptures, and ought, therefore, to be believed and taught. The second opinion is refuted in our examination of the third for what is called “the reflex act of faith,” is only a consciousness of believing, which we have shown must be exercised in order to pardon, but cannot be an evidence of it. The third opinion has been examined in all its parts, except the reference to “voices and impulses,” in the quotation from Scott’s Commentary, which appears to have been thrown in ad captandum. To this we may reply, that however the fact of his adoption is revealed to man by the Holy Spirit, it is done by his influence and inexplicable operation, producing clear satisfaction and conviction, that God is reconciled; that “our iniquities are forgiven, and our sins covered.” The fourth opinion was refuted when first stated.
CHAPTER 25. — EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

We have already spoken of some of the leading blessings derived to man from the death of Christ, and the conditions on which they are made attainable. Before the remainder are adduced, it may be here a proper place to inquire into the extent of that atonement for sin made by the death of our Saviour, and whether the blessings of justification, regeneration, and adoption, are rendered attainable by all to whom the Gospel is proclaimed.

This inquiry leads us into what is called the Calvinistic controversy; a controversy which has always been conducted with great ardour, and sometimes with intemperance. I shall endeavour to consider such parts of it as are comprehended in the question before us, with perfect calmness and fairness; recollecting, on the one hand, how many excellent and learned men have been arranged on each side; and, on the other, that while all honour is due to great names, the plain and unsophisticated sense of the word of inspired truth must alone decide on a subject with respect to which it is not silent.

In the system usually called by the name of Calvinism, and which shall subsequently be exhibited in its different modifications, there are, I think, many great errors; but they have seldom been held except in connection with a class of vital truths. By many writers who have attacked this system, the truth which it contains, as well as the error, has often been invaded; and the assault itself has been not unfrequently conducted on principles exceedingly anti-scriptural, and fatally delusive. These considerations are sufficient to inspire caution. The controversy is a very voluminous one; and yet no great dexterity is required to exhibit it with clearness in a comparatively small compass. Its essence lies in very limited bounds; and, according to the plan of this work, the whole question will be tested, first and chiefly, by Scriptural authority. High Calvinism, indeed, affects the mode of reasoning à priori, and delights in metaphysics. To some also it gives most delight to see it opposed on the same ground; and to such disputants it will be much less imposing to resort primarily, and with all simplicity, to the testimony of the sacred writings. “It is sometimes complained,” says one, “that the mind is unduly biassed in its judgment, by a continual reference to the authority of the Scriptures. The complaint is just, if the Scriptures are not the word of God: but if they are, there is an
opposite and corresponding danger to be guarded against, that of suffering
the mind to be unduly biassed in the study and interpretation of the
revealed will of God, by the deductions of unaided reason.” (Dr.
Whiteley’s Essays.)

With respect to the controversy, we may also observe, that it forms a clear
case of appeal to the Scriptures: for to whom the benefits of Christ’s death
are extended, whether to the whole of our race, or to a part, can be matter
of revelation only; and the sole province of reason is that of interpreting,
with fairness, and consistently with the acknowledged principles of that
revelation, those parts of it in which the subject is directly or incidentally
introduced.

The question before us, put into its most simple form, is, whether our Lord
Jesus Christ did so die for all men, as to make salvation attainable by all
men; and the affirmative of this question is, we think, the doctrine of
Scripture.

We assume that this is plainly expressed,

1. In all those passages which declare that Christ died “for all men,” and
speak of his death as an atonement for the sins “of the whole world.”

We have already seen, in treating of our Lord’s atonement, in what sense
the phrase, to die “for us,” must be understood; that it signifies to die in the
place and stead of man, as a sacrificial oblation, by which satisfaction is
made for the sins of the individual, so that they become remissible upon the
terms of the evangelical covenant. When, therefore it is said, that Christ
“by the grace of GOD tasted death for every man;” and that “he is the
propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins
of the whole world;” it can only, we think, be fairly concluded from such
declarations, and from many other familiar texts, in which the same
phraseology is employed, that, by the death of Christ, the sins of every man
are rendered remissible, and that salvation is consequently attainable by
every man. Again, our Lord calls himself “the Saviour of the world;” and
is, by St. Paul, called “the Saviour of all men.” John the Baptist points him
out as “the Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world;” and our
Lord himself declares, “God so loved the world, that he gave his
only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life: for GOD sent not his Son into the world to condemn
the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” So, also the
Apostle Paul, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

2. In those passages which attribute an equal extent to the effects of the death of Christ as to the effects of the fall of our first parents. “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” “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.” f120

As the unlimited extent of Christ’s atonement to all mankind, is plainly expressed in the above-cited passages, so is it, we also assume, necessarily implied.

1. In those which declare that Christ died not only for those that are saved, but for those who do, or may perish; so that it cannot be argued, from the actual condemnation of men, that they were excepted from many actual, and from all the offered, benefits of his death. “And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.” “Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” “False teachers, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” So also in the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace!” If any dispute should here arise as to the phrase, “wherewith he was sanctified,” reference may be made to chap. vi, of the same epistle, where the same class of persons, whose doom is pronounced to be inevitable, are said to have been “once enlightened;” to have “tasted of the heavenly gift;” to have been “made partakers of the Holy Ghost;” to have “tasted the good word of God,” and “the powers of the world to come:” all which expressions show that they were placed on the same ground with other Christians as to their interest in the new covenant, — a point to which we shall again recur.

2. In all those passages which make it the duty of men to believe the Gospel; and place them under guilt, and the penalty of death, for rejecting it. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “But
these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” “How shall We escape if we neglect so great salvation?” “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The plain argument from all such passages is, that the Gospel is commanded to be preached to all men; that it is preached to them that they may believe in Christ, its Author; that this faith is required of them, in order to their salvation, — “that believing ye may have life through his name;” that they have power thus to believe to their salvation: (from whatever source, or by whatever means this power is derived to them, need not now be examined: it is plainly supposed, for not to believe, is reckoned to them as a capital crime, for which they are condemned already, and reserved to final condemnation:) and that having power to believe, they have the power to obtain salvation, which, as it can be bestowed only through the merits of Christ’s sacrifice, proves that it extends to them. The same conclusion, also, follows from the nature of that faith, which is required by the Gospel, in order to salvation. This, we have already seen, is not mere assent to the doctrine of Christ’s sacrificial death, but personal trust in it as our atonement; which those, surely, could not be required by a God of truth to exercise, if that atonement did not embrace them. Nor could they be guilty for refusing to trust in that which was never intended to be the object of their trust; for if God so designed to exclude them from Christ, he could not command them to trust in Christ; and if they are not commanded thus to trust in Christ, they do not violate any command by not believing; and, in this respect, are innocent.

3. In all those passages in which men’s failure to obtain salvation is placed to the account of their own opposing wills, and made wholly their own fault. “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” “And ye will not come to me that ye may have life.” “Bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” It is useless here to multiply quotations, since the New Testament so constantly exhorts men to come to Christ, reproves them for neglect,
and threatens them with the penal consequences of their own folly: thus uniformly placing the bar to their salvation, just where Christ places it, in his parable of the supper, in the perverseness of those, who having been excluded to the feast, would not come. From these premises, then, it follows, that since the Scriptures always attribute the ruin of men’s souls to their own will, and not to the will of God; we ought to seek for no other cause of their condemnation. We can know nothing on this subject but what God has revealed. He has declared that it is not his will that men should perish: on the contrary, “He willeth all men to be saved;” and therefore commands us to pray for “all men;” he has declared, that the reason they are not saved, is not that Christ did not die for them, but that they will not come to him for the “life” which he died to procure for “the world;” and it must therefore be concluded, that the sole bar to the salvation of all who are lost is in themselves, and not in any such limitation of Christ’s redemption, as supposes that they were not comprehended in its efficacy and intention.

It will now be necessary for us to consider what those who have adopted a different opinion have to urge against these plain and literal declarations of Scripture. It is their burden, that they are compelled to explain these passages in a more limited and qualified sense, than the letter of them and its obvious meaning teaches: and that they must do this by inference merely; for it is not even pretended that there is any text whatever to be adduced, which declares as literally, that Christ did not die for the salvation of all, as those which declare that he did so die. We have no passages, therefore, to examine, which, in their clear literal meaning, stand opposed to those which we have quoted, so as to present apparent contradictions which require to be reconciled by concession on one side or the other. This is at least, prima facie, strongly in favour of those who hold that, in the same sense, and with the same design, “Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.”

To our first class of texts it is objected, that the terms “all men,” and “the world,” are sometimes used in Scripture in a limited sense.

This may be granted, without injury to the argument drawn from the texts in question. But though in Scripture, as in common language, all and every, and such universals, are occasionally used with limitation when the connection prevents any misunderstanding; yet they are, nevertheless, strictly universal terms, and are most frequently used as such. The true question is, whether, in the places above cited, they can be understood
except in the largest sense; whether “all men,” and “the world,” can be interpreted of the elect only, that is of some men of all countries.

We may very confidently deny this, —

1. Because the universal sense of the terms, “all,” and “all men,” and “every man,” is confirmed, either by the context of the passages in which they occur, or by other scriptures. When Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;” he affirms that the iniquity of all those who have gone astray, was laid on Christ. When St. Paul says, “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;” he argues the universality of spiritual death, from the universality of the means adopted for raising men to spiritual life: a plain proof that it was received as an undisputed principle in the primitive Church, that Christ’s dying for all men was to be taken in its utmost latitude, or it could not have been made the basis of the argument. When the same apostle calls Christ the “Saviour of all men, and especially of those that believe,” he manifestly includes both believers and unbelievers, that is, all mankind, in the term “all men,” and declares, that Christ is their Saviour, though the full benefits of his salvation are received through faith only by them that believe. When again he declares that, “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, (εἰς,) in order to justification of life;” the force of the comparison is lost if the term “all men,” is not taken in its full extent; for the apostle is thus made to say, AS by the offence of one, judgment came upon ALL MEN; EVEN SO by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon A FEW MEN. Nor can it be objected that the apostle uses the terms, “many,” and “all men,” indiscriminately in this chapter: for there is in this no contradiction, and the objection is in our favour. All men are many, though many are not in every case all. But the term, “many,” is taken by him in the sense of all, as appears from the following parallels: “death passed upon all men;” “many be dead;” “the gift by grace hath abounded unto many;” “the free gift came upon all men.” “By one man’s disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners,” made liable to death; “so by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted) righteous.” On the last passage we may observe that “many,” or “the many,” must mean all men in the first clause; nor is it to be restricted in the second, as though by being “made righteous,” actual, personal justification were to be understood; for the apostle is not speaking of believers individually, but of mankind collectively, and the opposite
conditions in which the race itself is placed by the offence of Adam and the obedience of Christ in all its generations.

It is equally impracticable to restrict the phrases, “the world,” “the whole world,” and to paraphrase them the “world of the elect:” and yet there is no other alternative; for either “the whole world” means those elected out of it; or else Christ died in an equal sense for every man. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,” &c. Here, if the world mean not the elect only, but every man, then every man was “so loved” by God, that he gave his own Son for his redemption. To say that the world, in a few places, means the Roman empire, and in others Judea, is nothing to the purpose, unless it were meant to affirm, that the elect were the people of Judea, or those of the Roman empire only. It proves, it is true, a hyperbolical use of the term in both instances; but this cannot be urged in the case before us: for, —

1. The elect are never called “the world” in Scripture; but are distinguished from it. “I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you.”

2. The common division of mankind, in the New Testament, is only into two parts; the disciples of Christ, and “the world.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own.” “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

3. When the redemption of Christ is spoken of, it often includes both those who had been chosen out of the world, and those who remained still of the world. “And you hath he reconciled,” say the apostles to those that had already believed; and as to the rest, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation,” plainly that they might beseech this “world” to be reconciled to God, so that both believers and unbelievers were interested in the reconciling ministry, and the work of Christ. “And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only; but also for the sins of the whole world:” words cannot make the case plainer than these, since this same writer, in the same epistle, makes it evident how he uses the term “world,” when he affirms that “the world lieth in wickedness,” in contradistinction to those who knew that they were “of God.”
4. In the general commission before quoted, the expression “world” is connected with universal terms which carry it forth into its utmost latitude of meaning. “Go ye into ALL the world, and preach the Gospel (the good news) to every creature;” and this too in order to his believing it, that he may be saved; “he that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not (this good news preached to him that he might be saved) shall be damned.”

5. All this is confirmed from the gross absurdity of this restricted interpretation when applied to several of the foregoing passages. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.” Now, if the world here means the elect world, or the elect not yet called out of it, then it is affirmed, that “whosoever,” of this elect body, believeth shall not perish; which plainly implies, that some of the elect might not believe, and therefore perish, contrary to their doctrine. This absurd consequence is still clearer from the verses which immediately follow. John 3:17, 18, “For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already.” Now here we must take the term “world,” either extensively for all mankind or limitedly for the elect. If the former, then all men “through him may be saved,” but only through faith: he therefore, of this world that believeth may be saved; but he of this world that believeth not is condemned already.” The sense is here plain and consistent; but if, on the other hand, we take “the world” to mean the elect only, then he of this elect world that believeth may be saved, and he of the elect world that “believeth not is condemned;” so that the restricted interpretation necessarily supposes, that elect persons may remain in unbelief, and be lost. The same absurdity will follow from a like interpretation of the general commission. Either “all the world” and “every creature,” mean every man, or the elect only. If the former, it follows, that he of this “world,” any individual among those included in the phrase, “every creature,” who believes, “shall be saved,” or, not believing, “shall be damned:” if the latter, then he of the elect, any individual of the elect, who believes, “shall be saved,” and any individual of the elect who believes not, “shall be damned.” Similar absurdities might be brought out from other passages; but if these are candidly weighed, it will abundantly appear, that texts so plain and explicit cannot be turned into such consequences by any true method of interpretation, and that they must, therefore, be taken in
their obvious sense, which unequivocally expresses the universality of the atonement.

It has been urged, indeed, that our Lord himself says, John 17:9, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.” But will they here interpret “the world” to be the world of the elect? if so, they cut even them off from the prayers of Christ. But if by “the world” they would have us understand the world of the non-elect, then they will find that all the prayers which our Lord puts up for those whom “the Father hath given him,” had this end, “that they” the non-elect “world,” may believe that thou hast sent me.” verse 21: let them choose either side of the alternative The meaning of this passage is, however, made obvious by the context. Christ, in the former part of his intercession, as recorded in this chapter, prays exclusively, not for his Church in all ages, but for his disciples then present with him; as appears plain from verse 12. “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name:” but he was only with his first disciples, and for them he exclusively prays in the first instance; then, in verse 20, he prays for all who, in future, should believe on him through their words; and he does this in order that “the world might believe.” Thus “the world,” in its largest sense, is not cut off, but expressly included in the benefits of this prayer.

John 10:15, “I lay down my life for the sheep,” is also adduced, to prove that Christ died for none but his sheep. But the consequence will not hold; for there is no inconsistency between his having died for them that believe, and also for them that believe not. Christ is said to be “the Saviour of all men, and especially of them that believe;” two propositions which the apostle held to be perfectly consistent. The very context shows that Christ laid down his life for others beside those whom in that passage, he calls “the sheep.” The sheep here intended, as the discourse will show, were those of the Jewish “fold;” for he immediately adds, “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold,” clearly meaning the Gentiles: “them must I bring.” He, therefore, laid down his life for them also; for the sheep in the fold, who “knew his voice, and followed him,” and for them out of the fold, who still needed “bringing in;” even for “the lost, whom he came to seek and save,” which is the character of all mankind: “all we like sheep have gone astray;” and “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

A restrictive interpretation of the first two classes of texts we have quoted above, may then be affirmed directly and expressly to contradict the
plainest declarations of God’s own word. For, it is not true, upon this interpretation that God loved “the world,” if the majority he loved not; nor is it true that Christ was not “sent to condemn the world,” if he was sent even to enhance its condemnation; nor that the Gospel, as the Gospel, can be preached “to every creature,” if to the majority it can not be preached as “good tidings of great joy to all people;” for it is sad and doleful tidings, if the greater part of the human race are shut out from the mercies of their Creator. If, then, in this interpretation there is so palpable a contradiction of the words of inspiration itself, the system which is built upon it cannot be sustained.

As to the texts which we have urged, as necessarily implying the unrestricted extent of the death of Christ, the usual answers to those which speak of Christ having died for them that perish, may be briefly examined. “Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died,” Romans 14:15. Him, says Poole, (Annotations,) for whom, “in the judgment of charity,” we are to presume Christ died. To say nothing of the danger of such unlicensed paraphrases, in the interpretation of Scripture, it is obvious that this exposition entirely annuls the motive by which the apostle enforces his exhortation. Why are we not to be an occasion of sin to our brother? The answer is, lest we “destroy him;” and, in the parallel place, 1 Corinthians 8:11, lest “he perish.” But what is the aggravation of the offence? Truly that “Christ died for him;” and so we have no tenderness for a soul on whom Christ had so much compassion as to die for his salvation. Let the text then be tried, as paraphrased by Poole and other Calvinists: “Destroy not him, for whom, in the judgment of charity, it may be concluded, Christ died;” and it turns the motive the other way. For if I admit that none can be destroyed for whom Christ died, then, in proportion to the charity of my judgment, that any individual is of this number, I may be the less cautious of ensnaring his conscience in indifferent matters, since at least, this is certain, that he cannot perish, and I cannot be guilty of the aggravated offence of destroying him who was an object of the compassion of Christ. Who can suppose that the apostle would thus counteract his own design? or that he should seriously admonish his readers not to do that which was impossible, if, in fact, he taught them that Christ died only for the elect; and that they for whom he died, could never perish? Another commentator, of the same school, explains this as a caution against doing that which had a “tendency to the ruin of one for whom Christ died; not that it implies, that the weak brother would actually perish.” (Revelation T.
Scotts Notes.) But in this case, also, as it is assumed, that it was a doctrine taught by St. Paul, and received by the Churches to whom he wrote, that the elect could not perish, the motive is taken away upon which the admonition is grounded. For if the persons to whom the apostle wrote, knew that the weak brother, for whom Christ died, could not perish, then nothing which they could do had any “tendency” to destroy him. It might injure him, disturb his mind, lead him into sin, destroy his comforts; all, or any of which, would have been appropriate motives on which to have urged the caution: but nothing can have even a tendency to destroy him whose salvation is fixed by an unalterable decree. Mr. Scott is, however, evidently not satisfied with his own interpretation; and gives a painful example of the influence of a preconceived system in commenting upon Scripture, by charging the apostle himself with careless writing. “We may, however, observe, that the apostles did not write in that exact, systematical style which some affect, otherwise they would scrupulously have avoided such expressions.” This is rather in the manner of Priestley and Belsham, than that of an orthodox commentator; but it does homage to the force of truth by turning away from it, and by tacitly acknowledging that the Scriptures cannot be Calvinistically interpreted. The same commentators, following, as they do, in the train of the Calvinistic divines in general, may furnish, also, the answer to the argument, from 2 Peter 2:1, “Denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” Poole gives us three interpretations: the first is, “the Lord that bought Israel out of Egypt;” as though St. Peter could be speaking of the Mosaic, and not of the Christian redemption; and as though the Judaizing teachers, supposing the apostle to speak of them, denied the God of the Jews, when it was their object to set up his religion against that of Christ. The second is, that “they were bought,” or redeemed, by Christ, from temporal death, their lives having been spared: but we have no such doctrine in Scripture, as that the long suffering of wicked men, procured by Christ’s redemption, is unconnected in its intent with their eternal salvation. The barren fig tree was spared at the intercession of Christ, that means might be taken with it, to make it fruitful; and in this same Epistle of St. Peter, he teaches us to “account the long suffering of the Lord salvation;” meaning, doubtless, in its tendency and intention. To this we may add, that there is nothing in the context to warrant this notion of mere temporal redemption. The third interpretation is, “that they denied the Lord, whom they professed to have bought them.” This also is gratuitous, and gives a very different sense from that which the words of the apostle
convey. But it is argued, that the offence would be the same in denying Christ, whether he really died for them, or that they had professed to believe he died for them. Certainly not. Their crime, as it is put by the apostle, is not the denying of their former profession, or denying Christ, whom they formerly professed to have bought them; but denying Christ, who had actually bought them, and whom, for that reason, they ought never to have denied, but confessed at the hazard of their lives. Farther, if they merely denied that which they formerly professed, namely that Christ had bought them, and, in point of fact, he never did buy them, they were in error when they professed to believe that he bought them, and spoke the truth only when they denied it; and if it be said, that they knew not but he had bought them, when they denied him, this might be a reason for their not being rewarded for renouncing an error, as being done unwittingly; but can be no reason for their being punished, though unwittingly they went back to the truth of the case. — There can be no great guilt in our denying Christ, if Christ never died for us.

Mr. Scott partly adopts, and partly rejects Poole’s solution of this Scriptural difficulty. But as he charged St. Paul with want of exactness in writing to the Romans, so also St. Peter, in the passage before us, comes in for his share of the same censure. “It was not the manner of the sacred writers, to express themselves with that systematic exactness, which many now affect.” The question is not, however, one of systematic exactness; but of common intelligible writing. Mr. Scott’s observation on this passage, is, “that Christ’s ransom was of infinite sufficiency; and the proposal of it, in Scripture, general; so that men are addressed according to their profession: but that Christ only intended to redeem those, whom he foresaw would eventually be saved.” (Notes on 2 Peter.) On this we may remark,

1. That the sufficiency of Christ’s redemption is not in question; but the redemption itself of these deniers of Christ: he is called “the Lord that bought them.” In that sufficiency, too, Mr. Scott affirms, in fact, that they had no interest; for Christ did not “intend to redeem them;” on this showing, therefore, the Lord did not “buy them,” which contradicts the apostle.

2. That the “proposal of the benefits of Christ’s redemption is general;” and that men are addressed, accordingly, as those who are interested in it, we grant, and feel how well this accords with the doctrine of general
redemption; but the difficulty lies with those who hold the limitation of Christ’s redemption to the elect only, to explain, not merely how it is that men are addressed generally; but how the sins of those who perish, can be aggravated by the circumstance of Christ’s having bought them, if he did not buy them; and how they can be punished for rejecting him, if they could never receive him, so as to be saved by him. This aggravation of their offence, by the circumstance of Christ having bought them, is the doctrine of the text, of the force of which the above interpretations are manifest evasions.

We come now to the case of the apostates, mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 6:4-8, and 10:26-31. With respect to these passages, it is agreed that they speak of the ultimate and eternal condemnation and rejection of the persons mentioned in them. The question then is, whether Christ died for them, as he died for such as persevere? which is to be determined by another question, whether they were ever true believers, and had received saving grace? If this be allowed, the proposition is established, that Christ died for them that perish; but in order to arrest this conclusion, all Calvinistic divines agree in denying that the persons referred to by the apostle, and against whom his terrible denunciations are directed, were ever true believers, or capable of becoming such; and here again we have another pregnant instance of the violence done to the obvious meaning of the word of God, through the influence of a preconceived system. For,

1. It will not be denied that the Hebrews, to whom the epistle was addressed, were, in the main, at least, true believers; and that the passages in question were written to preserve them from apostasy; of which the rejection, and hopeless punishment, described by the apostle, is represented as the consequence. But if St. Paul had taught them, as he must have done, if Calvinism be the doctrine of the New Testament, that they never could so fall away, and so perish, this was no warning at all to them. To suppose he held out that as a terror, which he knew to be impossible, and had taught them also to be impossible, is the first absurdity which the Calvinistic interpretation involves.

2. It will not be denied, that he speaks of these wretched apostates, as deterring examples to the true believers among the Hebrews; but as such apostates never were believers, and were not even rendered capable, by the grace of God, of becoming such, they could not be admonitory examples. To assume that the apostle, for the sake of argument and admonition,
supposes believers to be in the same circumstances and case as those who never were, and never could be believers, and when he had instructed them that their cases could never be similar, is the second absurdity.

3. The apostates in question are represented, by the apostle, “as falling away” from “repentance,” and from Christ’s “sacrifice for sins.” The advocates of the system of partial redemption, affirm, that they fell away only from their profession of repentance and doctrinal belief of Christ’s sacrifice for sins, in which they never had, and never could have, any interest. Yet the apostle places the hopelessness of their state on the impossibility of “renewing them again to repentance;” which proves that he considered their first repentance genuine and evangelical; because the absence of such a repentance as they had at first, is given as the reason of the hopelessness of their condition. He moreover heightens the case, by alleging, that there remained “no more sacrifice for sins;” which as plainly proves that, before their apostasy, there was a sacrifice for their sins, and that they had only cut themselves off from its benefits by “wilfully” renouncing it; in other words, that Christ died for them, and that they had placed themselves out of the reach of the benefit of his death, by this one act of aggravated apostasy. The contrast lies between a hopeful and a hopeless case. Theirs was once a hopeful case, because they had “repented,” and because there was a sacrifice for sins; afterward it became hopeless, because it was “impossible to renew them again unto repentance,” and the sacrifice for sin no more remained for them: they had not only renounced their profession of it; but had renounced the sacrifice itself, by renouncing Christianity. Now, so to interpret the apostle, as to make him describe the awful condition of apostates, as a “falling away” into a state of hopelessness, when, if Calvinism be the doctrine of the New Testament, their case was never really hopeful, but was as hopeless, as to their eternal salvation, before as after their apostasy is the third absurdity.

4. But it is plain that theirs had been a state of actual salvation which could only result from their having had an interest in the death of Christ. The proof of this lies in what the apostle affirms of the previous state of those who had finally apostatized, or might so apostatize. They were “enlightened;” this, the whole train of Calvinistic commentators tell us, means a mere speculative reception of the doctrine of the Gospel; they had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” and of “the good word of God;” that is, say Poole and others, “they tasted, not digested; they had superficial relishes of joy and peace,” and are to be compared “to the stony-ground hearers, who
received the word with joy.” “And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;” that is, say some commentators of this class, in his operations, “trying how far a natural man may be raised, and not have his nature changed:” (Poole in loc.:) others, “by the communication of miraculous powers.” They had “tasted of the powers of the world to come;” that is, they had felt the powerful doctrines of the Gospel, but as all reprobates may feel them, sometimes powerfully convincing their judgment, at others troubling their consciences. “All these things,” says Scott, (Notes,) “often take place in the hearts and consciences of men, who yet continue unregenerate.” These interpretations are undoubtedly forced upon these authors by the system they have adopted; but it unfortunately happens for them, that the apostle uses no term less strong in describing the religious experience of these apostates than he does in speaking of that of true believers. They were “enlightened,” is said of these apostates, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,” is said of the Ephesians; and “being turned from darkness to light” is the characteristic of all believers. The apostates “tasted the heavenly gift;” this, too, is affirmed of true believers, “much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ,” Romans 5:17. To be made “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” is also the common distinctive character of all true Christians. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” “but ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” “To taste the heavenly gift” and “the good word of God,” is also made the mark of true Christianity: “if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Finally, “the powers of the world to come;” that is, of the Gospel dispensation, or the power of the Gospel, stand in precisely the same case. This Gospel is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Since, then, the apostle expresses the prior experience of these apostates, by the same terms and phrases as those by which he designates the work of God in the hearts of those whose Christianity is by all, acknowledged to be genuine, where is the authority on which these commentators make him describe, not a saving work in the hearts of these apostates, during the time they held fast their profession, but a simulated one? They have clearly no authority for this at all; and their comments arise not out of the argument of St. Paul, nor out of his terms or phrases, or the connection of these passages with the rest of the discourse; but out of their own theological system alone; in other words, out of a mere human opinion which supplies a meaning to the apostle, of which he gives not the most distant intimation. To make the apostle describe the
falling away from a mere profession unaccompanied with a state of grace, by terms which he is constantly using to describe and characterize a state of grace, is the fourth absurdity.

We mark, also, two other absurdities. The interpretations above given are below the force of the terms employed; and they are above the character of reprobates.

They are below the force of the terms employed. To “taste the heavenly gift,” is not a mere intellectual or sentimental approval of it; for this heavenly gift is distinguished both from the Holy Spirit, and from the word of God, mentioned afterward; which leaves us no choice but to interpret it of Christ: and then to taste of Christ, is to receive his grace and mercy; “if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Thus the Greek fathers, and many later divines, understand it of the remission of sins; which interpretation is greatly confirmed by Romans 5, where the gift,” the free gift,” and “the gift by grace,” are used both for the means of our justification, and for justification itself. To “taste the heavenly gift,” then, is, in this sense, so to taste that the Lord is gracious as to receive the remission of sins.

To be made “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” follows this in the usual order of describing the work of God in the heart. It is the fruit of faith, the Spirit of adoption and sanctification — the Spirit in his comforting and renewing influences following our justification. To restrain this participation of the Holy Ghost to the endowment of miraculous powers, requires it to be previously established, either,

1. That all professing Christians, in that age, were thus endowed with miraculous powers, of which there is no proof; or,

2. That only those who were thus endowed with miraculous gifts were capable of this aggravated apostasy; and then the apostle’s warning would not be a general one, even to the Christians of the apostolic age, nor even to all the believing Hebrews, which it manifestly is. On the other hand, since all true believers, in the sense of the apostle, received the Holy Ghost in his comforting and renovating influences, the meaning of the phrase becomes obvious, and it lays down the proper ground for a general admonition. Again; “to taste the good word of God,” is still an advance in the process of a genuine experience. It is tasting the good word, that is, the goodness of the word in a course of experience and practice; having personal proof of its goodness and adaptation to man’s state in the world: for to argue from the term “taste,” as though something superficial and
transitory only were meant, is as absurd as to argue from the threat of Christ that those who refused the invitation of his servants should not “taste” of his supper, that he only excluded them from a superficial and transient gustation of his salvation here and hereafter; or that, when the psalmist calls upon us to “taste and see that the Lord is good,” he excludes a full, and rich, and permanent experience of the Divine goodness. Finally, if by the “powers of the world to come,” it could be proved that the apostle meant the miraculous evidences of the truth of the Gospel, it would not follow that he supposes the persons spoken of to be endowed with miraculous powers; but that to taste these powers, was rather to experience the abundant blessings of a religion thus confirmed and demonstrated by signs and wonders and divers miracles, according to what he urges in chap. 2:4, of the same epistle. The phrase, however, is probably a still farther advance upon the former, and signifies a personal experience of the mighty energy and saving power of the Gospel. Thus the interpretation of the Calvinists has the absurdity of making the apostle speak little things in great words, and of using unmeaning tautologies. To “partake of the Holy Ghost” is, according to them, to have the gift of miracles, and to taste “the powers of the world to come” is to have the gift of miracles. To taste the “heavenly gift,” is to have a superficial relish of Gospel doctrine, and “to taste the good word of God,” is also to have a superficial relish of Gospel doctrine: but how, then, are we to take the term “taste,” when the apostle speaks of tasting “the powers of the world to come?” According to these comments, this can only mean that they had a superficial taste of the power of working miracles!

But as these interpretations are below the force of the terms, so they are above the capacity of the reprobate. “They had, moreover,” says Scott, “tasted of the good word of God, and their connections, impressions, and transient affections, made them sensible that it was a good word, and that it was for their good to attend to it; and their purposes of doing so had produced such hopes and joys as have been described in the case of the stony-ground hearers, Matthew 13:21, 22.” That Mr. Scott had no right apprehension of the class of persons intended by those who received the good seed upon stony ground, might easily be proved but this is beside our present purpose. We find in the words quoted above, (and we refer to Mr. Scott rather than to the older divines of the same school, because it is often said that Calvinism is now modified and improved,) “convictions,” “impressions of the goodness of the word,” and purposes of attending to it,
ascribed to the non-elect, persons to whose salvation this bar is placed, that, according to this commentator, and all others who adopt the same system, Christ never “intentionally” died for them. We ask, then, are these “convictions, impressions,” and “purposes,” from the grace of God working in man, or from the natural man wholly unassisted by the grace of God? If the latter, then what becomes of the doctrine of the entire corruption of human nature, which they profess to hold, and that so strenuously? “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” By the flesh, the apostle means, doubtless, his natural and unassisted state. Yet how many “good things” are ascribed, by Mr. Scott, to the very reprobate? “Conviction of the truth of the Gospel” was doubtless “good,” and showed, in that day especially, when the prejudices of education had not yet come in to the aid of truth, an honest spirit of inquiry, and a docile mind. “Impressions” are still better, as they argue affection to truth which the natural man, as such, hates; and these are improved into an acknowledged “of the goodness of the word,” though it is a reproving word, and a doctrine of holiness, and consequently of restraint. To this the merely “carnal mind,” which St. Paul declares to be “enmity against God,” is here allowed not only to assent, but also to perceive with some taste and approving relish. “Purposes of attending to this good word,” are also admitted, which is a still farther advance, and must by all be acknowledged to be “good,” as they are the very basis of real religious attainment. Yet if all these, which, in the judgment of every spiritual man would be considered as placing such persons in a very hopeful state, and would give joy to angels, unless they were admitted to the secret of reprobation, are to be ascribed to nature; then the carnal mind is not absolutely and in all cases “enmity against God;” in our “flesh some good thing may dwell;” and we are not by nature “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Let us then suppose, since this position cannot be maintained in defiance of the Scriptures, that these are the effects of the grace of God, and the influences of the Holy Spirit in man; to what end is that grace exerted? Is it that it may lead to salvation? This is denied, and consistently so; for can such convictions, and desires, and purposes, lead to true repentance, when Christ gives true repentance to none but to the elect? Nor can they lead to pardon, because Christ has not intentionally “died for the persons in question.” Is the end, then, as Poole, or rather his continuator states it, that the Holy Spirit may “try how far a natural man may be raised” without ceasing to be so? If that is affirmed, for whose sake is the experiment tried?
Not surely for the sake of the Holy Spirit, whose omniscience needs no instruction by experiment; not for ours; for this, instead of being edifying, only puzzles and confounds us, for who can tell how far this experiment may go, and how far it is making upon himself? This, too, is so very unworthy an aspersion upon the Holy Spirit, that it ought to make sober men very much suspect the system which requires it. Is it then, finally, as some have affirmed, to make the persons more guilty, and to heighten their condemnation? How few Calvinists, in the present day, are bold enough to affirm this, although the advocates of that system have formerly done it; and yet this is the only practical end which their system will allow to be assigned to such an act as that which, by a strange abuse of terms, is called the operation of “common grace” in the hearts of the reprobate. In no other practical end can it issue, but to aggravate their guilt and damnation, as the old divines of this school perceived and acknowledged. Either, then, their interpretation of these passages affirms a change in the principles and feelings of the persons spoken of by the apostle in this epistle, much above the capacity and power of reprobates, greatly as it falls below the real import of the terms used: or else those who advocate the doctrine of reprobation are bound to the revolting conclusion, that the Holy Spirit thus works in them only to promote and deepen their destruction.

To that class of texts, which make it the duty of men to believe the Gospel, and threaten them with punishment for not believing, and which we adduced to prove, by necessary implication, that Christ died for all men, it has been replied, that it is the duty of all men to believe the Gospel, whether they are interested in the death of Christ or not; and that they are guilty and deserving of punishment for not believing it. By this argument it is conceived, that all such passages are made consistent with the doctrine of the limited extent of the death of Christ. On both sides, then, it is granted, that it is the bounden duty of all men who hear the Gospel to believe it, and that the violation of this duty induces condemnation; but if Christ died not for all such persons, we think it is plain, that it cannot be their duty to believe the Gospel; and if this can be established, then does the Scriptural principle of the obligation of all men to believe, which is acknowledged on both sides, refute all limitation of the extent of Christ’s atonement.

To settle this point it is necessary to determine what is meant by believing the Gospel. Some writers in this controversy seem to take it only in the sense of giving credit to the Gospel as a Divine revelation; and not for
accepting and trusting in it in order to salvation. But we have in the New Testament, no such division of the obligation of believing into two distinct duties, one laid upon one class of persons, and the other upon another class. So far from this, the faith which the Gospel requires of all, is trust in the Gospel; — “repentance toward God, and faith (trust) in our Lord Jesus Christ.” Will any say, that when all men are commanded “every where to repent,” two kinds of repentance are intended, one ineffectual, the other effectual; one to death, the other to life? And if not, will he contend that God commands one kind of faith to some, a faith which cannot lead to salvation, another kind of faith, which does lead to salvation to others? that he commands a dead faith to the reprobate, a living faith to the elect? For, according to the intention of the command, such must be the duty; and if it is the duty of the reprobate to believe with the mere faith of assent, which, as to them, is dead, then no more was ever required of them, in the intention of God, than this dead faith. But if men will affirm this, they must show us such a restricted and modified command from God; and they must point out, in the commands which we have to believe in Christ, such a distinction of the obligation of believing into a higher and lower duty. There is no such modified command, and there is no such distinction; but, on the contrary, the faith which is required of all in that, and not less than that, whereof cometh salvation; for with remission of sins and salvation it is constantly connected. “He that believeth shall be saved.” “Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish.” “That believing ye might have life through his name.” “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” The faith, then, required of all, is true faith; true faith following true repentance, the trust of a true penitent in the sacrifice of Christ as offered for his sins, that he may be forgiven, and received into the family of God.

If this, then, be the faith which is required of all who hear the Gospel, it is not, and cannot be the duty, of those to believe the Gospel in the Scriptural sense of believing, for whom Christ died not.

1. Because it is impossible, and God cannot command a thing impossible, and then punish men for not doing it; for this contradicts all notions of justice and benevolence. Nor does it alter the case whether the impossibility arises from a positive necessitating decree, or from withholding the aid necessary to enable them to comply with the command; such persons as those for whom Christ died not, never had, and never can have, the power to exercise the saving faith which is enjoined upon them:
and being impossible to them, it never could be the subject of express command and obligation as to them; which nevertheless it is.

2. Because, according to the Calvinistic opinion, it is not in the intention of God that they should believe and be saved: what, therefore, he never intended he could not command; and yet he has plainly commanded it.

3. Because what all are bound to believe or trust in, is true: but it is false, according to this system, that Christ died for the reprobate, and therefore they are not bound to believe or trust in him, though they are both commanded to believe, and threatened with condemnation if they believe not. Here, then, is the dilemma into which all must fall, who deny that the necessary inference from the universal obligation to believe in Christ, is, as we have stated it, that he died for all. If they deny the universality of the obligation to believe, they deny plain and express Scripture, which commands all men to believe; if they affirm the obligation to believe to be universal, they hold that men are bound to do that which is impossible: that the Lawgiver commands them to do what he never intended they should do; and that they are bound to believe and trust in what is not true, namely, that Christ died for them, and thus to lean upon a broken reed, and to trust their salvation to a delusion.

This is a difficulty which the theologians of this school have felt. The synod of Dort says, (Act. Syn. Dord, part 1, cap. 2, art. 5,) “It is the promise of the Gospel, that whosoever believes in Christ crucified should not perish, but have everlasting life; which promise, together with the injunction of repentance and faith, ought promiscuously and without distinction, to be declared and published to all men and people to whom God in his good pleasure sends the Gospel.” But as some of the later Calvinists found themselves perplexed with this statement, they began to differ from the synod; and, allowing that Christ died for all whom he commands to believe in him, denied that God had commanded all men so to believe. (Vide Womack’s Arcana Dogmatum, page 67.) These divines chose to fall on the opposite horn of the dilemma, and thus expressly to deny the word of God. Others have endeavoured to escape the difficulty by making faith in Christ a command of the moral law, under which even reprobates, as they take it, unquestionably are, and argue, that as by the principle of moral law, all are bound to believe every thing which God hath revealed, so by that law all are bound to believe in Christ, and, failing of that, are by the moral law justly condemned. It were easy, in answer to this, to show, that no man in
the state of a reprobate, as they represent it, is under law of any kind. except a law of necessity to do evil; but waiving this, it were as easy to prove, that, because the moral law obliges us, “in principle,” to do all which God commands, the command to the Jews to circumcise their children was a command of the moral law, as that to believe in Christ is a command of the moral law, because, in principle, it obliges us to believe what God has revealed. But should it be admitted that all are bound, by the moral law, to believe all that God reveals, yet, according to them, it is not revealed that Christ died for all; this we contend for, but they contend against: all are not, upon that very principle, therefore, bound to believe that Christ died for them. Farther, those who hold this notion, contend that the moral law commands us to do a thing impossible, and contrary to truth; and thus they fall upon the other horn of the dilemma.

The last class of texts we have adduced in favour of general redemption consists of those which impute the blame and fault of their non-salvation to men themselves. If Christ died for all men, so as to make their salvation practicable, then the fault, according to the doctrine of Scripture, lies in themselves; if he died not so for them that they may be saved, then the bar to their salvation lies out of themselves, and in the absence of any saving provision for them in the Gospel, which is contrary to the doctrine of Scripture.

We enter not now upon the questions of the invincibility of grace, and free and bound will. These will come under consideration in their place and we now confine ourselves to the argument, as it is grounded upon texts of this class as given above. The common reply to our argument, grounded upon these texts, at least among the more moderate kind of Calvinists, is, that the fault is indeed in the will of man, and that if men willed to come to Christ, and to believe in him; or it is not. If the former, then they may come to Christ, and
believe in him, without obtaining life and salvation; for he can dispense these blessings only to those for whom he purchased them, which, it is contended, he did for the elect only. If the latter, then the bar to their salvation is not in themselves; but in that which makes it impossible for them to will to come to Christ, and to believe in him. If it be said, that though this is impossible to them, yet that still the bar is in themselves, because it is in the obstinacy and perverseness of their own wills, we ask, whether the natural will of the elect is so much better than that of the reprobate, that by virtue of that better natural will, they come to Christ and believe in him? This they will deny, and ascribe their willing, and coming to Christ, and believing in him, to the influence only of Divine grace. It will follow then, from this, that the bar to this same kind of willing, and believing, on the part of the reprobate, lies not in themselves, where the Scriptures constantly place it, and so charge it upon men as their fault, and the reason of their condemnation; but in something without them, even in the determination and decree of God not to bestow upon them that influence of his grace, by which this good will, and this power to believe in Christ, are wrought in the elect: which is precisely what the synod of Dort has affirmed. “This was the most free counsel, gracious will, and intention of God the Father; that the lively and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his son should manifest itself in all the elect, for the bestowing upon them ONLY justifying faith; and bringing THEM infallibly by it unto eternal life.” (Cap. 2, art. 8.) This doctrine cannot, therefore, be true; for the Scriptures plainly place the bar to the salvation of them that are lost, in themselves, and charge the fault only on the wilful disobedience and unbelief of men; while this opinion places it in the refusal, on the part of God, to bestow that grace upon the non-elect, by which alone the evil of their natural will can be removed.

Nor is this in the least remedied by arguing, that as Christ is rejected freely and voluntarily by the natural will of man, the guilt is still chargeable upon himself. For, not here to anticipate what may be said on the freedom of the will, it is confessed by Calvinists that the will of the reprobate is not free to choose to come to Christ, and believe in him, since without grace, not even the elect can do this. But if it were free to choose Christ, and believe in him, the not doing it would not be chargeable upon them as a fault. For they do not reject Christ as a Saviour, since he is not offered to them as such; and they sin not, by not believing, that is, by not trusting in Christ for salvation. For as it is not the will of God that they should so believe, they
violates no command given to them to believe, unless it be held that God commands them to do that which he wills they should not do; which is only absurdly to say that he wills, and he does not will the same thing. And seeing that his commands are the declarations of his will, if the command reaches to them, it is a declaration that he wills that concerning them, which, on this system, he does not will; and this contradiction all are bound to maintain, who charge the want of faith, as a fault upon those to whom the power of believing is not imparted.

But the argument from this class of texts is not exhausted. They not only place that bar and fault which prevents the salvation of men in themselves; but they as expressly exclude God from all participation in it, contrary to the doctrine before us. “He willeth all men to be saved;” he has “no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” “He sent his Son not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;” and he invites all, beseeches all, obtests all, and makes even his threatenings merciful, since he interposes them to prevent men from going on still in their trespasses, and involving themselves in final ruin.

Perhaps not many Calvinists in the present day are disposed to resort to the ancient subterfuge, of a secret and a revealed will of God; and yet it is difficult to conceive how they can avoid admitting this notion, without totally denying that which is so clearly written, that God “willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;” and that he commands, by his apostle, that prayers should be made “for all men.” The universality of such declarations has already been established; and no way is left for escaping the difficulty in this direction. The incompatibility of such declarations, with the limited extent of Christ’s death, is therefore obvious, unless the term “will” can be modified. But if God declares his will in absolute terms, while he has yet secret reserves of a contrary kind, (to say nothing of the injury done by such a notion, to the character of the God of truth, whose words are without dross of falsehood, “as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times;”) this is to will that all men may be saved in word, and yet not to will it in fact, which is in truth not to will it at all. No subtlety of distinction can reconcile this. Nor, according to this scheme of doctrine, can God in any way, will the salvation of the non-elect. It is only under one condition, that he wills the salvation of any man: namely, through the death of Christ. His justice required this atonement for sin; and he could not will man to be saved to the dishonour of his justice. If then that atonement does not extend to all men, he cannot will the salvation
of all men; for such of them as are not interested in this atonement, could not be saved consistently with his righteous administration, and he could not, therefore, will it. If, then, he wills the non-elect to be saved, in any sense, he must will this independently of Christ’s sacrifice for sins; and if he cannot will this for the reason just given, he cannot “will all men to be saved,” which is contrary to the texts quoted: he cannot, therefore, invite all to be saved; he cannot beseech all by his ministers to be reconciled to him; for these acts could only proceed from his willing them to be saved: and for the same reason, “all men” ought not to be prayed for by those who hold this doctrine, since they assume, that it is not the will of God that all men should be saved. Thus they repeal the apostle’s precept, as well as the principle upon which it is built, by mere human authority; or else they so interpret the principle, as to impeach the truth of God, and so practise the precept, as to indulge reserves in their own mind, similar to those they feign to be in the mind of God. While, therefore, it remains on record, that “God willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;” and that he “willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” it must be concluded, that Christ died for all; and that the reason of the destruction of any part of our race lies not in the want of a provision for their salvation; not in any limitation of the purchase of Christ, and the administration of his grace, but in their obstinate rejection of both.
CHAPTER 26. — THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

So far, then, we have advanced in this discussion as to show, that while no passage of Scripture can be adduced, or is even pretended to exist, which declares that Christ did not die equally for all men, there are numerous passages which explicitly, and in terms which cannot, by any fair interpretation, be wrested from that meaning, declare the contrary; and that there are others, as numerous, which contain the doctrine by necessary implication and inference. To implication and inference the Calvinist divines also resort, and the more so, as they have not a direct text in favour of their scheme. It is necessary, therefore, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of this controversy, compressed into as narrow limits as possible, to examine those parts of Scripture which, according to their inferential interpretations, limit not merely the actual, but the intentional efficacy of the death of Christ to the elect only.

The first are those passages which treat of persons, said to be elected, foreknown, and predestinated to the spiritual and celestial blessings of the new dispensation; and the argument from the texts in which these distinctions occur, is, that the persons so called, elected, foreknown, and predestinated, are, by that very distinction, marked out as the only persons to whom the death of Christ intentionally extends.

We reserve it to another place to state the systematic views which the followers of Calvin, in their different shades of opinion, take of the doctrines of election, &c, lest our more simple inquiry into the sense of Scripture should be disturbed by extraneous topics; and we are now, therefore, merely called to consider, how far this argument, which is professedly drawn from Scripture and not from metaphysical principles, is supported or refuted, by an examination of those portions of Holy Writ on which it is usually built: and it will not prove a difficult task to show, that, when fairly interpreted, they contain nothing which obliges us to narrow our interpretation of those passages which extend the benefit of the death of Christ to all mankind; and that, in some views, they strongly corroborate their most extended meaning. Of a Divine election, or choosing and separation from others, we have three kinds mentioned in the Scriptures.
The FIRST is the election of individuals to perform some particular and special service. Cyrus was “elected” to rebuild the temple; the twelve apostles were “chosen,” elected, to their office by Christ; St. Paul was a “chosen,” or elected, “vessel,” to be the apostle of the Gentiles. This kind of election to special office and service has, however, manifestly no relation to the limitation of eternal salvation, either in respect of the persons themselves so chosen, or of others. With respect to themselves, it did not confer upon them an absolute security. One of the twelve elected apostles was Judas, who fell and was lost; and St. Paul confesses his own personal liability to become “a castaway,” after all his zeal and abundant labours. With respect to others, the twelve apostles, and St. Paul afterward, were “elected” to preach the Gospel in order to the salvation of all to whom they had access.

The SECOND kind of election which we find in Scripture, is the election of nations, or bodies of people, to eminent religious privileges, and in order to accomplish, by their superior illumination, the merciful purposes of God, in benefitting other nations or bodies of people. Thus the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, were chosen to receive special revelations of truth; and to be “the people of God,” to be his visible Church, and publicly to observe and uphold his worship. “The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” “The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people.” It was especially on account of the application of the terms ELECT, CHOSEN, and PECULIAR, to the Jewish people that they were so familiarly used by the apostles in their epistles addressed to the believing Jews and Gentiles, then constituting the Church of Christ in various places. For Christians were the subjects, also, of this second kind of election; the election of bodies of men to be the visible people and Church of God in the world, and to be endowed with peculiar privileges. Thus they became, though in a more special and exalted sense, the chosen people, the elect of God. We say in a more special sense, because as the entrance into the Jewish Church was by natural birth, and the entrance into the Christian Church, properly so called, is by faith and a spiritual birth, these terms, although many became Christians by mere profession, and enjoyed various privileges in consequence of their people or nation being chosen to receive the Gospel, have generally respect, in the New Testament, to bodies of true believers, or to the whole body of true believers as such. They are not, therefore, to be interpreted, according to
the scheme of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, by the constitution of the Jewish, but by the constitution of the Christian Church.

To understand the nature of this “election,” as applied sometimes to particular bodies of Christians, as when St. Peter says, “the Church which is at Babylon, elected together with you,” and sometimes to the whole body of believers everywhere; and also the reason of the frequent use of the term election, and of the occurrence of allusions to the fact, it is to be remembered, that a great religious revolution, so to speak, had occurred in the age of the apostles; with the full import of which we cannot, without calling in the aid of a little reflection, be adequately impressed. This was no other than the abrogation of the CHURCH STATE of the Jews, which had continued for so many ages. They had been the only visible acknowledged people of God in all the nations of the earth; for whatever pious people might have existed in other nations, they were not, in the sight of men, and collectively, acknowledged as “the people of Jehovah.” They had no written revelations, no appointed ministry, no forms of authorized initiation into his Church and covenant, no appointed holy days, no sanctioned ritual. All these were peculiar to the Jews, who were, therefore, an elected and peculiar people. This distinguished honour they were about to lose. They might have retained it, had they, by believing the Gospel, admitted the believing Gentiles of all nations to share it with them; but the great reason of their peculiarity and election, as a nation, was terminated by the coming of the Messiah, who was to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as “the glory of his people Israel.” Their pride and consequent unbelief resented this, which will explain their enmity to the believing part of the Gentiles, who, when that which St. Paul calls “the fellowship of the mystery” was fully explained, chiefly by the glorious ministry of that apostle himself, were called into this Church relation and state of visible acknowledgment as the people of God, which the Jews had formerly enjoyed, and that with even a higher degree of glory, in proportion to the superior spirituality of the new dispensation. It was this doctrine which excited that strong irritation in the minds of the unbelieving Jews, and in some partially Christianized ones, to which so many references are made in the New Testament. They were “provoked,” were made “jealous;” and were often roused to the madness of persecuting opposition by it. There was then a NEW ELECTION of a NEW PEOPLE of God, to be composed of Jews, not by virtue of their NATURAL DESCENT, but of their faith in Christ, and of Gentiles of all nations, also believing, and put, as believers, on equal
ground with the believing Jews; and there was also a REJECTION, a reprobation, if the term please any one better; but not an absolute one: for THE ELECTION was offered to the Jews first, in every place, by offering them the Gospel. Some embraced it, and submitted to be the elect people of God, on the new ground of faith, instead of the old one of natural descent; and therefore the apostle, Romans 11:7, calls the believing part of the Jews, “the election,” in opposition to those who opposed this “election of grace,” and still clung to their former and now repealed election as Jews and the descendants of Abraham; — “but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” The offer had been made to the whole nation; all might have joined the one body of believing Jews and believing Gentiles; but the major part of them refused: they would not “come in to the supper;” they made “light of it;” light of an election founded on faith, and which placed the relation of “the people of God” upon spiritual attainments, and offered to them only spiritual blessings. They were, therefore, deprived of election and Church relationship of every kind: — their temple was burned; their political state abolished; their genealogies confounded; their worship annihilated; and all visible acknowledgment of them by God as a Church withdrawn and transferred to a Church henceforward to be composed chiefly of Gentiles: and thus, says St. Paul, Romans 10:19, “were fulfilled the words of Moses, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish (ignorant and idolatrous) people I will anger you.”

It is easy now to see what is the import of the “calling” and “election” of the Christian Church, as spoken of in the New Testament. It was not the calling and the electing of one nation in particular to succeed the Jews; but it was the calling and the electing of believers in all nations, wherever the Gospel should be preached, to be in reality what the Jews had been but typically, and, therefore, in an inferior degree, the visible Church of God, “his people,” under Christ “the Head;” with an authenticated revelation; with an appointed ministry, never to be lost; with authorized worship; with holy days and festivals; with instituted forms of initiation; and with special protection and favour.

This second kind of election being thus explained, we may inquire whether any thing arises out of it, either as it respects the Jewish Church, or the Christian Church, which obliges us in any degree to limit the explicit declarations of Scripture, as to the universal extent of the intentional benefit of the atonement of Christ.
With respect to the ancient election of the Jews to be the peculiar people and visible Church of God, we may observe,

1. That it did not argue such a limitation of the saving mercy of God to them, as that their election secured the salvation of every Jew individually. This will be acknowledged by all; for, as the foundation of their Church state was their natural relation to Abraham, and our Lord, with allusion to this, says to Nicodemus, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” none of them could be saved by virtue of being “Jews outwardly.”

2. That it did not argue, that sufficient, though not equal means of salvation, were not left to the non-elected Gentile nations. These were still a “law unto themselves;” and “in every nation,” says St. Peter, “he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

3. That, so far from the election of the Jewish nation arguing that the mercy of God was restrained from the Gentile nations, it is manifest that, great reason as the Almighty had to be provoked by their idolatries the election of the Jews was intended for their benefit also; that it was not only designed to preserve truth, but to diffuse it, and to counteract the spread of superstition and idolatry. The miracles wrought from age to age among them, exalted “Jehovah” above the gods of the heathen; rays of light from their sacred books and institutions spread far beyond themselves; the temple of Solomon had its court of the Gentiles, and the “stranger” from “a far country” had access to it, and enjoyed his right of praying to the true God; their captivities and dispersions wondrously fulfilled the purposes of justice as to them, and of mercy as to the nations into which they were carried; and their whole history bore an illustrious part in that series of the Divine dispensations by which the Gentile world was prepared for the coming of Christ, and the establishment of his religion. This subject has already been adverted to and illustrated in the first part of this work. Jerusalem was, in an inferior sense, literally “the joy of the whole earth;” and “in the seed of Abraham,” all the nations of the earth have, in all ages, in some degree, been blessed.

With respect to the “election” of the Christian Church, we also observe,

1. That neither does its election suppose such a special grace of God, as secures infallibly the salvation of every one of its members; that is, in other words, of every elected person. For to pass over the case of those who are Christians but in name, even true Christians are exhorted to give diligence
to make their “calling and election sure;” and are warned against “turning back to perdition.” We have also seen, in the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, in point of fact, some of those who had thus been actually elected, and brought into a state of salvation, had fallen away into a condition of extreme hazard, or of utter hopelessness.

2. That the election of Christians, as members of the Church of Christ, concludes nothing against the saving mercy of GOD being still exercised as to those who are not of the Church. Even the Calvinists cannot deny this; for many who are not now of the body of the visible and true Church of Christ, may, according to their scheme, be yet called and chosen into that body, and thus partake of an election which, while they are notoriously wicked and alien from the Church of Christ, they do not actually partake of, whatever may be the secret purposes of God concerning them.

3. That Christians are thus elected, and made the Church of God, not in consequence of others being excluded from the compassions and redeeming mercy of Christ; but for their benefit and salvation, that they also may be called into the fellowship of the Gospel. “Ye are the light of the world;” “ye are the salt of the earth.” But in what sense could the Church be “the light of the world,” were there no capacity in the world to receive the same light with which it is itself enlightened? or “the salt of the earth,” if it did not exist for the purifying of the mass beyond itself, with the same purity? Yet if such a capacity exists in “the world,” it is from the grace of God alone that it derives it, and not from nature; a grace which could be imparted to the world only in consequence of the death of Christ. Thus nothing is to be argued from the actual election of the Christian Church, as God’s visible and acknowledged people on earth, in favour of the doctrine that election limits the benefits of our Lord’s atonement; but, on the contrary, this election of the Church has, for one of its final causes, the illumination of the world. But as Calvinistic commentators have so generally confounded this collective election with personal election, (a doctrine to which, in its proper place, we shall presently advert,) and have, in consequence, misunderstood and misinterpreted the argument of St. Paul, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans; this celebrated discourse of the apostle requires to be briefly examined.
Let the reader, then, take the epistle in his hand, and follow the argument in these chapters, with reference to the determining of the two main questions at issue, namely, whether personal or collective election be the subject of the apostle’s discourse; and whether the election, of which he speaks, of whatever kind it may be, is, in the sense of the Calvinists, unconditional.

Let us examine the discourse, first, with reference to the question of personal or collective election.

It is acknowledged by all, that, whatever other subjects the apostle may or may not connect with it, he treats of the casting off of the Jews, as the visible Church of God, and the calling of the Gentiles into that relation. For the case of the Jews he expresses great “sorrow of heart;” not indeed because God had now determined to compose his visible Church upon a new principle, that of faith, and to constitute it no longer upon that of natural descent from Abraham; for to announce this doctrine St. Paul was chosen to be an apostle, and to call, by earnest and extensive labours, not only the Gentiles, but the Jews thankfully to submit to it, by receiving the Gospel: but he had great “sorrow of heart,” both on account of their having rejected this gracious offer, and of the calamities which the approaching destruction of their nation would bring upon them, verses 1, 2. The enumeration which he makes in verses 4 and 5, of the religious honours and privileges of the Jewish nation, while it remained a Church accomplishing the purposes of God, shows that he did not intend, by proclaiming the new foundation on which God would now construct his Church, and elect to himself a people; out of all nations, to detract at all from the Divinity or glory of the Mosaic dispensation.

The objection made, in the minds of the Jews, to this doctrine of the abolition of the Jewish visible Church as founded upon descent from Abraham, in the line of Isaac, was, as we may collect from verse 6 that it was contrary to the word and promise of God made to Abraham. This objection St. Paul first refutes: — “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect,” literally “has fallen,” or “fallen to the ground,” that is, has not been accomplished; or as though this election of a new Church, composed only of believing Jews and Gentiles, was contrary to the promises made to Abraham, Genesis 17:7, 8, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” This he proves, from several events,
which the Jews could not deny, as being in the records of their own history. By these facts he shows, that the exclusion of a part of the seed of Abraham, at various times, from being the visible Church of God, was not, as the Jews themselves must allow, any violation of the covenant with Abraham. He first instances the case of the descendants of Jacob himself, although he was the son of Isaac. “All are not Israel, (God’s visible Church and acknowledged people,) who are of Israel,” or Jacob; for a great part of the ten tribes who had been carried into captivity before the Babylonian invasion of Judah, had never returned, had never been again collected into a people, and had, for ages, been cast out of their ancient Church state and relation, though, by natural descent, they were “of Israel,” that is, descendants of Jacob.

From Jacob he ascends to Abraham, verse 7: “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children,” that is Abraham’s “seed” in the sense of the promise; “but in Isaac” not in Ishmael, “shall thy SEED be called;” “that is, they which are the children of the flesh,” Ishmael by Hagar, and his descendants, “these are not the children of God. But the children of the promise,” Isaac, born of Sarah, and his descendants “are counted for the seed,” meaning, obviously, for that seed to whom the promise refers. He gives a third instance of this election and exclusion taken from the children of Isaac, ver. 10-13, “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election,” the election of one in preference to the other, “might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” On this last passage, so often perverted to serve the system of Calvinian election and reprobation, a few remarks more at large may be allowed.

1. The argument of the apostle, of which this instance is in continuance requires us to understand that he is still speaking of “the seed” intended in the promise, which did not comprise all the descendants either of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, for he brings instances of exclusion from each; but such as God elected to be his visible Church: he is not therefore speaking of the personal election or rejection of Isaac, or Ishmael, or Jacob, or Esau; but of their descendants in certain lines, as elected to be the acknowledged Church of GOD.
2. This is proved, also, from those passages in the history of Moses, which furnish the facts on which the apostle reasons, and which he quotes briefly as being well known to the Jews. “As it is written, The elder shall serve the younger.” Now this is written, Genesis 25:23, “TWO NATIONS are in thy womb, and two manner of PEOPLE shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one PEOPLE shall be stronger than the other PEOPLE; and the elder,” the descendants of the elder, “shall serve the younger.” So far, indeed, was this prophecy from being intended of Esau personally, that he himself did never serve his brother Jacob, although he wantonly surrendered to him his birthright. Another passage is found in the Prophet Malachi 1:2, 3, and expresses God’s dealings, not with the individuals Jacob and Esau; but with their descendants, who, according to frequent usage in Scripture, are called by the names of their first ancestors. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness!” judgments which fell not upon Esau personally, but upon the Edomites his descendants.

3. If the apostle, in this instance of Jacob and Esau, speaks of the rejection or reprobation of individuals, he says nothing at all to his purpose, because he is discoursing of the rejection of the Jews, as a NATION, from being any longer the visible and acknowledged Church of God in the world; so that instances of individual reprobation would have been impertinent to his purpose. But to proceed with the apostle’s discourse.

Having shown, by these instances, that God had limited the covenant to a part of the descendants of Abraham, at different periods, he puts it to the objecting Jews to say, whether, on that account, there was a failure of his covenant with Abraham; “What shall we say then, Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.” The word unrighteousness is usually taken in the sense of injustice, but is sometimes used in the sense of falsehood and unfaithfulness, by the writers of the New Testament, as well as by the LXX; and in this sense it well agrees with the apostle’s reasoning; “Is there then unfaithfulness with God,” because he has so frequently limited the promise made to the seed of Abraham, to particular branches of that seed? The apostle denies that in this there was any unfaithfulness, or, in the sense of injustice, which perhaps is to be preferred, any “unrighteousness in God;” and the Jews themselves are bound to agree with him, since, as the apostle adds, it was a general principle laid down in their own law, by the Lawgiver himself when speaking to Moses, and by which, therefore, all such promises of special favour must be interpreted, — “I will have mercy
on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The connection of these words as they stand in Exodus 33:19, shows that the mercy and grace here spoken of, refer not, as Beza would have it, to that mercy exercised to individuals which supposes misery, and consists in the exercise of pardon; but to the granting of special favours and privileges. For the words are spoken to Moses, in answer to his prayer, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.” To him God had before said, verse 17, “Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by thy name. He was not, therefore, in the case of a guilty, miserable man. Nor do the words refer to the forgiveness of the people at his intercession. This had been done; the transaction, as to them, had been finished, as the history shows; and then Moses, encouraged by the success of his intercessions for them, makes a bold but wholly personal request for himself. “And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious,” in showing these great condescensions, “to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” God has a right to select whom he pleases to enjoy special privileges; in this there is no “unrighteousness,” and, therefore, in limiting those favours to such branches of Abraham’s seed, as he chose to elect, neither his justice nor his truth was impeached. This is obvious, when the words are interpreted of the election of collective bodies of men, and of the individuals which compose them, to peculiar favours and religious privileges; while yet all others have still the means of salvation. The onus lies only upon them who interpret this part of Scripture of personal, unconditional election and reprobation, to show how it can be a “righteous” proceeding to punish men for not availing themselves of means of salvation which are never afforded them. This is manifestly “unrighteous;” but in the election and rejection spoken of by the apostle, he expressly denies that there is “unrighteousness with God;” he does this in a solemn manner, “God forbid:” and, therefore, the kind of election and rejection of which he speaks is not the unconditional election and reprobation of individuals to or from eternal salvation.

The conclusion of the apostle’s answer to the objection of the Jews, that the casting off a part of the Jewish nation, even all who did not believe in Christ, was contrary to the promises made to Abraham, is, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” He grants special favours, as the term “showing mercy,” in the
preceding verse, has been already proved to mean; and in granting these special favours he often acts contrary to the designs and efforts of men, and frustrates both. The allusion contained in these words, to the case of Isaac and Esau, is, therefore, highly beautiful and appropriate, — “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth.” Isaac willed that Esau, the first born, should have the blessing; and Esau ran for the venison as the means of obtaining it; but still Jacob obtained it. The blessing was not, however, a personal one, but referred to the people of whom Jacob was to be the progenitor, as the history given by Moses will show. Thus this case also affords no example of personal election.

The apostle having proved that there was neither unfaithfulness nor unrighteousness in God, in selecting from his own good pleasure, from his sovereignty if the term please better, the persons to be endowed with special religious honours and privileges, proceeds to show, with reference, not only to the exclusion of the Jews, as a nation, from the visible Church, but also to the terrible judgments which our Lord himself had predicted, and which were about to come upon them, that he exercises also the prerogative of making some notorious sinners, and especially when they set themselves to oppose his purposes, the eminent and unequivocal objects of his displeasure. Here again he uses for illustration an example taken from the Jewish Scriptures. But let the example be marked. Had it been his intention to show, that the personal election of Isaac and Jacob necessarily implied the personal reprobation of Ishmael and Esau; and that their not receiving special privileges necessarily cut them off from salvation, so that being left to themselves they became objects of wrath, then would he have selected them as his illustrative examples, for this would have been required by his argument. But he selects Pharaoh, not a descendant of Abraham; a person not involved in the cases of non-election which had taken place in Abraham’s family; but a notoriously wicked prince, and one who resolved to oppose himself to the designs of God in the deliverance of Israel from bondage. His doctrine, then, manifestly is, that when these two characters meet in individuals, or in nations, notorious vice and flagrant opposition to God’s plans and purposes, he often makes them the objects of his special displeasure; giving them up to the hardness of their hearts, and postponing their destruction to make it more impressively manifest to the world. In every respect Pharaoh was a most appropriate example to illustrate the case of the body of the unbelieving Jews, who, when the apostle wrote, were under the sentence of a terrible excision. Pharaoh had
several times hardened his own heart; now God hardens it, that is, in Scripture language, withdraws his all-gracious interposition, and gives him up. So the Jews had hardened their hearts against repeated calls of Christ and his apostles; now God was about to give them up, as a nation, to destruction. Pharaoh was not suddenly cut off, but was spared; “for this same purpose have I raised thee up” from the effect of so many plagues; that is, I have not destroyed thee outright. The LXX translate, “thou hast been preserved;” for the Hebrew word rendered by us, “raised up,” never signifies to bring a person or thing into being, but to preserve, support, establish, or make to stand. Thus, also, the Jews had not been instantly cut off; but had been “endured with much long suffering,” to give them an opportunity of repentance, of which many availed themselves; and the remainder were still endured, though they were filling up the measure of their iniquities, and would, in the end, but by their own fault, display more eminently, the justice and severity of God. Pharaoh’s crowning offence was his rebellious opposition to the designs of God in taking Israel out of Egypt, and establishing them in Canaan as an independent nation, and as the Church of God; the Jews filled up the measure of their iniquities by endeavouring to withstand the purpose of God as to the Gentiles; his purpose to elect a Church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, only on the ground of faith, and this made the cases parallel. Therefore, says the apostle, it follows from all these examples, that “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,” gives special religious advantages to those whom he wills to elect for this purpose; “and whom he will,” whom he chooses to select as examples from among notorious sinners who rebelliously oppose his designs, “he hardeneth,” or gives up to a hardness which they themselves have cherished. In verse 19, the Jew is again introduced as an objector. “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” and to this St. Paul answers, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” verse 20. The usual way in which the objection is explained, by non-Calvinistic commentators, is; — if the continuance of the Jews in a state of disobedience, was the consequence of the determination of God to leave them to themselves, why should God still find fault? If they had become obdurate by the judicial withholding of his grace, why should the Jews still be blamed, since his will had not been resisted, but accomplished? If this be the sense of the objection, then the import of the apostle’s answer will be, that it is both perverse and wicked for a nation justly given up to obduracy, “to reply
against God,” or” debate” the case with him; and that it ought silently at least to submit to its penal dereliction, recollecting that God has an absolute power over nations, not only to raise them to peculiar honours and privileges, and to take them away, as “the potter has power over the clay to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour;” but to leave them to fill up the measure of their sins, that his judgments may be the more conspicuous. That this is a better and more consistent sense than that forced upon these words by Calvinistic commentators, may be freely admitted; but it is not wholly satisfactory.

For,

1. One sees not what can be expected from a people judicially given up, but a “replying against God;” or what end is to be answered by taking any pains to teach a people, in this hopeless case, not “to reply against God,” but to suffer his judgments in silence.

2. As little discoverable, if this be the meaning, is the appropriateness of the apostle’s allusion to the parable of the potter in Jeremiah. chap. 18. There almighty God declares his absolute power over nations to give them what form and condition he pleases; but still under these rules, that he repents of the evil which he threatens against wicked nations, when they repent, and withdraws his blessings from them when they are abused. But this illustration is surely not appropriate to the case of a nation given up to final obduracy, because the parable of the potter supposes the time of trial, as to such nations, not yet passed. “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” There is here no allusion to nations being kept in a state of judicial dereliction and obduracy, in order to make their punishment more conspicuous.

3. When the apostle speaks of the potter making of the “same lump, one vessel to honour and another to dishonour,” the last term does not fully apply to the state of a people devoted to inevitable destruction. It is true,
that in a following verse he speaks of “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;” but that is in another view of the case of the Jews, as we shall immediately show; nor does he affirm that they were “fitted to destruction” by God. There he speaks of what men fit themselves for; or that fitness for the infliction of the Divine wrath upon them, which they themselves, by their perverseness, create. — Here he speaks of an act of God, using the figure of a potter forming some vessels “to honour, others to dishonour.” But dishonour is not destruction. No potter makes vessels to destroy them; and we may be certain, that when Jeremiah went down to the potter’s house, to see him work the clay upon “the wheel,” that the potter was not employed in forming vessels to destroy them. On the contrary, says the prophet, when the lamp of clay was “marred in his hand;” so that not for want of skill in himself, but of proper quality in the clay, it took not the form he designed, of the same lump he made “another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make it;” — a meaner vessel, as the inferior quality or temper of the clay admitted, instead of that finer and more ornamental form which it would not take. The application of this was natural and easy to the house of Israel. It had become a lump of marred clay in the hands of the potter, which answered not to his design, and yielded not to his will. This illustrated the case of the Jews previous to the captivity of Babylon: they were marred in his hand, they were not answering the design for which he made them a people; but then the potter gave the stubborn clay another, though a baser form, and did not cast it away from him: he put the Jews into the condition of slaves and captives in a strange land, and reduced them from their honourable rank among the nations. This might have been averted by their repentance; but when the clay became utterly “marred,” it was turned into this inferior and less honourable form and state. But all this was not excision; not destruction. The proceeding was corrective, as well as punitive; it brought them to repentance in Babylon; and God “repented him of the evil.” The potter took even that vessel which had been made unto dishonour for seventy years, and made of it again “a vessel unto honour,” by restoring the polity and Church relation of the Jews.

4. The interpretation to which these objections are made, also supposes that the body of the Jewish nation had arrived at a state of dereliction already. But this epistle was written several years before the destruction of Jerusalem; and although the threatening had gone forth, as to the dereliction and “hardening” of the perseveringly impenitent, it is plain, from
the labours of the apostle himself to convert the Jews every where, and
from his “prayers, that Israel might be saved,” chap. 10:1; that he did not
consider them, as yet at least, in this condition; though most of them, and
especially those in Judea, were hastening to it.

Let us then take a view of this part of the apostle’s discourse, in some
respects different. The objecting Jew, upon the apostle having stated that
God shows mercy, or special favour to whom he will, and selects out of
the mass of sinners whom he pleases, for marked and eminent punishment,
says, “Why doth he yet find fault?” “Why does he, by you, his messenger,
allowing you your apostolic commission, continue to reprove and blame
the Jews? for who hath resisted his will?” According to your own doctrine,
he chooses the Gentiles and rejects us; his will is accomplished, not
resisted: “why then doth he still find fault?” We may grant that the
objection of the Jew goes upon the Calvinistic view of sovereignty and
predestination, and the shutting out of all conditions; but then it is to be
remembered, that it is the objection of a perverse and unbelieving Jew; and
that it is refuted, not conceded, by the apostle; for he proceeds wholly to
cut off all ground and pretence of “replying against God,” by his reference
to the parable of the potter in Jeremiah. This reference, according to the
view we have already given of that parable, shows,

1. That “the vessel” was not made “unto dishonour,” until the clay of
which it was formed, had been “marred in the hand of the potter;” that is,
not until trial being made, it did not conform to his design; did not work
according to the pattern in his mind. This is immediately explained by the
prophet; the nation did not “repent,” and “turn from its wickedness,” and
therefore God dealt with them “as seemed good” to him. Thus, in the time
of the apostle, the Jewish nation was the clay marred in the hands of God:
— From its stubbornness and want of temper, it had not conformed to his
design of bringing it to the honourable form of a Christian Church, in
association with the Gentiles. It was therefore made “a vessel unto
dishonour,” unchurched, and disowned of God, as its forefathers had been
in Babylon. This was the dishonoured, degraded condition, of all the
unbelieving Jews in the apostle’s day, although the destruction of their city,
and temple, and polity, had not taken place. They were rejected from being
the visible Church of God from the rending of the veil of the temple, or at
least, from the day of pentecost, when God visibly took possession of his
new spiritual Church, by the descent of the Holy Ghost. But all this was
their own “fault;” and therefore, notwithstanding the objection of the
perverse Jew, “fault” might be found with them who refused the glory of a higher Church estate than that which their circumcision formerly gave; and which had been so long and so affectionately offered to them; with men who, not only would not enter “the kingdom of God” themselves, but attempted to hinder even the Gentiles from entering in, as far as lay in their power.

2. The reference to the parable of the potter served to silence their “replying against God” also; because, in the interpretation which Jeremiah gives of that parable, he represents even the vessel formed unto dishonour, out of the mass which was “marred in the hand of the potter,” as still within the reach of the Divine favour, upon repentance; and so the conduct of God to the Jews, instead of proceeding as the Jew in his objection supposes, upon rigid predestinarian and unconditional grounds, left their state still in their own hands: they had no need to remain vessels of dishonour, since the Christian Church was still open to them, with its higher than Jewish honours. The word of the Lord, by his prophet, immediately on his having visited the potter’s house, declares that if a nation “repent,” he will repent of the evil designed against, or brought upon it. The Jews in Babylon, although they were there in the form of dishonoured vessels, did repent; and of that dishonoured mass “vessels of honour” were again made, at their restoration to their own land. Instead of replying against God, they bowed to his judgments in silence; and, as we read in the prayer of Daniel, confessed them just. Every Jew had this option when the apostle wrote, and has it now; and therefore St. Paul does not here call upon the Jews, as persons hardened and derelict of God, to be silent and own the justice of God; but as persons whose silent submission would be the first step to their recovery. Nor will they always, even as a people, remain vessels of dishonour; but be formed again on the potter’s wheel as vessels of honour and glory, of which the return from Babylon was probably a type. The object of the apostle was therefore, to silence a rebellious and perverse replying against God, by producing a conviction, both of his sovereign right to dispense his favours as he pleases, and of his justice in inflicting punishments upon those who set themselves against his designs; and thus to bring the Jews to repentance.

3. What follows verse 22 serves farther, and by another view, to silence the objecting Jew. It was true, that the body of the Jewish people in Judea, and their polity would be destroyed: our Lord had predicted it; and the apostles frequently, but tenderly, advert to it. This prediction did not, however,
prove that the Jews were, at the time the apostle wrote, generally, in a state of entire and hopeless dereliction; or the apostle would not so earnestly have sought, and so fervently have prayed for their salvation. Nor did that event itself prove, that those who still remained, and to this day remain, were given up entirely by God; for if so, why should the Church have been, in all ages, taught to look for their restoration: no time being fixed, and no signs established, to enable us to conclude that the dereliction had been taken off? The temporal punishment of the Jews of Judea had no connection with the question of their salvability as a people. To this sad national event, however, the apostle adverts, in the next verses. — “What,” or beside, “if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared to glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, who were not my people,” &c, ver. 22-25. The apostle does not state his conclusion, but leaves it to be understood. He intended it manifestly, farther to silence the perverse objections of the Jews; and he gives it as a proof, not of sovereignty alone, but of sovereignty and justice, sovereign mercy to the Gentiles; but justice to the Jews: as though he had said, this procedure is also righteous, and leaves no room to reply against God.

The metaphor of “vessels” is still carried on; but by “vessels of dishonour, formed by the potter,” and “vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction,” he does not mean vessels in the same condition; but in different conditions. This is plain, from the difference of expression adopted: “vessels unto dishonour,” and “vessels of wrath;” but as the apostle’s reasoning is evidently influenced by the reference he has made to the parables of the potter, in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Jeremiah, we must again refer to that prophecy for illustration. In all the examples which, in this discourse, St. Paul takes out of the Old Testament, it has been justly observed by critics, that he quotes briefly, and only so as to give to the Jews, who were well acquainted with their Scriptures, the key to the whole context in which the passages stand to which he directs their attention. So in the verses before us, by referring to the potter forming the vessels on the wheel, he directs them to the whole section of prophecy, of which that is the introduction. By examining this it will be found, that the prophet, in delivering his message, makes use of the work of the potter for illustration,
in two states, and for two purposes. The first we have explained: — the
giving to the mass, marred in the hands of the potter, another form; which
expressed that dishonoured, and humbled state, in which the Jews, both for
punishment and correction, were placed under captivity in Babylon. But
connected with the humbling of this proud people, by rejecting them for
seventy years, as God’s visible Church, was also the terrible destruction of
Jerusalem, and the temple itself. With reference to this, the prophet, in the
nineteenth chapter, which is a continuation of the eighteenth, receives this
command, “Thus saith the Lord, Go and get a potter’s earthen bottle, and
take of the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests; and go
forth unto the valley of the sons of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the
east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, and say, Hear
ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem:
Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; behold I will bring evil
upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.” And
then having delivered his awful message in various forms of malediction, he
is thus commanded, in verse 10, “Then shalt thou break the bottle in the
sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the
Lord of hosts; even so will I break this people and this city, as one
breaketh a potter’s vessel, that cannot be made whole again.” As this
stands in the same section of prophecy as the parable of the forming of
vessels out of clay by the potter, can it be doubted to what the apostle
refers when he speaks, not only of “vessels made unto dishonour,” but also
of “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?” The potter’s earthen bottle,
broken by Jeremiah, was “a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction,” though
not in the retention of the potter who formed it; and the breaking or
destruction of it represented, as the prophet himself says, the destruction of
the city, temple, and polity of the Jews, by the invasion of the forces of the
king of Babylon. The coming destruction of the temple, city, and polity of
the Jews by the Romans was thereby fitly represented by the same figure in
words, that is, the destruction of an earthen vessel by violent fracture, as
the former calamity had been represented by it in action. Farther, the
circumstances of these two great national punishments signally answer to
each other. In the former, the Jews ceased to be the visible Church of God
for seventy years; in the latter, they have been also unchurched for many
ages. Their temporary rejection as the visible Church of God when they
were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, was marked, also, by
circumstances of severe and terrible vengeance, by invasion, and the
destruction of their political state. Their longer rejection, as God’s Church,
was also accompanied by judgments of the same kind, and by their more
terrible excision and dispersion, as a body politic. As the prophet refers to
both circumstances, so, in his usual manner of teaching by action, he
illustrates both by symbols. The first, by the work of the potter on the
wheels; the second, by taking “an earthen bottle, a vessel out of the house
of the potter, and destroying it before the eyes of the ancients of the people
and the ancients of the priests.” The apostle, in like manner, refers to both
events, and makes use of the same symbols verbally. The “dishonoured”
state of the Jews, as no longer acknowledged by God as his people, since
they would not enter the new Church, the New Jerusalem, by faith, is
shown by the vessel formed by the potter unto “dishonour;” the collateral
calamities brought upon their city, temple, and nation, arising out of their
enormous sins, is shown by allusion to the prophet’s breaking another
vessel, an earthen bottle. This temporal destruction of the Jews by the
Roman invasion, was also figurative of the future and final punishment of
all persevering unbelievers. As to the Jews of that day living in Judea, the
nation of the Jews, the punishment figured by the broken vessel was final,
for they were destroyed by the sword, and wasted by slavery; and as to all
who persevered in unbelief, the future punishment in eternity would be final
and hopeless, “as one breaketh a potter’s vessel that cannot be made whole
again:” a sufficient proof that St. Paul is not speaking of the vessel in its
state of clay, on the potter’s wheel, which might be made whole again;
and, therefore, the punishment figured by that was not final, but corrective;
for the Jews, though made vessels unto dishonour in Babylon, were again
made vessels of honour on their restoration; and the Jews now, though for
a much longer period existing as “vessels of dishonour,” shall be finally
restored, brought into the Church of Christ, acknowledged to be his
people, as the believing Gentiles are, and thus, united with them, again be
made “vessels unto honour.”

The application of the apostle’s words, in the verses just commented upon,
as intended to silence the “replying” of the Jews against God, is now
obvious. They could urge no charge upon God for making them vessels of
dishonour by taking away their Church state, for that was their own fault;
they were “marred in his hands,” and they yielded not to his design. But
their case was no more hopeless than that of the Jews in Babylon; they
might still be again made vessels of honour. And then, as to the case of the
“vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,” those stubborn Jews who were
bringing upon themselves the Roman invasion, with the destruction of their
city and nation; and all perverse, unbelieving Jews, who continued, in other parts of the world, to reject the Gospel; although their approaching punishment would be final and remediless, yet was there no ground for them “to reply against God” on that account, as though this dispensation of wrath were the result of unconditional predestination and rigid sovereignty. On the contrary, it was an act of pure and unquestionable justice, which the apostle proves by its being brought upon themselves by their own sins; and by the circumstance that it did not take place until after God had “endured them with much long suffering.”

1. The destruction was brought upon themselves by their own sins. This is manifest from all the instances in the New Testament, in which their sins are charged upon them as the cause of their calamities, and which need not be quoted; and also from the expression in the text before us, vessels “fitted to destruction.” The word might as well have been rendered “adapted to destruction,” which fitness or congruity for punishment can be produced only by sin; and this sin must have been their own choice and fault, unless we should blasphemously make God the author of sin, which but a few Calvinistic divines have been bold enough to affirm. Nor are we to overlook the change of speech which the apostle uses (Wolfius in loc.) when speaking of “the vessels of mercy.” Their “preparation unto glory,” is ascribed expressly to God, — “which HE had afore prepared unto glory;” but of the vessels of wrath the apostle simply says passively, “fitted to destruction,” leaving the agent to be inferred from the nature of the thing, and from the testimony of Scripture, which uniformly ascribes the sins of men to themselves, and their punishment to their sins.

2. The justice of God’s proceeding as to the incorrigible Jews is still more strongly marked by the declaration, that these vessels of wrath fitted, or adapted to destruction, were “endured with much long suffering.” To say that their punishment was delayed to render it more conspicuous, after they had been left or given up by God, would be no impeachment of God’s justice; but it is much more consonant to the tenor of Scripture to consider the “long suffering” here mentioned, as exercised previously to their being given up to the hardness of their hearts, like Pharaoh, and even after they were, in a rigid construction of just severity, “fitted for destruction;” the punishment being delayed to afford them still farther opportunities for repentance. The barren tree, in our Lord’s parable, was the emblem of the Jewish nation: and no one can deny that after the Lord had come for many years “seeking fruit and finding none,” this fruitless tree was “fitted” to be
cut down; and yet it was “endured with much long suffering.” This view is, also, farther supported by the import of the word “long suffering,” and its use in the New Testament. Long suffering is a mode of mercy, and the reason of its exercise is only to be found in a merciful intention. Hence “goodness and forbearance, and long suffering,” are united by the apostle, in another part of this epistle, when speaking of these very Jews. in a passage which may be considered as strictly parallel with that before us. “Or despisest thou the rules of his goodness and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;” which “wrath” the long suffering of God was exercised to prevent, by leading them “to repentance,” Romans 2:4, 5. So also St. Peter teaches us, that the end of God’s long suffering to men is a merciful one: he is “long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The passage in question, therefore, cannot be understood of persons derelict and forsaken of God, as though the long suffering of God, in enduring them, were a part of the process of “showing his wrath and making his power known.” Doddridge, a moderate Calvinist, paraphrases it: “What if God, resolving” at last “to manifest his wrath, and make his power known, hath,” in the meantime, “endured with much long suffering” those who shall finally appear to be “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” to which there is no objection, provided it be allowed that in this “meantime” they might have repented and obtained mercy.

Thus the proceedings of God as to the Jews shut out all “reply” and “debate” with God. Nothing was unjust in his conduct to the impenitent among them, for they were “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,” wicked men, justly liable to it, and yet, before God proceeded to his work of judgment, he endured them with forbearance, and gave them many opportunities of coming into his Church on the new election of believers both of Jews and Gentiles. And as to this election, the whole was a question not of justice but of grace, and God had the unquestionable right of forming a new believing people, “not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles,” and of filling them, as “vessels of honour,” with those riches, that fulness of glory, as his now acknowledged Church, for which he had “afore prepared them” by faith, the only ground of their admission into his covenant. The remainder of the chapter, on which we have commented,
contains citations from the prophecies, with respect to the salvation of the “remnant,” of the believing Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. The tenth and eleventh chapters which continue the discourse, need no particular examination; but will be found to contain nothing but what most obviously refers to the collective rejection of the Jewish nation, and the collective election of the “remnant” of believing Jews, along with all believing Gentiles, into the visible Church of God.

We have now considered this discourse of the Apostle Paul, with reference to the question of personal or collective election, and find that it can be interpreted only of the latter. Let us consider it, secondly, with reference to the question of unconditional election, a doctrine which we shall certainly find in it; but in a sense very different from that in which it is held by Calvinists.

By unconditional election, divines of this class understand an election of persons to eternal life without respect to their faith or obedience, these qualities in them being supposed necessarily to follow as consequences of their election; by unconditional reprobation, the counterpart of the former doctrine, is meant a non-election or rejection of certain persons from eternal salvation; unbelief and disobedience following this rejection as necessary consequences. Such kind of election and rejection has no place in this chapter, although the subject of it is the election and rejection of bodies of men, which is a case more unfettered with conditions than any other. We have, indeed, in it several instances of unconditional election. Such was that of the descendants of Isaac to be God’s visible Church, in preference to those of Ishmael; such was that of Jacob, to the exclusion of Esau; which election was declared when the children were yet in the womb, before they had done “good or evil;” so that the blessing of the special covenant did not descend upon the posterity of Jacob because of any righteousness in Jacob, nor was it taken away from the descendants of Esau because of any wickedness in their progenitor. In like manner, when almighty God determined no longer to found his visible Church upon natural descent from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, nor in any line according to the flesh; but to make faith in his Son Jesus Christ the gate of admission into this privilege, he acted according to the same sovereign pleasure. It is not impossible to conceive that he might have carried on his saving purposes among the Gentiles through Christ, without setting up a visible Church among them; as, before the coming of Christ, he carried on such purposes in the Gentile nations, (unless we suppose that all but the
Jews perished,) without collecting them into a body, and making himself their head as his Church, and calling himself “their God” by special covenant, and by visible and constant signs acknowledging them to be “his people.” Greatly inferior would have been the mercy to the Gentile world had this plan been adopted; and, as far as it appears to us, the system of Christianity would have been much less efficient. We are, indeed, bound to believe this, since Divine wisdom and goodness have determined on another mode of procedure; but still it is conceivable. On the contrary, the purpose of God was now not only to continue a visible Church in the world, but to extend it in its visible, collective, and organized form, into all nations. Yet this resolve rested on no goodness in those who were to be subjects of it: both Jews and Gentiles were “concluded under sin,” and “the whole world was guilty before God.” As this plan is carried into effect by extending itself into different nations, we see the same sovereign pleasure. A man of Macedonia appears to Paul in a vision by night, and cries, “Come over and help us;” but we have no reason to believe that the Macedonians were better than other Gentiles, although they were elected to the enjoyment of the privileges and advantages of evangelical ordinances. So in modern times parts of Hindostan have been elected to receive the Gospel, and yet its inhabitants presented nothing more worthy of this election than the people of Tibet, or California, who have not yet been elected. We call this sovereignty; not indeed in the sense of many Calvinistic writers, who appear to understand by the sovereign acts of God those procedures which he adopts only to show that he has the power to execute them; but because the reasons of them, whether they are reasons of judgment, or wisdom, or mercy, are hidden from us — either that we have no immediate interest in them, or that they are too deep and ample for our comprehension, or because it is an important lesson for men to be taught to bow with reverent submission to his regal prerogatives. This is the unconditional election and non-election taught by the apostle in this chapter, but what we deny is, that either the spiritual blessings connected with religious privileges follow as necessary consequences from this election; or that unbelief, disobedience, and eternal ruin follow in the same manner from non-election. Of both these opinions the apostle’s discourse itself furnishes abundant refutation.

Let us take the instances of election. The descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob were elected; but true faith, and obedience, and salvation, did not follow as infallible consequents of that election. On the contrary, the “Jew outwardly,” and the “Jew inwardly,” were always
distinguished in the sight of God; and the children of Abraham’s faith, not
the children of Abraham’s body, were the true “Israel of God.” Again, the
Gentiles were at length elected to be the visible Church of God; but
obedience and salvation did not follow as necessary consequents of this
election. On the contrary, many Gentiles chosen to special religious
privileges have, in all ages, neglected the great salvation, and have
perished, though professing the name of Christ; and in that pure age in
which St. Paul wrote, when comparatively few Gentiles entered the Church
but with a sincere faith in Christ, he warns all of the danger of excision for
unbelief and disobedience: — “Thou standest by faith; be not high minded,
but fear.” “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he
also spare not thee.” “Toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his
goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Certain, therefore, it is,
that although this collective election of bodies of men to religious
privileges, and to become the visible Church of God, be unconditional, the
salvation to which these privileges were designed to lead, depends upon
personal faith and obedience.

Let us turn, then, to the instances of non-election or rejection; and here it
will be found that unbelief, disobedience, and punishment, do not follow as
infallible consequents of this dispensation. Abraham was greatly interested
for Ishmael, and obtained, in answer to his prayer, at least temporal
promises in his behalf, and in that of his posterity; and there is no reason to
conclude from any thing which occurs in the sacred writers, that his
Arabian descendants were shut out, except by their own choice and fault,
at any time, from the hopes of salvation; at least previous to their
embracing the imposture of Mohammed; for if so, we must give up Job and
his friends as reprobates. The knowledge of the true God existed long in
Arabia; and “Arabians” were among the fruits of primitive Christianity, as
we learn from the Acts of the Apostles.

Nor have we any ground to conclude that the Edomites, as such, were
excluded from the mercies of God, because of their non-election as his
visible Church. Their proximity to the Jewish nation must have served to
preserve among them a considerable degree of religious knowledge; and
their continuance as a people for many ages may argue at least no great
enormity of wickedness among them; which is confirmed by the reasons
given for their ultimate destruction. The final malediction against this
people is uttered by the Prophet Malachi: — “Whereas Edom saith, We are
impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith
the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them the BORDER OF WICKEDNESS, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever,” Malachi 1:4. Thus their destruction was the result of their “wickedness” in the later periods of their history; nor have we any reason to conclude that this was more inevitable than that of other ancient nations, whom God, as in the case of Assyria, called to repentance; but who, not regarding the call, were finally destroyed. That the Edomites were not, in more ancient times, the objects of the Divine displeasure, is manifest from Deuteronomy 2:5, where it is recorded that God commanded the Israelites, “Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.” They also outlived, as a people, the ten tribes of Israel; they continued to exist when the two tribes were carried into captivity to Babylon; and about the year of the world 3875, or 129 before the Christian era, John Hircanus entirely subdued them, and obliged them to incorporate with the Jewish nation and to receive religion. They professed consequently the same faith, and were thus connected with the visible Church of God.

Welcome, finally, to the case of the rejected Jews in the very age of the apostles. The purpose of God, as we have seen, was to abolish the former ground on which his visible Church had for so many ages been built, that of natural descent from Abraham by Isaac and Jacob; but this was so far from shutting out the Jews from spiritual blessings, that though, as Jews, they were now denied to be God’s Church, yet they were all invited to come in with the Gentiles, or rather to lead the way into the new Church established on the new principle of faith in Jesus, as the Christ. Hence the apostles were commanded to “begin at Jerusalem” to preach the Gospel; hence they made the Jews the first offer in every place in Asia Minor, and other parts of the Roman empire, into which they travelled on the same blessed errand. Many of the Jews accepted the call, entered into the Church state on the new principle on which the Church of Christ was now to be elected, and hence they are called, by St. Paul, “the remnant according to the election of grace,” Romans 11:5, and “the election.” The rest, it is true, are said to have been “blinded;” just in the same sense as Pharaoh was hardened. He hardened his own heart, and was judicially left to his obduracy; they blinded themselves by their prejudices and worldliness and spiritual pride, and were at length judicially given up to blindness. But then might they not all have had a share in this new election into this new
Church of God? Truly every one of them; for thus the apostle argues, Romans 9:30-32, “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law.” And thus we have it plainly declared that they were excluded from the new spiritual Church of God, not by any act of sovereignty, not by any decree of reprobation, but by an act of their own: they rejected the doctrine and way of faith; they attained not unto righteousness, because they sought it not by faith.

The collective election and rejection taught in this chapter is not then unconditional, in the sense of the Calvinists; and neither the salvation of the people elected, nor the condemnation of the people rejected, flows as necessary consequents from these acts of the Divine sovereignty. They are, indeed, mysterious procedures; for doubtless it must be allowed that they place some portions of men in circumstances more favoured than others; but even in such cases God has shut out the charge of “unrighteousness,” by requiring from men according “to what they have, and not according to what they have not,” as we learn from many parts of Scripture which reveal the principles of the Divine administration, both as to this life and another; for no man is shut out from the mercy of God, but by his own fault. He has connected these events also with wise and gracious general plans, as to the human race. They are not acts of arbitrary will, or of caprice; they are acts of “wisdom and knowledge,” the mysterious bearings of which are to be in future times developed. “O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” These are the devout expressions with which St. Paul concludes this discourse; but they would ill apply to the sovereign, arbitrary, and unconditional reprobation of men from God’s mercies in time and eternity, on the principle of taking some and leaving others without any reason in themselves. There is no plan in this; no wisdom; no mystery; and it is capable of no farther development for the instruction and benefit of the world; for that which rests originally on no reason but solely on arbitrary will, is incapable, from its very nature, of becoming the component part of a deeply laid, and, for a time, mysterious plan, which is to be brightened into manifest wisdom, and to terminate in the good of mankind, and the glory of God.
The only argument of any weight which is urged to prove, that in the election spoken of in this discourse of St. Paul, individuals are intended, is, that though it should be allowed that the apostle is speaking of the election of bodies of men to be the visible Church of God; yet, as none are acknowledged by him to be his true Church, except true believers; therefore, the election of men to faith and eternal life, as individuals, must necessarily be included; or rather, is the main thing spoken of. For as the spiritual seed of Abraham were the only persons allowed to be “the Israel of God” under the Old Testament dispensation; and as, upon the rejection of the Jews, true believers only, both of Jews and Gentiles, were allowed to constitute the Church of Christ, the spiritual seed of Abraham, under the law; and genuine Christians, both of Jews and Gentiles, under the Gospel, are “the election;” and “the remnant according to the election of grace,” mentioned by the apostle.

In this argument truth is greatly mixed up with error, which a few observations will disentangle.

1. It is a mere assumption, that the spiritual Israelites, under the law, in opposition to the Israelites by birth, are any where called “the election;” and “the remnant according to the election of grace;” or even alluded to under these titles. The first phrase occurs in Romans 11:7, “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” Here it is evident that “the election” means the Jews of that day, who believed in Christ, in opposition to “the rest,” who believed not; in other words, “the election” was that part of the Jews, who had been chosen into the Christian Church, by faith. The second phrase occurs in verse 5, of the same chapter, “Even so, then, at this present time, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace;” where the same class of persons, the believing Jews, who submitted to the plan of election into the Church by “grace,” through faith, are the only persons spoken of. Nor are these terms used to designate the believing Gentiles; they belong exclusively to the Christianized portion of the Jewish nation, and as the contrary assumption is without any foundation, the inferences drawn from it are imaginary.

2. It is true that, under the Old Testament dispensation, the spiritual seed of Abraham were the only part of the Israelites who were, with reference to their spiritual and eternal state, accepted of God; but it is not true, that the election of which the apostle speaks, was confined to them. With
reference to Esau and Jacob, the apostle says, Romans 9:11, 13, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” The “election” here spoken of, or God’s purpose to elect, relates to Jacob being chosen in preference to Esau; which election, as we have seen, respected the descendants of Jacob. Now, if this meant the election of the pious descendants of Jacob only, and not his natural descendants; then the opposition between the election of the progeny of Jacob, and the non-election of the progeny of Esau, is destroyed; and there was no reason to say, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” or loved less; but the pious descendants of Jacob have I loved and elected; and the rest I have not loved, and therefore have not elected. Some of the Calvinistic commentators have felt this difficulty, and therefore say, that these cases are not given as examples of the election and reprobation of which the apostle speaks; but as illustrations of it. If considered as illustrations, they must be felt to be of a very perplexing kind; for how the preference of one nation to another, when, as we have seen, this did not infallibly secure the salvation of the more favoured nation, nor the eternal destruction of the less favoured, can illustrate the election of individuals to eternal life, and the reprobation of other individuals to eternal death, is difficult to conceive. But they are manifestly examples of that one election, of which the apostle speaks throughout; and not illustrations of one kind of election by another. They are the instances which he gives in proof that the election of the believing Jews of his day to be, along with the believing Gentiles, the visible Church of God, and the rejection of the Jews after the flesh, was not contrary to the promises of God made to Abraham because God had, in former times, made distinctions between the natural descendants of Abraham as to Church privileges, without any impeachment of his faithfulness to his word. Again, if the election of which the apostle speaks were that of pious Jews in all ages, so that they alone stood in a Church relation to God, and were thus the only Jews in covenant with him: how could he speak of the rejection of the other portion of the Jews? Of their being cut off? Of the covenants “pertaining” to them? They could not be rejected, who were never received; nor cut off, who were never branches in the stock; nor have covenants pertaining to them, if in these covenants they had never been included.
3. This notion, that the ancient election of a part of the descendants of Abraham spoken of by the apostle, was of the pious Jews only, and therefore, a personal election is, in part, grounded by these commentators upon a mistaken view of the meaning of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth verses in this chapter; in which they have been sometimes incautiously followed by those of very different sentiments, and who have thus somewhat entangled themselves. “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” In this passage, the interpreters in question suppose that St. Paul distinguishes between the spiritual Israelites, and those of natural descent; between the spiritual seed of Abraham, and his seed according to the flesh. Yet the passage not only affords no evidence that this was his intention; but implies just the contrary. Our view of its meaning is given above; but it may be necessary to support it more fully. Let it then be recollected that the apostle is speaking of that great event, the rejection of the Jews from being any longer the visible Church of God, on account of natural descent; and that in this passage he shows that the purpose of God to construct his Church upon a new basis, that of faith in Christ, although it would exclude the body of the Jewish people from this Church, since they refused “the election of grace” through faith, would not prove that “the word of God had fallen” to the ground; or, as the literal meaning of the original is rendered in our version, “has taken none effect.” The word of God referred to can only be God’s original promise to Abraham, to be “a God to him and to his seed after him;” which was often repeated to the Jews in after ages, in the covenant engagement, “I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people;” a mode of expression which signifies, in all the connections in which it stands, an engagement to acknowledge them as his visible Church; he being publicly acknowledged on their part as “their God,” or object of worship and trust; and they, on the other, being acknowledged by him as his peculiar “people.” This, therefore, we are to take to be the sense of the promise to Abraham and to his seed. How then does the apostle prove that the “word of God had not fallen to the ground,” although the natural seed of Abraham, the Jews of
that day, had been rejected as his Church? He proves it by showing that all the children of Abraham by natural descent had not, in the original intention of the promise, been “counted,” or reckoned, as “the seed” to which these promises had been made; and this he establishes by referring to those acts of God by which he had, in his sovereign pleasure, conferred the Church relation upon the descendants of Abraham only in certain lines, as in those of Isaac and Jacob, and excluded the others. In this view, the argument is cogent to his purpose. By the exercise of the same sovereignty God had now resolved not to connect the Church relation with natural descent, even in the line of Isaac and Jacob; but to establish it on a ground which might comprehend the Gentile nations also, the common ground of faith in Christ. The mere children of the flesh were, therefore, in this instance excluded; and “the children of the promise,” the promise now made to believing Jews and Gentiles, those begotten by the word of the Gospel, were “counted for the seed.” But though it is a great truth that only the children of the Gospel promise are now “counted for the seed,” it does not follow that the children of the promise made to Sarah were all spiritual persons; and, as such, the only subjects of that Church relation which was connected with that circumstance. That the Gentiles who believed upon the publication of the Gospel were always contemplated as a part of that seed to which the promises were made, the apostle shows in a former part of the same epistle; but that “mystery” was not in early times revealed. God had not then formed, nor did he till the apostle’s age form, his visible Church solely on the principle of faith, and a moral relation. This is the character of the new, not of the old dispensation; and the different grounds of the Church relation were suited to the design of each. One was to preserve truth from extinction; the other to extend it into all nations: in one, therefore, a single people, taken as a nation into political as well as religious relations with God, was made the deposite of the truth to be preserved; in the other, a national distinction, and lines of natural descent, could not be recognized, because the object was to call all nations to the obedience of the same faith, and to place all on an equality before God. As the very ground of the Church relation, then, under the Old Testament, was natural descent from Abraham; and as it was mixed up and even identified with a political relation also, the ancient election of which the apostle speaks could not be confined to spiritual Jews; and even if it could be proved, that the Church of God, under the new dispensation is to be confined to true believers only, yet that would not prove that the ancient Church of God had that basis alone, since we know it had another, and a
more general one. When therefore, the apostle says, “for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,” the distinction is not between the spiritual and the natural Israelites; but between that part of the Israelites who continued to enjoy Church privileges, and those who were “of Israel,” or descendants of Jacob, surnamed Israel, as the ten tribes and parts of the two, who, being dispersed among the heathen for their sins, were no longer a part of God’s visible Church. This is the first instance which the apostle gives of the rejection of a part of the natural seed of Abraham from the promise. He strengthens the argument by going up higher, even to those who had immediately been born to Abraham, the very children of his body, Ishmael and Isaac. “The children of the flesh;” that is, Ishmael and his descendants, (so called, because he was born naturally not supernaturally, as Isaac was, according to “the promise” made to Abraham and Sarah;) — they, says the apostle, are not the “children of God;” that is, as the context still shows, not “the seed” to whom the promise that he would be “a God to Abraham and his seed” was made: “but the children of the promise,” that is, Isaac and his descendants, were “counted for the seed.” And that we might not mistake this, “the promise” referred to is added by the apostle; — “for this is the word of the promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.” Of this promise, the Israelites by natural descent, were as much “the children,” as the spiritual Israelites; and, therefore, to confine it to the latter is wholly gratuitous, and contrary to the words of the apostle. It is indeed an interesting truth, that a deep and spiritual mystery ran through that part of the history of Abraham here referred to, which the apostle opens in his Epistle to the Galatians: “The children of the bond woman and her son,” symbolized the Jews who sought justification by the law; and “the children of the promise,” “the children of the free woman,” those who were justified by faith, and born supernaturally, that is, “born again,” and made heirs of the heavenly inheritance. But these things, says St. Paul, are an “ALLEGORY;” and therefore could not be the thing allegorized, any more than a type can be the thing typified; for a type is always of an inferior nature to the antitype, and is indeed something earthly, adumbrating that which is spiritual and heavenly. It follows, therefore, that although the choosing of Isaac and his descendants prefigured the choosing of true believers, (persons born supernaturally under the Gospel dispensation,) to be “the children of God;” and that the rejection of the “children of the flesh,” typified the rejection of the unbelieving Jews from God’s Church, because they had nothing but natural descent to plead; nay, though we allow that these events might be allegorical, on one part, of the truly
believing Israelites, in all ages; and on the other, of those who were Jews only “outwardly,” and, therefore, as to the heavenly inheritance were not “heirs;” yet still that which typified, and represented in allegory these spiritual mysteries, was not the spiritual mystery itself. It was a comparatively gross and earthly representation of it; and the passage is, therefore, to be understood of the election of the natural descendants of Isaac, as the children of the promise made to Sarah, to be “the seed” to which the promises of Church privileges and a Church relation were intended to be in force though still subject to the election of the line of Jacob in preference to that of Esau; and subject again, at a still greater distance of time, to the election of the tribe of Judah, to continue God’s visible Church, till the coming of Messiah, while the ten tribes, who were equally “of Israel,” were rejected.

4. That this election of bodies of men to be the visible Church of God, involved the election of individuals into the true Church of God and consequently their election to eternal life, is readily acknowledged; but this weakens not in the least the arguments by which we have shown that the apostle, in this chapter, speaks of collective, and not of individual election; on the contrary, it establishes them. Let us, to illustrate this, first take the case of the ancient Jewish Church.

The end of God’s election of bodies of men to peculiar religious advantages is, doubtless as to the individuals of which these bodies are composed, their recovery from sin, and their eternal salvation. Hence, to all such individuals, superior means of instruction, and more efficient means of salvation are afforded along with a deeper responsibility. The election of an individual into the true Church by writing his name in heaven is, however, an effect dependent upon the election of the body to which he belongs. It follows only from his personal repentance and justifying faith; or else we must say, that men are members of the true spiritual Church, before they repent and have justifying faith, for which, assuredly, we have no warrant in Scripture. Individual election is then another act of God, subsequent to the former. The former is sovereign and unconditional; the latter rests upon revealed reasons; and is not, as we shall just now more fully show, unconditional. These two kinds of election, therefore, are not to be confounded; and it is absurd to argue that collective election has no existence because there is an individual election; since the latter, on the contrary, necessarily supposes the former. The Jews, as a body, had their visible Church state, and outward privileges, although the pious Jews alone
availed themselves of them to their own personal salvation. As to the Christian Church, there is a great difference in its circumstances; but the principle, though modified, is still there.

The basis of this Church was to be, not natural descent from a common head; marking out, as that Church, some distinct family, tribe, and, as it increased in numbers, some one nation, invested too, as a nation must be, with a political character and state; but faith in Christ. Yet even this faith supposes a previous sovereign and unconditional collective election. For, as the apostle argues, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: but how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?” Now this *sending* to one Gentile nation before another Gentile nation, a distinction which continues to be made in the administration of the Divine government to this day, is that sovereign unconditional election of the people constituting that nation, to the means of becoming God’s Church by the preaching of the Gospel, through the men “sent” to them for this purpose. The persons who first believed were for the most part real Christians, in the sense of being truly, and in heart turned to God. They could not generally go so far as to be baptized into the name of Christ, in the face of persecution, and in opposition to their own former prejudices, without a considerable previous ripeness of experience, and decision of character. Under the character of “*saints,*” in the highest sense, the primitive Churches are addressed in the apostolical epistles: and such we are bound to conclude they were; or they would not have been so called by men who had the “discernment of spirits.” Whatever then the number was, whether small or great, who first received the word of the Gospel in every place, they openly confessed Christ, assembled for public worship; and thus the promise was fulfilled in them: I will be to them a God, the object of worship and trust; “and they shall be to me a people.” They became God’s visible Church; and for the most part entered into that, and into the true and spiritual Church at the same time. But this was not the case with all the members; and we have therefore still an election of bodies of men to a visible Church state, independent of their election as “heirs of eternal life.” The children of believers, even as children, and therefore incapable of faith, did not remain in the same state of alienation from God as the children of unbelievers; nay, though but one parent believed, yet the children are pronounced by St. Paul, to be “holy.” “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband: else were your children *unclean;* but now they are *holy.*”
When both parents believed, and trained up their families to believe in Christ, and to worship the true God, the case was stronger: the family was then “a Church in the house;” though all the members of it might not have saving faith. Sincere faith or assent to the Gospel, with desires of instruction and salvation, appear to have uniformly entitled the person to baptism; and the use of Christian ordinances followed. The numbers of the visible Church swelled till it comprehended cities, and at last countries: whose inhabitants were thus elected to special religious privileges, and, forsaking idols and worshipping God, constituted his visible Church among Gentile nations. And that the Apostle Paul regarded all who “called upon the name of the Lord” as Christian Churches, is evident from his asserting his authority of reproof, and counsel, and even excision over them, as to their unworthy members; and also from his threatening the Gentile Churches with the fate of the Jewish Church; — unless they stood by faith, they also should be “cut off;” that is, be unchurched. Of his full meaning, subsequent history gives the elucidation, in the case of those very Churches in Asia Minor which he himself planted; and which, departing from the faith of Christ, his true doctrine, have been, in many instances “cut off,” and swallowed up in the Mohammedan delusion; so that Christ is there no longer worshipped. The whole proves a sovereign unconditional election independent of personal election; unconditional as to the people to whom the Gospel was first sent; unconditional as to the children born of believing parents; unconditional as to the inhabitants of those countries who, when a Christian Church was first established among them, came, without seeking it, into the possession of invaluable and efficacious means and ordinances of Christian instruction and salvation; and who all finally, by education, became professors of the true faith; and, as far as assent goes, sincere believers. This election too, as in the Jewish Church, was made with reference to a personal election into the true spiritual Church of God; but personal election was conditional. It rested, as we have seen, upon personal repentance and justifying faith; or else we must hold that men could be members of the true Church without either. This election was then dependent upon the other; and, instead of disproving, abundantly confirms it. The tenor of the apostle’s argument sufficiently shows that the transfer of the Church state and relation from one body of men to others, is that which in this discourse he has in view — in other words, he speaks of the election of bodies of men to religious advantages, not of individuals to eternal life; and however intimately the one may be connected with the other, the latter is not necessarily involved in the former; since superior
religious privileges, in all ages have, to many, proved but an aggravation of their condemnation.

The **THIRD** kind of election is personal election; or the election of individuals to be the children of God, and the heirs of eternal life.

It is not at all disputed between us and those who hold the Calvinistic view of election, whether believers in Christ are called the **ELECT** of God with reference to their individual state and individual relation to God as his “people,” in the highest sense of that phrase. Such passages as “the elect of God;” “chosen of God;” “chosen in Christ;” “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father;” and many others, we allow therefore, although borrowed from that collective election of which we have spoken, to be descriptive of an act of grace in favour of certain persons considered individually.

The first question then which naturally arises, respects the import of that act of grace which is termed choosing, or an election. It is not a choosing to particular offices and service, which is the first kind of election we have mentioned; nor is it that collective election to religious privileges and a visible Church state, on which we have more largely dwelt. For although “the elect” have an individual interest in such an election as parts of the collective body, thus placed in possession of the ordinances of Christianity; yet many others have the same advantages who still remain under the guilt and condemnation of sin and practical unbelief. The individuals properly called “the elect,” are they who have been made partakers of the grace and saving efficacy of the Gospel. “Many,” says our Lord, “are called, but few chosen.”

What true personal election is, we shall find explained in two clear passages of Scripture. It is explained negatively by our Lord, where he says to his disciples, “I have chosen you out of the world;” it is explained positively by St. Peter, when he addresses his first epistle to the “elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” To be elected, therefore, is to be separated from “the world.” and to be sanctified by the Spirit, and by the blood of Christ.

It follows, then, that election is not only an act of God done in **time**, but also that it is subsequent to the administration of the means of salvation. The “calling” goes before the “election;” the publication of the doctrine of
“the Spirit,” and the atonement, called by Peter “the sprinkling of the blood of Christ,” before that “sanctification” through which they become “the elect” of God. The doctrine of eternal election is thus brought down to its true meaning. Actual election cannot be eternal; for, from eternity, the elect were not actually chosen out of the world, and from eternity, they could not be “sanctified unto obedience.” The phrases, “eternal election,” and “eternal decree of election,” so often in the lips of Calvinists, can, in common sense, therefore, mean only an eternal purpose to elect; or a purpose formed in eternity, to elect, or choose out of the world, and sanctify in time, by “the Spirit and the blood of Jesus.” This is a doctrine which no one will contend with them; but when they graft upon it another, that God hath, from eternity, “chosen in Christ unto salvation,” a set number of men, “certam quorundam hominum multitudinem;” not upon foresight of faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or of any other good quality, or disposition, (as a cause or condition before required in man to be chosen;) but unto faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, &c, “non ex prævisa fide, fideique obedientia, sanctitate, aut alia aliqua bona qua litate et dispositione,” &c, (Judgment of the Synod of Dort,) it presents itself under a different aspect, and requires an appeal to the word of God.

This view of election has two parts: it is the choosing of a set or determinate number of men, who cannot be increased or diminished; and it is unconditional. Let us consider each.

With respect to the first, there is no text of Scripture which teaches that a fixed and determinate number of men are elected to eternal life; and the passages which the synod of Dort, adduce in proof, being such as they only infer the doctrine from, the synod themselves allow that they have no express Scriptural evidence for this tenet. But if there is no explicit scripture in favour of the opinion, there is much against it; and to this test it must, therefore, be brought.

The election here spoken of must either be election in eternity, or election in time. If the former, it can only mean a purpose of electing in time: if the latter, it is actual election, or choosing out of the world.

Now as to God’s eternal purpose to elect, it is clear, that is a subject on which we can know nothing but from his own revelation. We take, then, the matter on this ground. A purpose to elect, is a purpose to save; and when it is explicitly declared in this revelation that God “willeth all men to be saved,” and that “he willeth not the death of a sinner,” either we must
say, that his will is contrary to his purpose, which would be to charge God foolishly, and indeed has no meaning at all; or it agrees with his purpose: if then his will agrees with his purpose, that purpose was not confined to a “certain determinate number of men;” but extended to all “whosoever” should believe, that they might be elected and saved.

Again, we have established it as the doctrine of Scripture, that our Lord Jesus Christ died for all men, that all men through him might be saved; but if he died in order to their salvation through faith, he died in order to their election through faith; and God must have purposed this from eternity.

Farther, we have his own message to all to whom his servants preach the Gospel. They are commanded to preach “to every creature,” — “He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This is an unquestionable decree of God in time; and, if God be unchangeable, it was his decree, as touching this matter, from all eternity. But this decree or purpose can in no way be reconciled to the doctrine of an eternal purpose to elect only “a set and determinate number.” For the Gospel could not be 
good news
to “every creature” to whom it should be 
as such proclaimed, which is the first contradiction to the text. Nor would those who believe it not, but who are nevertheless commanded to believe it, have any power to believe it, which is the second contradiction: for since they are to be “damned” for not believing, they must have had the power to believe, or they could not have come into condemnation for an act impossible to them to perform, or else we must admit it as a principle of the Divine government that God commands his creatures to do, what under no circumstances they can do; and then punishes them for not doing what he thus commands. Finally, he commands those that believe not, and who are alleged not to be included in this “fixed number” of elected persons, to believe the good tidings, as a matter in which they are interested: they are commanded to believe the Gospel as a truth; but if they are not interested in it, they are commanded to believe a falsehood, which is the third contradiction; and thus the text and the doctrine cannot consist together.

As the whole argument on this point is involved in what we have already established concerning the universal extent of the benefit of Christ’s death, we may leave it to be determined by what has been advanced on that topic; observing only, that two of the points there confirmed bear directly upon the doctrine, that election is confined to a “fixed number of men.” If we have proved from Scripture, that the reason of the condemnation of men
lies in themselves, and not in the want of a sufficient and effectual provision having been made in Christ for their salvation, then the number of the actually elect might be increased; and if it has been established that those for whom Christ died might “perish;” and that true believers may “turn back unto perdition,” and be “cast away,” and fall into a state in which it were better for them “never to have known the way of righteousness,” then the number of the elect may be diminished. To what has already been said on these subjects the reader is referred; and we shall now only mention a few of the difficulties with which the doctrine of an election from eternity of a determinate number of men to be made heirs of eternal life is attended.

Whether men will look to the dark and repugnant side of this doctrine of the eternal election of a certain number of men unto salvation or not, it unavoidably follows from it, that all but the persons so chosen in Christ, are placed utterly and absolutely, from their very birth, out of the reach of salvation; and have no share at all in the saving mercies of God, who from eternity purposed to reject them, and that not for their fault as sinners. For all, except Adam and Eve, have come into the world with a nature which, left to itself, could not but sin; and as the determination of God, never to give the reprobate the means of avoiding sin, could not rest upon their fault, for what is absolutely inevitable cannot be charged on man as his fault, so it must rest where all the high Calvinistic divines place it, — upon the mere will and sovereign pleasure of God.

The difficulties of reconciling such a scheme as this to the nature of God, not as it is fancied by man, but as it is revealed in his own word; and to many other declarations of Scripture as to the principles of the administration both of his law and of his grace; one would suppose insuperable by any mind, and indeed, are so revolting, that few of those who cling to the doctrine of election will be found bold enough to keep them steadily in sight. They even think it uncandid for us who oppose these views to pursue them to their legitimate logical consequences. But in discussion this is inevitable; and if it be done in fairness, and in the spirit of candour, without pushing hard arguments into hard words, the cause of truth, and a right understanding of the word of God, will thereby be promoted.

The doctrine of the election to eternal life only of a certain determinate number of men to salvation, involving, as it necessarily does, the doctrine
of the absolute and unconditional reprobation of all the rest of mankind, cannot, we may confidently affirm, be reconciled,

1. To the LOVE of God. “God is love.” “He is loving to every man; and his tender mercies are over all his works.”

2. Nor to the WISDOM of God; for the bringing into being a vast number of intelligent creatures under a necessity of sinning, and of being eternally lost, teaches no moral lesson to the world; and contradicts all those notions of wisdom in the ends and processes of government which we are taught to look for, not only from natural reason, but from the Scriptures.

3. Nor to the GRACE of God, which is so often magnified in the Scriptures: “for doth it argue any sovereign or high strain; any superabounding richness of grace or mercy in any man, when ten thousand have equally offended him, only to pardon one or two of them?” (Goodwin’s Agreement and Difference.) And on such a scheme can there be any interpretation given of the passage “that where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound?” or in what sense has “the grace of God appeared unto all men;” or even to one millionth part of them?

4. Nor can this merciless reprobation be reconciled to any of those numerous passages in which almighty God is represented as tenderly compassionate, and pitiful to the worst and most unworthy of his creatures, even them who finally perish. “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth:” “Being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.” “How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” “The Lord is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.” “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance”

5. It is as manifestly contrary to his JUSTICE. Here, indeed, we would not assume to measure this attribute of God by unauthorized human conceptions; but when God himself has appealed to those established notions of justice and equity which have been received among all enlightened persons, in all ages, as the measure and rule of his own, we cannot be charged with this presumption. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord.” We may then be bold to affirm, that justice and equity in God are what they are taken to be among reasonable men; and if all men every where would condemn it, as
most contrary to justice and right, that a sovereign should condemn to death one or more of his subjects, for not obeying laws which it is absolutely impossible for them, under any circumstances which they can possibly avail themselves of, to obey, and much more the greater part of his subjects; and to require them, on pain of aggravated punishment, to do something in order to the pardon and remission of their offences, which he knows they cannot do, say to stop the tide or to remove a mountain; it implies a charge as awfully and obviously unjust against God, who is so “holy and just in all his doings,” so exactly “just in the judgments which he executeth,” as in silence all his creatures, to suppose him to act precisely in the same manner as to those whom he has passed by and rejected, without any avoidable fault of their own; to destroy them by the simple rule of his own sovereignty, or, in other words, to show that he has power to do it. In whatever light the subject be viewed, no fault, in any right construction, can be chargeable upon the persons so punished, or, as we may rather say, destroyed, since punishment supposes a judicial proceeding, which this act shuts out. For either the reprobates are destroyed for a pure reason of sovereignty, without any reference to their sinfulness, and thus all criminality is left out of the consideration; or they are destroyed for the sin of Adam, to which they were not consenting; or for personal faults resulting from a corruption of nature which they brought into the world with them, and which God wills not to correct, and they have no power to correct themselves. Every received notion of justice is thus violated. We grant, indeed, that some proceedings of the Almighty may appear at first irreconcilable with justice, which are not so; as that we should suffer pain and death, and be infected with a morally corrupt nature in consequence of the transgression of our first progenitors; that children should suffer for their parents’ faults in the ordinary course of providence; and that, in general calamities, the comparatively innocent should suffer the same evils as the guilty. But none of these are parallel cases. For the “free gift” has come upon all men, “in order to justification of life,” through “the righteousness” of the second Adam, so that the terms of our probation are but changed. None are doomed to inevitable ruin, or the above words of the apostle would have no meaning; and pain and death, as to all who avail themselves of the remedy, are made the instruments of a higher life, and of a superabounding of grace through Christ. The same observation may be made as to children who suffer evils for their parents’ faults. This circumstance alters the terms of their probation; but if every condition of probation leaves to men the possibility and the hope of eternal life, and the
circumstances of all are balanced and weighed by him who administers the affairs of individuals on principles, the end of which is to turn all the evils of life into spiritual and higher blessings, there is, obviously, no impeachment of justice in the circumstances of the probation assigned to any person whatever. As to the innocent suffering equally with the guilty in general calamities, the persons so suffering are but COMPARATIVELY innocent, and their personal transgressions against God deserve a higher punishment than any which this life witnesses; this may also as to them be overruled for merciful purposes, and a future life presents its manifold compensations. But as to the non-elect, the whole case, in this scheme of sovereign reprobation, or sovereign preterition, is supposed to be before us. Their state is fixed, their afflictions in this life will not in any instance be overruled for ends of edification and salvation; they are left under a necessity of sinning in every condition; and a future life presents no compensation, but a fearful looking for of fiery and quenchless indignation. It is surely not possible for the ingenuity of man to reconcile this to any notion of just government which has ever obtained; and by the established notions of justice and equity in human affairs, we are taught by the Scriptures themselves to judge of the Divine proceedings in all completely stated and comprehensible cases.

6. Equally impossible is it to reconcile this notion to the SINCERITY of God in offering salvation by Christ to all who hear the Gospel, of whom this scheme supposes the majority, or at least great numbers, to be among the reprobate. The Gospel, as we have seen, is commanded to be preached to “every creature;” which publication of “good news to every creature,” is an offer of salvation “to every creature,” accompanied with earnest invitations to embrace it, and admonitory comminations lest any should neglect and despise it. But does it not involve a serious reflection upon the truth and sincerity of God which men ought to shudder at, to assume, at the very time the Gospel is thus preached, that no part of this good news was ever designed to benefit the majority, or any great part of those to whom it is addressed? that they to whom this love of God in Christ is proclaimed were never loved by God? that he has decreed that many to whom he offers salvation, and whom he invites to receive it, shall never be saved? and that he will consider their sins aggravated by rejecting that which they never could receive, and which he never designed them to receive? It is no answer to this to say, that we also admit that the offers of mercy are made by God to many whom he, by virtue of his prescience, knows will never
receive them. We grant this; but, not now to enter upon the question of foreknowledge, it is enough to reply, that here there is no insincerity. On the Calvini\n\n\nOn the former, the offer is made to those whom GOD never designed to embrace it; on ours, to none but those whom God seriously and in truth wills that they should avail themselves of it; on their theory, the bar to the salvation of the non-elect lies in the want of a provided sacrifice for sin; on ours, it rests solely in men themselves: one consists, therefore, with a perfect sincerity of offer, the other cannot be maintained without bringing the sincerity of God into question, and fixing a stigma upon his moral truth.

7. Unconditional reprobation cannot be reconciled with that frequent declaration of Scripture, that GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS. This phrase, we grant, is not to be interpreted as though the bounties of the Almighty were dispensed in equal measures to his creatures. In the administration of favour, there is place for the exercise of that prerogative which, in a just sense, is called the sovereignty of GOD; but justice knows but of one rule; it is, in its nature, settled and fixed, and respects not the PERSON, but the CASE. “To have respect of persons” is a phrase, therefore, in Scripture, which sometimes refers to judicial proceedings, and signifies to judge from partiality and affection, and not upon the merits of the question. It is also used by St. Peter with reference to the acceptance of Cornelius: — “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” Here it is clear, that to respect persons, would be to reject or accept them without regard to their moral qualities, and on some national or other prejudice or partiality which forms no moral rule of any kind. But if the doctrine of absolute election and reprobation be true; if we are to understand that men like Jacob and Esau, in the Calvinistic construction of the passage, while in the womb of their mother, nay, from eternity, are loved and hated, elected or reprobated, before they have done “good or evil,” then it necessarily follows, that there is precisely this kind of respect of persons with God; for his acceptance or rejection of men stands on some ground of aversion or dislike, which cannot be resolved into any moral rule, and has no respect to the merits of the case itself; and if the Scripture affirms that there is no such respect of persons with God, then the doctrine which implies it is contradicted by inspired authority.
8. The doctrine of which we are showing the difficulties, brings with it the repulsive and shocking opinion of the ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OF INFANTS. Some Calvinists have, indeed, to get rid of the difficulty, or rather to put it out of sight, consigned them to annihilation; but of the annihilation of any human being there is no intimation in the word of God. In order, therefore, to avoid the fearful consequence of admitting the punishment of beings innocent as to all actual sin, there is no other way than to suppose all children dying in infancy to be an elected portion of mankind, which, however, would be a mere hypothesis brought in to serve a theory without any evidence. That some of those who, as they suppose, are under this sentence of reprobation, die in their infancy, is, probably, what most Calvinists allow; and if their doctrine be received cannot be denied; and it follows, therefore, that all such infants are eternally lost. Now we know that infants are not lost, because our Lord gave it as a reason why little children ought not to be hindered from coming unto him, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” On which Calvin himself remarks. (Harm. in Matthew 19:13,) “in this word, ‘for of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ Christ comprehends as well little children themselves, as those who in disposition resemble them. Hac voce, tam parvulos, quam eorum similes, comprehendit.” We are assured of the salvation of infants, also, because “the free gift has come upon all men to [in order to] justification of life,” and because children are not capable of rejecting that blessing, and must, therefore, derive benefit from it. The point, also, on which we have just now touched, that “there is no respect of persons with God,” demonstrates it. For, as it will be acknowledged that some children, dying in infancy, are saved, it must follow, from this principle and axiom in the Divine government, that all infants are saved: for the case of all infants, as to innocence or guilt, sin or righteousness, being the same, and God, as a judge, being “no respecter of persons,” but regarding only the merits of the case; he cannot make this awful distinction as to them, that one part shall be eternally saved and the other eternally lost. That doctrine, therefore, which implies the perdition of infants cannot be congruous to the Scriptures of truth; but is utterly abhorrent to them. (On the case of infants, see part ii, p. 57.)

9. Finally, not to multiply these instances of the difficulties which accompany the doctrine of absolute reprobation, or of preterition, (to use the milder term, though the argument is not in the least changed by it,) it destroys the end of PUNITIVE JUSTICE. That end can only be to deter men
from offence, and to add strength to the law of God. But if the whole body of the reprobate are left to the influence of their fallen nature without remedy, they cannot be deterred from sin by threats of inevitable punishment; nor can they ever submit to the dominion of the law of God: their doom is fixed, and threats and examples can avail nothing.

We may leave every candid mind to the discussion of these and many other difficulties, suggested by the doctrine of the synod of Dort, as to the election of “a set and determinate number of men” to eternal life; and proceed to consider the second branch of this opinion — that election is unconditional. “It was made,” says the synod, “not upon foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition, (as a cause or condition before required in men to be chosen,) but unto faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, &c.”

Election, we have already said, must be either God’s purpose in eternity to elect actually, or it must be actual election itself in time; for as election is choosing men “out of the world,” into the true Church of Christ, actual election from eternity is not possible, because the subjects of election had no existence; there was no world to choose them “out of,” and no Church into which to bring them. To affirm that any part of mankind were chosen from eternity, in purpose, (for in no other way could they be chosen,) to become members of the Church without “foresight of faith, and the obedience of faith,” is therefore to say, that God purposed from all eternity to establish a distinction between the world, “out” of which the elect are actually chosen, and the Church, which has no foundation in, or respect to, faith and obedience; in other words, to constitute his Church of persons to whose faith and obedience he had no respect. For how is this conclusion to be avoided? The subjects of this election, it seems, are chosen as men, as Peter, James, and John, not as believers. God eternally purposed to make Peter, James, and John, members of his Church, without respect to their faith or obedience; his Church is therefore constituted on the sole principle of this purpose, not upon the basis of faith and obedience; and the persons chosen into it in time are chosen because they are of the number included in this eternal purpose, and with no regard to their being believers and obedient, or the contrary. How manifestly this opposes the word of God, we need scarcely stay to point out. It contradicts that specific distinction constantly made in Scripture between the true Church and the world, the only marks of distinction being, as to the former, faith and obedience; and as to the latter, unbelief and disobedience — in other
words, the Church is composed not merely of men, as Peter, James, and John; but of Peter, James, and John believing and obeying: while all who believe not, and obey not, are “the world.” The Scriptures make the essential elements of the Church to be believing and obeying men; the synod of Dort makes them to be men in the simple condition of being included in a set and determinate number, chosen with no respect to faith and obedience. Thus we have laid two very different foundations upon which to place the superstructure of the Church of Christ; one of them indeed is to be found in the Scriptures, but the other only in the theories of men; and as they agree not together, one of them must be renounced.

But election, without respect to faith, is contrary also to the history of the commencement and first constitution of the Church of Christ. Peter, James, and John did not become disciples of Christ in unbelief and disobedience. The very act of their becoming disciples of Christ, unequivocally implied some degree both of faith and obedience. They were chosen, not as men, but as believing men. This is indicated also by the grand rite of baptism, instituted by Christ when he commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel, and call men into his Church. That baptism was the gate into this Church cannot be denied; but faith was required in order to baptism; and, where true faith existed, this open confession of Christ would necessarily follow, without delay. Here then, we see on what grounds men were actually elected into the Church of Christ; it was with respect to their faith that they were thus chosen out of the world, and thus chosen into the Church. The rule, too, is universal; and if so, if it universally holds good that actual election has respect to faith, then, unless God’s eternal purpose to elect be at variance with his electing, that is, unless he purposes one thing and does another differing from his purpose; purposes to elect without respect to faith; and only actually elects with respect to faith; his eternal purpose to elect had respect both to faith and obedience.

It is true, that the synod of Dort says, that election is “unto faith and the obedience of faith.” &c, thereby making the end of election to be faith: in other words their doctrine is, that some men were personally chosen to believe and obey, even before they existed. But we have no such doctrine in Scripture as the election of individuals unto faith; and it is inconsistent with several passages which expressly speak of personal election.

“Many are called but few chosen.” In this passage we must understand, that the many who are called, are called to believe and obey the Gospel, or
the calling means nothing; in other words they are not called. But if the end of this calling be faith and obedience, and the end of election also be faith and obedience, then have we in the text a senseless tautology; for if the many are called to believe and obey, then, of course, we need not have been told that the few are chosen to believe and obey, since the few are included in the many. But if the "choosing" of the "few" means, as it must, something different to the "calling" of the "many," then is the end of election different to the end of calling; and if the election be, as is plain from the passage, consequent upon the calling, then it can mean nothing else than the choosing of those "few," of the "many," who being obedient to the "calling," had previously believed and obeyed, into the true Church and family of God, which is the proper and direct object of personal election. This passage, therefore, which unquestionably speaks of personal election, contradicts the notion of an election unto faith and obedience, and makes our election consequent upon our obedience to the calling, or evangelical invitation.

Let this notion of personal election unto faith be tested also by another passage, in which, like the former, personal election is spoken of. "I have chosen you out of the world," John 15:19. According to the notion of the synod of Dort, the act of election consists in appointing or ordaining a certain number of the human race to believe and obey: here the personal electing act is a choosing out of the world, a choosing, manifestly, into the number of Christ's disciples, which no man is capable of without a previous faith; for the very act of becoming Christ's disciple was a confession of faith in him.

A third passage, in which election is spoken of as personal, or at least with more direct reference to individual experience, than to Christians in their collective capacity as the Church of Christ, is 1 Peter 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus!" Here obedience is not the end of election, but of the sanctification of the Spirit; and both are joined "with the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," (which, in all cases, is apprehended by faith,) as the media through which our election is effected — "elect through sanctification of the Spirit," &c. These cannot, therefore, be the ends of our personal election; for if we are elected "through" that sanctification of the Spirit which produces obedience, we are not elected, being unsanctified and disobedient, in order to be sanctified
by the Spirit that we may obey: it is the work of the Spirit which produces obedient faith, and through both we are “elected” into the Church of God.

Very similar to the passage just explained is 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As the apostle had been predicting the future apostasy of persons professing Christianity, he recollects, with gratitude, that from “the beginning,” from the very first reception of the Gospel in Thessalonica, which was preached there by St. Paul himself with great success, the Thessalonians had manifested no symptoms of this apostasy, but had been honourably steadfast in the faith. For this he gives thanks to God in the verses above quoted, and in the 15th exhorts them still “to stand fast.” When, therefore, Calvinistic commentators interpret the clause “hath chosen you from the beginning,” to mean election from eternity, they make a gratuitous assumption which has nothing in the scope of the passage to warrant it. Mr. Scott, indeed, (Notes in loc.) rather depends upon the “calling” of the Thessalonians being, as he states, subsequent to their election, than upon an arbitrary interpretation of the clause “from the beginning,” and says, “if the calling of the Thessalonians was the effect of any preceding choice of them, it comes to the same thing whether the choice was made the preceding day, or from the foundation of the world.” But the calling of the members of this Church is not represented by the apostle as the effect of their having been chosen, but on the contrary, their election is spoken of as the effect of “the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;” and these, as the effects of the calling of the Thessalonians by the Gospel, — “whereunto,” to which sanctification and faith,” he called you by our Gospel.” Or the whole may be considered as the antecedent to the next clause “to which” election from the beginning, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, “he called you by our Gospel.” Certain it is, that sanctification and belief of the truth cannot be the ends of election if they are the means of it, as they are here said to be; and we may therefore conclude from this, as well as from the other passages we have quoted as speaking of the personal election of believers, that this kind of election is not “unto faith and obedience,” as stated in “The Judgment of the Synod of Dort,” that is, a choice of individuals to be made believers and obedient persons; but an election, as it is expressed both by St. Peter and St. Paul,
through faith and obedience; or, in other words, a choice of persons already believing and obedient into the family of God.

There are scarcely any other passages in the New Testament, which speak expressly of personal election; but there is another class of texts in which the term election occurs, which refer to believers, not distributively, but collectively; not personally, but as a body, either existing as particular Churches, or as the universal Church; and, by entirely overlooking, or ingeniously confounding this obvious distinction, the advocates of unconditional personal election bring forward such passages with confidence, as proofs of the doctrine of election unto faith furnished by the word of God. Thus the synod of Dort quotes, as the leading proof of its doctrine of personal election, Ephesians 1:4, 5, 6, “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 Jesus Christ, to 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.” This, indeed, is the only passage quoted by the synod of Dort, in which the terms chosen and election occur; and, we may ask, why none of those on which we have above offered some remarks, were quoted also, since the subject of personal election is much more obviously contained in them than in that which they have adduced? The only answer is, that the others were perceived not to accord with the doctrine of “election unto faith and obedience;” while this, in which the personal election of individual believers is not referred to, but the collective election of the whole body of Christians, was better suited to give a colour to their doctrine; because it speaks, of course, and as the subject required, of election as the means of faith, and of faith as the end of election, an order which is reversed when the election of individuals, or the election of any body of believers, considered distributively and personally, is the subject of the apostle’s discourse. If, indeed, the election spoken of in this passage were personal election, the Calvinistic doctrine would not follow from it; because it would admit of being questioned, whether the choosing in Christ before the foundation of the world, here mentioned, was a choice of certain persons, as men merely, or as believing men, which is surely the most rational. For all choice necessarily supposes some reason; but, as men, all things were equal between those who, according to this scheme, were chosen, and those who were passed by. But, according to the Calvinists, this election was made arbitrarily, that is without any reason,
but that God would have it so; and to this sense they bend the clause in the passage under consideration, “according to the good pleasure of his will.” This phrase has, however, no such arbitrary sense. “The good pleasure of his will” means the benevolent and full acquiescence of the will of God with a wise and gracious act; and, accordingly, in verse 11, the phrase is varied “according to the counsel of his own will,” an expression which is at utter variance with the repulsive notion that mere will is in any case the rule of the Divine conduct, or, in other words, that he does any thing merely because he will do it, which excludes all “counsel.” To choose men to salvation considered as believers, gives a reason for election which not only manifests the wisdom and goodness of God, but has the advantage of being entirely consistent with his own published and express decree: “he that believeth shall be saved: and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This revealed and promulgated decree, we must believe, was according to his eternal purpose; and if from eternity he determined that believers, and only believers in Christ, among the fallen race, should be saved, the conclusion is inevitable that those whom he chose in Christ “before the foundation of the world,” were considered, not as men merely, which gives no reason of choice worthy of any rational being, much less of the ever blessed God: but as believing men, which harmonizes the doctrine of election with the other doctrines of Scripture, instead of placing it, as in the Calvinistic scheme, in opposition to them. For the choice not being of certain men, as such; but of all persons believing; and all men to whom the Gospel is preached, being called to believe, every one may place himself in the number of the persons so elected. Thus we get rid of the doctrine of the election of a set and determinate number of men: and with that, of the fearful consequence, the absolute reprobation of all the rest, which so few Calvinists themselves have the courage to avow and maintain.

But though this argument might be very successfully urged against those who interpret the passage above quoted of personal election, the context bears unequivocal proofs that it is not of an election or predestination of this kind of which the apostle speaks; but of the election of believing Jews and Gentiles into the Church of God; in other words, of the eternal purpose of God, upon the publication of the Gospel, to constitute his visible Church no longer upon the ground of natural descent from Abraham, but upon the foundation of faith in Christ. For upon no other hypothesis can that distinction which the apostle makes between the Jews who first believed, and the Gentile Ephesians, who afterward believed, be at all explained. He
speaks first of the election of Christians in general, whether Jews or Gentiles; using the pronouns “us” and “we” as comprehending himself and all others. He then proceeds to the “predestination” of those “who first trusted in Christ;” plainly meaning himself and other believing Jews. He goes on to say, that the Ephesians were made partakers of the same faith, and therefore were the subjects of the same election and predestination: “in whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth;” the preaching of which truth to them as Gentiles, by the apostle and his coadjutors, was, in consequence of God “having made known unto them the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ;” which, in the next chapter, a manifest continuance of the same head of discourse, is explained to mean the calling in of the Gentiles with the believing Jews, reconciling “both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” The same subject he pursues in the third chapter, representing this union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one Church as the revelation of the mystery which had been hid “from the beginning of the world;” but was now manifested “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” verses 8-11. Here then we have the true meaning of the election and predestination of the Ephesians spoken of in the opening of the epistle: it was their election, as Gentiles, to be, along with the believing Jews, the Church of God, his acknowledged people on earth; which election was, according to God’s “eternal purpose,” to change the constitution of his Church; to establish it on the ground of faith in Christ; and thus to extend it into all nations. So far as this respected the Ephesians in general, their election to hear the Gospel sooner than many other Gentiles was unconditional and sovereign, and was an election “unto faith and obedience of faith;” that is to say, these were the ends of that election; but so far as the Ephesians were concerned, as individuals, they were actually chosen into the Church of Christ as its vital members, on their believing; and so the election to the saving benefits of the Gospel was a consequence of their faith, and not the end of it, and was therefore conditional — “in whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

The Calvinistic doctrine of election unto faith has no stronger passage than this to lean upon for support; and this manifestly fails them: while other passages in which the terms election, or chosen occur, all favour a very
different view of the Scripture doctrine. When we are commanded to be
diligent “to make our calling and election sure,” or firm, this supposes that
it may be rendered nugatory by want of diligence; a doctrine which cannot
comport with the absolute certainty of our salvation as founded upon a
decree determining, infallibly, our personal election to eternal life, and our
faith and obedience in order to it. When believers are called a “chosen
generation,” they are also called “a royal priesthood, a holy people;” and if
the latter characteristics depend upon, and are consequences of faith, so
the former depends upon a previous faith, and is the consequence of it.
Finally, although these terms themselves occur in but few passages, and in
all of them which respect the personal experience of individuals express, or
necessarily imply, the previous condition of faith, there are many others,
which, in different terms, embody the same doctrine. The phrases to be “IN
Christ,” and to be “CHRIST’S,” are, doubtless, equivalent to the personal
election of believers: and these, and similar modes of expression, are
constantly occurring in the New Testament; but no man is ever represented
as “Christ’s,” or as “in Christ,” by an eternal election unto faith; but, on the
contrary, as entering into that relation which is termed being “IN Christ;” or
being “Christ’s,” through personal faith alone. The Scripture knows no
such distinctions as elect unbelievers, and elect believers; but all
unbelievers are represented as “of the world;” under “condemnation,” so
that “the wrath of God abideth upon them;” and as liable to eternal ruin.
But if Calvinistic election be true, then there are elect unbelievers; and with
respect to these, the doctrine of Scripture is contradicted: for they are not
“of the world,” though in a state of unbelief, since God from eternity
“chose them out of the world;” they are not under condemnation, “but
were justified from eternity;” “the wrath of God does not abide upon
them,” for they are objects of an unchangeable love which has decreed
their salvation: subject to no conditions whatever; and therefore no state of
unbelief can make them objects of wrath, as no condition of faith can make
them objects of a love which was moved by no such consideration. Nor are
they liable to ruin. They never were, nor can be liable to it: the very threats
of God are without meaning as to them, and their consciousness of guilt
and danger under the awakenings of the Spirit are deceptious, and unreal;
contradicting the work of the Spirit in the heart of man, as THE SPIRIT OF
TRUTH. For if he “convinces them of sin,” he convinces them of danger; but
they are, in fact, in no danger; and the monstrous conclusion follows
inevitably, that the Spirit is employed in exciting fears which have no
foundation.
We have thus considered the Scriptural doctrine of election; and as we find nothing in it which can warrant any one to limit the meaning of the texts we have adduced to prove that Christ made an actual atonement for the sins of all mankind, we may proceed to examine another class of Scripture proofs quoted by Calvinists to strengthen their argument: — those which speak of the “calling,” and “predestination” of believers.

The terms “to call,” “called,” and “calling,” very frequently occur in the New Testament, and especially in the epistles. Sometimes “to call” signifies to invite to the blessings of the Gospel, to offer salvation through Christ, either by God himself, or under his appointment, by his servants; and in the parable of the marriage of the king’s son, Matthew 22:1-14, which appears to have given rise to many instances of the use of this term in the epistles, we have three descriptions of “called” or invited persons. First, the disobedient who would not come in at the call; but made light of it. Second, the class of persons represented by the man who, when the king came in to see his guests, had not on the wedding garment; and with respect to whom our Lord makes the general remark, “for many are called, but few are chosen.” The persons thus represented by this individual culprit, were not only “called,” but actually came into the company. Third, the approved guests; those who were both called and chosen. As far as the simple calling, or invitation, is concerned, all these three classes stand upon equal ground; all were invited; and it depended upon their choice and conduct whether they embraced the invitation, and were admitted as guests. We have nothing here to countenance the Calvinistic fiction, which is termed “effectual calling.” This implies an irresistible influence exerted upon all the approved guests, but withheld from the disobedient, who could not, therefore, be otherwise than disobedient; or at most could only come in without that wedding garment, which it was never put into their power to take out of the king’s wardrobe; the want of which would necessarily exclude them, if not from the Church on earth, yet from the Church in heaven. The doctrine of the parable is in entire contradiction to this; for they who refused, and they who complied but partially with the calling, are represented, not merely as being left without the benefit of the feast; but as incurring additional guilt and condemnation for refusing the invitation. It is to this offer of salvation by the Gospel, this invitation to spiritual and eternal benefits, that St. Peter appears to refer, when he says, Acts 2:39, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall CALL.”
passage which, we may observe, in passing, declares "the promise" to be as extensive as the "calling;" in other words, as the offer or invitation. To this also St. Paul refers, Romans 1:5, 6, "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name;" that is to publish his Gospel, in order to bring all nations to the obedience of faith; "among whom are ye also the CALLED of Jesus Christ;" you at Rome have heard the Gospel, and have been invited to salvation in consequence of this design. This promulgation of the Gospel, by the ministry of the apostle, personally, under the name of calling, is also referred to in Galatians, 1:6, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ," (obviously meaning that it was the apostle himself who had called them by his preaching to the grace of Christ,) "unto another Gospel." So also in chapter 5:13, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." Again, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath CALLED you to his kingdom and glory.

In our Lord’s parable it will also be observed, that the persons called are not invited as separate individuals to partake of solitary blessings, but they are called to "a feast," into a company, or society, before whom the banquet is spread. The full revelation of the transfer of the visible Church of Christ from Jews by birth, to believers of all nations, was not, however, then made. When this branch of the evangelic system was fully revealed to the apostles, and taught by them to others, that part of our Lord’s parable which was not at first developed, was more particularly inculcated by his inspired followers. The calling of guests to the evangelical feast, we now more fully learn, was not the mere calling of men to partake of spiritual benefits; but calling them also to form a spiritual society composed of Jews and Gentiles, the believing men of all nations; to have a common fellowship in these blessings, and to be formed into this fellowship for the purpose of increasing their number, and diffusing the benefits of salvation among the people or nation to which they respectively belonged. The invitation, "the calling" of the first preachers, was to all who heard them in Rome, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in all other places; and those who embraced it, and joined themselves to the Church by faith, baptism, and continued public profession, were named especially and eminently "THE CALLED;" because of their obedience to the invitation. They not only put in their claim to the blessings of Christianity individually; but became members of the new Church, that spiritual society of believers which God now visibly owned as
his people. As they were thus called into a common fellowship by the Gospel, this is sometimes termed their “vocation:” as the object of this Church state was to promote “holiness,” it is termed a “holy vocation:” as sanctity was required of the members, they are said to have been “called to be saints:” as the final result was, through the mercy of God, to be eternal life, we hear of “the hope of their calling:” and of their being “called to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus:”

These views will abundantly explain the various passages in which the term “calling” occurs in the epistles, Romans 9:24, “Even us whom he hath CALLED, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles;” that is whom he hath made members of his Church through faith. 1 Corinthians 1:24, “But unto them which are CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God;” the wisdom and efficacy of the Gospel being, of course, acknowledged in their very profession of Christ, in opposition to those to whom the preaching of “Christ crucified,” was a stumbling block,” and “foolishness.” 1 Corinthians 7:18, “Is any man CALLED;” (brought to acknowledge Christ, and to become a member of his Church;) “being circumcised, let him not become uncircumcised: is any CALLED in uncircumcision, let him not be circumcised.” Ephesians 4:1-4, “That ye walk worthy of the VOCATION wherewith ye are called. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are CALLED in one hope of your calling.” 1 Thessalonians 2:12, “That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath CALLED you to his kingdom and glory.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14, “Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he CALLED you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Timothy 1:9, 10, “Who hath saved us and CALLED US with a 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; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ:” on which passage we may remark, that the object of the “calling,” and the “purpose,” mentioned in it, must of necessity be interpreted to mean the establishment of the Church on the principle of faith; and not, as formerly, on natural descent. For personal election, and a purpose of effectual personal calling, could not have been hidden till manifested by the appearing of Christ; since every instance of true conversion to God in any age prior to the appearing of Christ, would be as much a manifestation of eternal election, and an instance of personal effectual calling, according to the Calvinistic scheme, as it was after the
appearance of Christ. The apostle is speaking of a purpose of God, which was kept secret till revealed by the Christian system; and, from various other parallel passages we learn that this secret, this “mystery,” as he often calls it, was the union of the Jews and Gentiles in “one body,” or Church, by faith.

In none of these passages is the doctrine of the exclusive calling of any set number of men contained; and the synod of Dort, as though they felt this, only attempt to reason the doctrine from a text not yet quoted; but which we will now examine. It is Romans 8:30: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” This is the text on which Calvinists chiefly rest their doctrine of effectual calling; and tracing it as they say, through its steps and links, they include, that a set and determinate number of persons having been predestinated unto salvation, this set number only are called effectually, then justified, and finally glorified. The words of the synod of Dort are, “He hath chosen a set number of certain men, neither better, nor more worthy than others; but lying in the common misery with others, to salvation in Christ, whom he had also appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect; and the foundation of salvation from all eternity; and so he decreed to give them to him to be saved; and effectually to call, and draw them to a communion with him, by his word and Spirit; or to give them a true faith in him: to justify, sanctify, and finally glorify them; having been kept in the communion of his Son, to the demonstration of his mercy, and the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.”

The text under consideration is added by the synod, in proof of the doctrine of this article; but it was evidently nothing to the purpose unless it had spoken of a set and determinate number of men as predestinated and called, independent of any consideration of their faith and obedience; which number, as being determinate, would, by consequence, exclude the rest. As these are points on which the text is at least silent, there is nothing in it unfriendly to those arguments founded on explicit texts of holy writ, which have been already urged against this view of election; and with this notion of election is refuted, also, the cognate doctrine of effectual calling, considered as a work of God in the heart, of which the elect only can be the subjects. But the passage, having been pressed into so alien a service, deserves consideration; and it will be found that it indeed speaks of the privileges and hopes of true believers; but not of those privileges and hopes
as secured to them by any such decree of election as the synod has advocated. To prove this, we remark,

1. That the chapter in which the text is found, is the lofty and animating conclusion of St. Paul’s argument on justification by faith: it is a discourse of that present state of pardon and sanctity, and of that future hope of felicity, into which justification introduces believers, notwithstanding those sufferings and persecutions of the present life to which those to whom he wrote were exposed, and under which they had need of encouragement. It was, obviously, not in his design here to speak of the doctrines of election and non-election, however these doctrines may be understood. There is nothing in the course of his argument which leads to them; and those who make use of the text in question for this purpose are obliged, therefore, to press it, by circuitous inference, into their service.

2. As the passage stands in intimate connection with an important and elucidatory context, it ought not to be considered as insulated and complete in itself; which has been the great source of erroneous interpretations. Under the sufferings of the present time, the apostle encourages those who had believed with the hope of a glorious resurrection: this forms the subject of his consolatory remarks from verse 17 to 25. The assistance and “intercession” of the Spirit; and the working of “all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;” clearly meaning those who, according to the Divine design, had received and embraced the Gospel in truth, form two additional topics of consolatory suggestion. — The passage under consideration immediately follows, and is in full, for the synod has quoted it short: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” The connection is here manifest. “The sufferings of the present time could only work together for the good” of them that “love God,” by being connected with, and compensated in a future state by a glorious resurrection from the dead; and therefore the apostle shows that this was the design of God, the ultimate and triumphant result of the administration of his grace, that they who love God here, should be conformed to the image of his Son, in his glorified state, that he might be
“the first born among brethren:” the head and chief of the redeemed, who shall be acknowledged as his “brethren,” and co-heirs of his glory. Thus the whole of the 29th verse is a reason given to show why “all things, however painful in the present life, work together for good to them that love God;” and it is therefore introduced by the connective particle, ὅτι, which has here, obviously, a casual signification, “for (because) whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”

3. The apostle is here speaking, we grant, not of the foreknowledge or predestination of bodies of men to Church privileges; but of the experience of believers, taken distributively and personally. This will, however, be found to strengthen our argument against the use made of the latter part of the passage by the synod of Dort.

It is affirmed of believers, that they were “foreknown.” This term may be taken in the sense of foreapproved. For not only is it common with the sacred writers to express approval by the phrase “to know,” of which Hebraism the instances are many in the New Testament; but in Romans 11:2, “to foreknow,” is best interpreted into this meaning. — “God hath not cast away his people which he FOREKNEW.” It is not of the whole people of Israel of which the apostle here speaks, as the context shows; but of the believing part of them, called subsequently “the remnant according to the election of grace:” a clause which has been before explained. The question put by the apostle into the mouth of an objecting Jew, is, “Hath God cast away his people?” This is denied; but the illustration taken from the reservation of seven thousand men, in the time of Elijah, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, proves that St. Paul meant to say, that God had cast off from being members of his Church, all but the remnant; all but his people whom he “foreknew;” those who had laid aside the inveterate prejudices of their nation, and had entered into the new Christian Church by faith. These he foreknew, that is approved; and so received them into his Church. In this sense of the term foreknew, the text in question harmonizes well with the context. “All things work together for good to them that love God,” &c. “For, whom he did foreknow,” (approve as lovers of him,) “he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” in mind and temper here, and especially in glory hereafter.

The second sense of foreknowing is that of simple prescience; and if any prefer this we shall not dispute with him, since it will come to the same issue. The foreknowledge of men must have respect either simply to their
existence as persons, or as existing under some particular circumstances and characters. If persons only be the objects of this foreknowledge, then has God’s prescience no more to do with the salvation of the elect than of the non-elect, since all are equally foreknown as persons in a state of existence: and we might as well argue the glorification of the reprobate from God’s foreknowing them, in this sense, as that of the elect. The objects of this foreknowledge, then, must be men under certain circumstances and characters; not in their simple existence as rational beings. If, therefore, the term “foreknow,” in the passage above cited, “God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew,” be taken in the sense of prescience, those of the general mass of Jews, who were not “cast away,” were foreknown under some circumstance and character which distinguished them from the others; and what this was is made sufficiently plain from the context, — the persons foreknown were the then believing part of the Jews, “even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” Equally clear are the circumstances and character under which, more generally, the apostle represents believers as having been foreknown in the text more immediately under examination. Those “whom he did foreknow,” are manifestly the believers of whom he speaks in the discourse; and who are called in chap. 8:28, “them that love God.” Under some character he must have foreknown them, or his foreknowledge of them would not be special and distinctive; it would afford no ground from which to argue any thing respecting them; it could make no difference between them and others. This specific character is given by the apostle; but it is not that which is gratuitously assumed by the synod of Dort, a selection of them from the mass, without respect to their faith. It is their faith itself: for of believers only is St. Paul speaking as the subjects of this foreknowledge; and such believers too as “love God,” and who, having actually embraced the heavenly invitation, are emphatically said to be, as before explained, “called according to his purpose.”

To predestinate, or to determine beforehand, is the next term in the text; but here it is also to be remarked, that the persons predestinated, or before determined to be glorified with Christ, are the same persons, under the same circumstances and character, as those who are said to have been foreknown of God; and what has been said under the former term, applies, therefore, in part, to this. The subjects of predestination are the persons foreknown, and the persons foreknown are true believers: foreknown as such, or they could not have been specially or distinctively
foreknown, according to the doctrine of the apostle. This predestination, then, is not of persons “unto faith and obedience,” but of believing and obedient persons unto eternal glory. Nor are faith and obedience mentioned anywhere as the end of predestination, except in Ephesians chap. i, where we have already proved, when treating of election, that the predestination spoken of in that chapter, is the eternal purpose of God to choose the Gentile Ephesians into his Church, along with the believing Jews: and that what is there said is not intended of personal, but of collective election and predestination; and that to the means and ordinances of salvation. For the argument, by which this is established, let the reader to prevent repetition, turn back.

The passage before us, then, declares, that true believers were foreknown and predestinated to eternal glory; and when the apostle adds, “moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified;” he shows in particular how the Divine purpose to glorify believers is carried into effect, through all its stages. The great instrument of bringing men to “love God” is the Gospel; they are therefore called, invited by it, to this state and benefit: the calling being obeyed, they are justified; and being justified, and continuing in that state of grace, they are glorified. This is the plain and obvious course of the amplification pursued by the apostle; but let us remark how many unscriptural notions the synod of Dort engraves upon it. First, a “certain number” of persons, not as believers, but as men, are foreknown; then a decree of predestination to eternal life goes forth in their favour; but still without respect to them as believing men as the subjects of that decree; — then we suppose, by another decree, (for the first cannot look at qualities at all,) and by a second predestination, they are to be made believers; — then they are exclusively “called;” then infallibly justified; and being justified, are infallibly glorified. In opposition to these notions we have already shown, that the persons spoken of are fore-known and predestinated as believers, not as men or persons; and we may also oppose Scriptural objections to every other part of the interpretation.

As to calling, we allow that all of whom the apostle speaks are necessarily called;” for since he is discoursing of the predestination of believers in Christ to eternal glory, and does not touch the question of the salvation, or otherwise, of those who have not the means of becoming such, the calling of the Gospel is necessarily supposed, as it is only upon that Divine system
being proposed to their faith, that they could become believers in Christ. But though all such as the apostle speaks of are “called;” they are not the only persons called: on the contrary, our Lord declares, that “many are called, but few chosen.” To confine the calling here spoken of to those who are actually saved, it was necessary to invent the fiction of “effectual calling,” which is made peculiar to the elect; but calling is the invitation, and offer, and publication of the Gospel: a bringing men into a state of Christian privilege to be improved unto salvation, and not an operation in them. Effectual invitation, effectual offer, and effectual publication, are turns of the phrase which sufficiently expose the delusiveness of their comment. By effectual calling, they mean an inward compelling of the mind to embrace the outward invitation of the Gospel, and to yield to the inward solicitations of the Spirit which accompanies it; but this, whether true or false, is a totally different thing from all that the New Testament terms “calling.” It is true, that some embrace the call, and others reject it, yet is there in the “calling” of the Scripture nothing exclusively appropriate to those who are finally saved; and though the apostle supposes those whom he speaks of in the text as “called,” to have been obedient, he confines not the calling itself to them so as to exclude others, — still “many are called.”

Nor is the synod more sound in assuming that all who are called are “justified.” If “many are called, and few chosen,” this assumption is unfounded: nay, all compliances with the call do not issue in justification; for the man who not only heard the call, but came in to the feast, put not on the wedding garment, and was therefore finally cast out. Equally contradictory to the Scripture is it so to explain St. Paul here, as to make him say, that all who are justified, are also glorified. The justified are glorified: but not, as we have seen from various texts of Scripture already, all who are justified. For if we have established it, that the persons who “turn back to perdition;” “make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience;” who turn out of the “way of righteousness;” who forget that they were “purged from their old sins;” who have “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” and were “sanctified” with the blood they afterward “counted an unholy thing;” are represented by the apostles to have been in a state of grace and acceptance with God, through Christ; then all persons justified are not infallibly glorified; but only such are saved as “endure to the end;” and they only receive that “crown of life” who are “faithful unto death.”
The clear reason why the apostle, having stated that true believers were foreknown and predestinated, introduces also the order and method of their salvation, was, to connect that salvation with the Gospel, and the work of Christ and to secure to him the glory of it. The Gospel reveals it, that those who “love God” shall find that “all things work together for their good,” because (οτί) they are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God,” in his glory; yet the Gospel did not find them lovers of God, but made them so. Since, therefore, none but such persons were so foreknown and predestinated to be heirs of glory, the Gospel calling was issued according to “his purpose,” or plan of bringing them that love him to glory, in order to produce this love in them. “Whom” he thus called, assuming them to be obedient to the call, he justified; “and whom he justified,” assuming them to be faithful unto death, he “glorified.” But since the persons predestinated were contemplated as believers, not as a certain number of persons; then all to whom the invitation was issued might obey that call, and all might be justified, and all glorified. In other words, all who heard the Gospel might, through it, be brought to love God; and might take their places among those who were “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.” For since the predestination, as we have seen, was not of a certain number of persons, but of all believers who love God; then, either it must be allowed that all who were called by the Gospel, might take the character and circumstances which would bring them under the predestination mentioned by the apostle; or else those who deny this are bound to the conclusion, that God calls (invites) many whom he never intends to admit to the celestial feast; and not only so, but punishes them, with the severity of a relentless displeasure, for not obeying an invitation which he never designed them to accept, and which they never had the power to accept. In other words, the interpretation of this passage by the synod of Dort obliges all who follow it to admit all the consequences connected with the doctrine of reprobation, as before stated.
CHAPTER 26. — AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, SUPPOSED TO LIMIT THE EXTENT OF CHRIST’S REDEMPTION.

HAVING now shown that those passages of Holy Writ, in which the terms ELECTION, CALLING, PREDESTINATION, and FOREKNOWLEDGE occur, do not warrant those inferences, by which Calvinists attempt to restrain the signification of those declarations with respect to the extent of the benefit of Christ’s death which are expressed in terms so universal in the New Testament, we may conclude our investigation of the sense of Scripture on this point by adverting to some of those insulated texts which are most frequently adduced to support the same conclusion.

John 6:37, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

It is inferred from this, and some similar passages in the Gospels, that by a transaction between the Father and the Son, a certain number of persons, called “the elect,” were given to Christ, and in process of time “drawn” to him by the Father; and that as none can be saved but those thus “given” to him, and “drawn” by the Father, the doctrine of “distinguishing grace” is established; and the rest of mankind, not having been given by the Father to the Son, can have no saving participation in the benefits of a redemption, which did not extend to them. This fiction has often been defended with much ingenuity; but it remains a fiction still unsupported by any good interpretation of the texts which have been assumed as its foundation.

1. The first objection to the view usually taken by Calvinists of this text, is, that in the case of the perverse Jews, with whom the discourse of Christ was held, it places the reason of their not “coming” to Christ, in their not having been “given” to him by the Father; whereas our Lord, on the contrary, places it in themselves, and shows that he considered their case to be in their own hands by his inviting them to come to him, and reproving them because they would not come. “Ye have not his word (the word of the Father) abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not,” John 5:38. “And ye will not come to me that ye may have life,” verse 40. “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another,” verse 44. “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of
me,” verse 46. Now these statements cannot stand together; for if the true reason why the perverse Jews did not believe in our Lord was, that they had not been given to him of the Father, then it lay not in themselves; but if the reason was that “his word did not abide in them;” that they “would not come to him;” that they sought worldly “honour;” finally, that they believed not Moses’s writings; then it is altogether contradictory to these declarations, to place it in an act of God; to which it is not attributed in any part of the discourse.

2. To be “given” by the Father to Christ, is a phrase abundantly explained in the context which this class of interpreters generally overlook.

It had a special application to those pious Jews, who “waited for redemption at Jerusalem:” those who read and believed the writings of Moses, (a general term it would seem for the Old Testament Scriptures,) and who were thus prepared, by more spiritual views than the rest, though they were not unmixed with obscurity, to receive Christ as the Messiah. Of this description were Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, Lazarus and his sisters, and many others. Philip says to Nathanael, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write;” and Nathanael was manifestly a pious Jew; for our Lord said of him, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” The light which such honest inquirers into the meaning of the Scriptures obtained as to the import of their testimony concerning the Messiah, and the character and claims of Jesus, is expressly attributed to the teaching and revelation of “the Father.” So, after Peter’s confession, our Lord exclaimed, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but my Father which is in heaven.” This teaching, and its influence upon the mind is, in John 6:44, called the “drawing” of the Father, “No man can come to me, except the Father draw him;” for, that “to draw,” and “to teach,” mean the same thing, is evident, since our Lord immediately adds, “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God;” and then subjoins this exegetical observation: — “Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me.” Those who truly “believed” Moses’s words, then, were under the Father’s illuminating influence, “heard and learned of the Father;” were “drawn” of the Father; and so, by the Father, were “given to Christ,” as his disciples, to be more fully taught the mysteries of his religion, and to be made the saving partakers of its benefits: — for “this is the Father’s will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me (thus to perfect in knowledge, and to exalt in holiness,) I
should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the last day.” Thus we have exhibited that beautiful process in the work of God in the hearts of sincere Jews, which took place in their transit from one dispensation to another, from Moses to Christ. Taught of the Father; led into the sincere belief, and general spiritual understanding of the Scriptures as to the Messiah; when Christ appeared, they were “drawn” and “given” to him, as the now visible and accredited Head, Teacher, Lord, and Saviour of the Church. All in this view is natural, explicit, and supported by the context; all in the Calvinistic interpretation appears forced, obscure, and inapplicable to the whole tenor of the discourse. For to what end of edification of any kind, were the Jews told that none but a certain number, elected from eternity, and given to him before the world was by the Father, should come to him; and that they to whom he was then speaking were not of that number? But the coherence of the discourse is manifest, when, in these sermons of our Lord, they were told that their not coming to Christ was the proof of their unbelief in Moses’s writings; that they were not “taught of God;” that they had neither “heard nor learned of the Father,” whom they yet professed to worship, and seek; and that, as the hinderance to their coming to Christ was in the state of their hearts, it was remediable by a diligent and honest search of the Scriptures; and by listening to the teachings of God. To this very class of Jews our Lord, in this same discourse, says, “Search the Scriptures;” but to what end were they to do this, if, in the Calvinistic sense, they were not given to him of the Father? The text in question, then, thus opened by a reference to the whole discourse, is of obvious meaning. “All that the Father giveth me after this preparing teaching, shall or will come to me; (for it is simply the future tense of the indicative mood which is used; and no notion of irresistible influence is conveyed;) and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” The latter clause is added to show the perfect harmony of design between Christ and the Father, a point often adverted to in this discourse; for “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” Whom, therefore, the Father so gives, I receive. I enter upon my assigned office, and shall be faithful to it. In reference also to the work of God in the hearts of men in general, as well as to the honest and inquiring Jews of our Lord’s day, these passages have a clear and interesting application. The work of the Father is carried on by his convincing and teaching Spirit; but that Spirit “testifies” of Christ, “leads” to Christ, and “gives” to Christ, that we may receive the full benefit of his sacrifice and salvation, and be placed in the Church of which he is the
Head. But in this there is no exclusion. That which hinders others from coming to Christ, is that which hinders them from being “drawn” of the Father; from “hearing and learning” of the Father, in his holy word, and by his Spirit; which hinderance is the moral state of the heart, not any exclusive decree; not the want of teaching, or drawing; but, as it is compendiously expressed in Scripture, a “RESISTING of the Holy Ghost.”

Matthew 20:15, 16, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called but few chosen.”

This passage has been often urged in proof of the doctrine of unconditional election; and the argument raised upon it is, that God has a right to dispense grace and glory to whom he will, on a principle of pure sovereignty; and to leave others to perish in their sins. That the passage has no relation to this doctrine, needs no other proof than that it is the conclusion of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The householder gives to them that “wrought but one hour” an equal reward to that bestowed upon those who had laboured through the twelve. The latter received the full price of the day’s labour agreed upon; and the former were made subjects of a special and sovereign dispensation of grace. The exercise of the Divine sovereignty, in bestowing degrees of grace, or reward, is the subject of the parable, and no one disputes it; but, according to the Calvinistic interpretation, no grace at all, no reward, is bestowed upon the non-elect, who are, moreover, punished for rejecting a grace never offered. The absurdity of such a use of the parable is obvious. It relates to no such subject; for its moral manifestly relates to the reception of great offenders, and especially of the Gentiles, into the favour of Christ: and the abundant rewards of heaven.

2 Timothy 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

The apostle, in this chapter, is speaking of those ancient heretics who affirmed “that the resurrection is passed already, and overthrew the faith of some.” What then? The truth itself is not overthrown; the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, or inscription, “The Lord knoweth,” or approveth, or, if it please better, distinguishes and acknowledges, “them that are his;” and, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity;” which is as much as to say that none are truly “the Lord’s”
who do not depart from iniquity; and that those whose faith is “overthrown” by the influence of corrupt principles and manners, are no longer accounted “his:” all which is perfectly congruous with the opinions of those who hold the unrestricted extent of the death of Christ. Toward the Calvinistic doctrine, this text certainly bears no friendly aspect; for surely it was of little consequence to any, to have their “faith overthrown,” if that faith never was, nor could be, connected with salvation.

\[\text{John 10:26, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”}\]

The argument here is, that the cause of the unbelief of the persons addressed was, that they were not of the number given to Christ by the Father, from eternity, to the exclusion of all others. \[\text{[124]}\] Let it, however, be observed, that in direct opposition to this, men are called the sheep of Christ by our Lord himself, not with reference to any supposed transaction between the Father and the Son in eternity, which is never even hinted at, but because of their \textit{qualities} and \textit{acts}. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me.” “A stranger will they not follow.” Why then did not the Jews believe? Because they had not the qualities of Christ’s sheep: they were neither discriminating as to the voice of the shepherd, nor obedient to it. The usual Calvinistic interpretation brings in our Lord, in this instance, as teaching the Jews that the reason why they did not believe on him, was, that they \textit{could} not believe! for, as Mr. Scott says in the note below, “not being of that chosen remnant, they were left to the pride and enmity of their carnal hearts.” This was not likely to be very edifying to them. But the words of our Lord are manifestly words of reproof, grounded not upon acts of God, but upon acts of their own; and they are parallel to the passages — “If God were your Father, ye would love me,” \[\text{John 8:42. “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,”}\] \[\text{John 18:37. “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another,”}\] \[\text{John 5:44.}\]

\[\text{John 13:18, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”}\]

“He perfectly knew,” says Mr. Scott on the passage, “what persons he had chosen, as well as which of them were chosen unto salvation.” This is surely making our Lord utter a very unmeaning truism; for as he chose the apostles, so he must have \textit{known}” that he chose them. Dr. Whitby’s
interpretation is, therefore, to be taken in preference. “I know the temper and disposition of those whom I have chosen, and what I may expect from every one of them; for which cause I said, ‘Ye are not all clean;’ but God in his wisdom hath permitted this, that as Ahithophel betrayed David, though he was his familiar friend, so Judas, my familiar at my table, might betray the Son of God; and so the words recorded, Psalm 41:9, might be fulfilled in him also of whom King David was the type.” (Notes in loc.) Certainly Judas was “chosen,” as well as the rest. “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” nor have we any reason to conclude that Christ uses the term chosen differently in the two passages. When, therefore, our Lord says, “I know whom I have chosen,” the term know must he taken in the sense of discriminating character.

John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” Mr. Scott, whom, as being a modern Calvinistic commentator, we rather choose again to quote, interprets — “chosen them unto salvation.” In its proper sense, we make no objection to this phrase: it is a Scriptural one; but it must be taken in its own connection. Here, however, either the term “chosen” is to be understood with reference to the apostolic office, which is very agreeable to the context; or if it relate to the salvation of the disciples, it can have no respect to the doctrine of eternal election. For if the election spoken of were not an act done in time, it would have been unnecessary for our Lord, to say, “Ye have not chosen me;” because It is obvious they could not choose him before they came into being. Another passage also, in the same discourse, farther proves, that the election mentioned was an act done in time. “I have chosen you out of the world,” verse 19. But if they were “chosen out of the world,” they were chosen subsequently to their being “in the world;” and, therefore, the election spoken of is not eternal. The last observation will also deprive these interpreters of another favourite passage, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” The “giving” here mentioned, was no more an act of God in eternity, as they pretend, than the “choosing” to which we have already referred, for in the same discourse the apostles are called “the men thou gavest me out of the world,” and were therefore given to Christ in time. The exception as to Judas, also, proves that this “giving” expresses actual discipleship. Judas had been “given” as well as the rest, or he could not have been mentioned as an exception; that is, he had been once “found.” or he could not have been “lost.” 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who
hath saved us, and called us with a 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.”

Mr. Scott here contends for the doctrine of the personal election of the persons spoken of, “from the beginning, or before eternal ages,” which is the most literal translation; and argues that this cannot be denied, without supposing “that all who live and die impenitent, may be said to be saved, and called with a holy calling; because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world.” “Indeed,” he adds, “the purpose of God is mentioned as the reason why they, rather than others were saved and called.” We shall see the passage in a very different light, if we attend to the following considerations.

“The purpose and grace,” or gracious purpose, “which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” is represented as having been “hid in past ages;” for the apostle immediately adds, “but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” It cannot be the personal election of believers, therefore, of which the apostle here speaks; because it was saying nothing to declare that the Divine purpose to elect them was not manifest in former ages; but was reserved to the appearing of Christ. Whatever degree of manifestation God’s purpose of personal election as to individuals receives, even the Calvinists acknowledge that it is made obvious only by the personal moral changes which take place in them through their “effectual calling,” faith, and regeneration. Till the individual, therefore, comes into being, God’s purpose to elect him cannot be manifested; and those who were so elected, but did not live till Christ appeared, could not have their election manifested before he appeared. Again, if personal election be intended in the text, and calling and conversion are the proofs of personal election, then it is not true that the election of individuals to eternal life, was kept hid until the appearing of Christ; for every true conversion, in any former age, was as much a manifestation of personal election, that is of the peculiar favour and “distinguishing grace” of God, as it is under the Gospel. A parallel passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians 3:4-6, will, however, explain that before us. “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel,” and in verse 11 this is
called, in exact conformity to the phrase used in the Epistle to Timothy, “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The “purpose,” or “gracious purpose,” mentioned in both places, as formerly hidden, but “now manifested,” was therefore the purpose to form one universal Church of believing Jews and Gentiles: and in the text before us, the apostle, speaking in the name of all his fellow Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, says that they were saved and called according to that previous purpose and plan — “who hath saved us and called us,” &c. The reason why the Apostle Paul so often refers to “this eternal purpose” of God, is to justify and confirm his own ministry as a teacher of the Gentiles, and an assertor of their equal, spiritual rights with the Jews; and that this subject was present to his mind when he wrote this passage, and not an eternal, personal election, is manifest from verse 11, which is a part of the same paragraph, “whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

But, says Mr. Scott, “all who live and die impenitent, may then be said to be ‘saved, and called with a holy calling,’ because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world.” But we do not say that any are saved only because a Saviour was promised from the beginning of the world; but that the apostle simply affirms that the salvation of believers, whether Gentiles or Jews, and the means of that salvation, were the consequences of God’s previous purpose, before the world began. All who are actually saved, may say, “We are saved,” according to this purpose; but if their actual salvation shut out the salvation of all others, then no more have been saved than those included by the apostle in the pronoun “us,” which would prove too much. But Mr. Scott tells us that “the purpose of God’ is mentioned as the reason why they, rather than others, were thus saved and called.” It is mentioned with no such view. The purpose of God is introduced by the apostle as his authority for making to “the Gentiles” the offer of salvation; and as a motive to induce Timothy to prosecute the same glorious work, after his decease. This is obviously the scope of the whole chapter.

Acts 13:48, “And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Mr. Scott is somewhat less confident than some others as to the support which the Calvinistic system is thought to derive from the word rendered ordained. He, however, attempts to leave the impression upon the minds of his readers, that it means, “appointed to eternal life.”
We may, however, observe, —

1. That the persons here spoken of were the Gentries to whom the apostles preached the Gospel, upon the Jews of the same place “putting it from them,” and “judging” or proving “themselves unworthy of eternal life.” But if the only reason why the Gentiles believed was, that they were “ordained,” in the sense of personal predestination, “to eternal life;” then the reason why the Jews believed not was the want of such a predestinating act of God, and not as it is affirmed, an act of their own — the PUTTING IT AWAY from them.

2. This interpretation supposes that all the elect Gentiles at Antioch believed at that time; and that no more, at least of full age, remained to believe. This is rather difficult to admit; and therefore Mr. Scott says, “though it is probable that all who were thus affected at first, did not at that time believe unto salvation; yet many did.” But this is not according to the text, which says expressly, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed;” so that such commentators must take this inconvenient circumstance along with their interpretation, that all the elect at Antioch were, at that moment, brought into Christ’s Church.

3. Even some Calvinists, not thinking that it is the practice of the apostles and evangelists to lift up the veil of the decrees so high as this interpretation supposes, choose to render the words — “as many as were determined,” or “ordered” for eternal life.

4. But we may finally observe, that, in no place in the New Testament, in which the same word occurs, is it ever employed to convey the meaning of destiny, or predestination: a consideration which is fatal to the argument which has been drawn from it. The following are the only instances of its occurrence: <402816>Matthew 28:16, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.” Here the word means commanded, or at most agreed upon beforehand, and certainly conveys no idea of destiny. <420708>Luke 7:8, “For I also am a man set under authority.” Here the word means “placed, or disposed.” <441502>Acts 15:2, “They determined that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem.” Here it signifies mutual agreement and decision. <442210>Acts 22:10, “Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.” Here it means committed to, or appointed in the way of injunction; but no idea of destiny is conveyed. <442823>Acts 28:23, “And when they had appointed him a day,” when they had fixed upon a day by
mutual agreement; for St. Paul was not under the command or control of
the visiters who came to him to hear his doctrine. Romans 13:1, “The
powers that be are ordained of God:” clearly signifying constituted and
ordered. 1 Corinthians 16:15, “They have addicted themselves to the
ministry of the saints:” here it can mean nothing else than applied, devoted
themselves to. Thus the word never takes the sense of predestination; but,
on the contrary, when St. Luke wishes to convey that notion, he combines
it with a preposition, and uses a compound verb — “and hath determined
the times before appointed.” This was pre-ordination, and he therefore so
terms it; but in the text in question he speaks not of pre-ordination, but of
ordination simply. The word employed signifies, “to place, order, appoint,
dispose, determine,” and is very variously applied. The prevalent idea is
that of settling, ordering, and resolving; and the meaning of the text is, that
as many as were fixed and resolved upon eternal life, as many as were
careful about, and determined on salvation, believed. For that the historian
is speaking of the candid and serious part of the hearers of the apostles, in
opposition to the blaspheming Jews; that is, of those Gentiles “who, when
they heard this were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord,” is evident
from the context. The persons who then believed, appear to have been
under a previous preparation for receiving the Gospel; and were probably
religious proselytes associating with the Jews.

Luke 10:20, “But rather rejoice, because your names are written in
heaven.” The inference from this text is, that there is a register of all the
elect in the “Book of Life,” and that their number, according to the
doctrine of the synod of Dort, is fixed and determinate. Our Calvinistic
friends forget, however, that names may be “blotted out of the Book of
Life:” and so the theory falls. — “And if any man shall take away from the
words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the
Book of Life.”

Proverbs 16:4, “The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even
the wicked for the day of evil,” If there be any relevance in this passage to
the Calvinistic theory, it must be taken in the supralapsarian sense, that the
final cause of the creation of the wicked is their eternal punishment. It
follows from this, that sin is not the cause of punishment; but that this
flows from the mere will of God; which is a sufficient refutation. The
persons spoken of are “wicked.” Either they were made wicked by
themselves, or by God. If not by God, then to make the wicked for the day
of evil, can only mean that he renders them who have made themselves
wicked, and remain incorrigibly so, the instruments of glorifying his justice, “in the day of evil,” that is, in the day of punishment. The Hebrew phrase, rendered literally, is, “the Lord doth work all things for himself;” which applies as well to acts of government as to acts of creation. Thus, then, we are taught by the passage, not that God created the wicked to punish them, but so governs, controls, and subjects all things to himself; and so orders them for the accomplishment of his purpose, that the wicked shall not escape his just displeasure; since upon such men the day of evil will ultimately come. It is therefore added in the next verse, “Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”

John 12:37-40, “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.”

Mr. Scott’s interpretation is, in its first aspect, more moderate than that of many divines of the same school. It is — “they had long shut their own eyes, and hardened their own hearts; and so God would give up many of them to such judicial blindness, as rendered their conversion and salvation impossible. The prophecy was not the motive or cause of their wickedness; but it was the declaration of God’s purpose, which could not be defeated: therefore while this prophecy stood in Scripture against them, and others of like character, who hated the truth from the love of sin, the event became certain; in which sense it is said, that they could not believe.”

That, in some special and aggravated cases, and especially in that which consisted in ascribing the miracles of Christ to Satan, and thus blaspheming the Holy Ghost; (cases, however, which probably affected but a few individuals, and those principally the chief Pharisees and rabbins of our Lord’s time;) there was such a judicial dereliction as Mr. Scott speaks of, is allowed; but that it extended to the body of the Jews, who at that time did not believe in the mission and miracles of Christ, may be denied. The contrary must appear from the earnest manner in which their salvation was sought by Christ and his apostles, subsequently to this declaration; and also from the fact of great numbers of this same people being afterward brought to acknowledge and embrace Christ and his religion. This is our objection
to the former part of this interpretation. Not every one who is lost finally, is given up previously to judicial blindness. To be thus abandoned before death is a special procedure, which our Lord himself confines to the special case of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. To the latter part of the comment, the objection is still stronger. Mr. Scott acknowledges the wicked and wilful blindness of these Jews to be the cause of the judicial dereliction supposed. From this it would naturally follow, that this wilful blinding and hardening of their hearts, was the true reason why they “could not believe,” as provoking God to take away his Holy Spirit from them. But Mr. Scott cannot stop here. He will have another cause for their incapacity to believe: not, indeed, the prophecy quoted from Isaiah by the evangelist; but “GOD’S purpose,” of which that prediction, he says, was the “declaration.” It follows, then, that “they could not believe,” because it was “GOD’S purpose which could not be defeated.” Agreeably to this Mr. Scott understands the prediction as asserting, that the agent in blinding the eyes of the people reproved, that is, the obstinate Jews, was God himself.

Let us now, therefore, more particularly examine this passage, and we shall find,

1. That it affirms, not that their eyes should be blinded, or their ears closed, by a Divine agency, as assumed by Mr. Scott and other Calvinists. This notion is not found in Isaiah vi, from which the quotation is made. There the agent is represented to be the prophet himself. “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes,” &c. Now as the prophet could exert no secret direct influence over the minds of the disobedient Jews, he must have fulfilled this commission, if it be taken literally, by preaching to them a fallacious and obdurating doctrine, like that of the false prophets; but if, as we know, he preached no such doctrine, then are the words to be understood according to the genius of the Hebrew language, which often represents him as an agent, who is the occasion, however innocent and undesigned, of any thing being done by another. Thus the prophet, in consequence of the unbelief of the Jews of his day in those promises of Messiah he was appointed to deliver, and which led him to complain, “Who hath believed our report!” became an occasion to the Jews of “making their own hearts fat, and their ears heavy, and of shutting their eyes” against his testimony. The true agents were, however, the Jews themselves; and by all who knew the genius of the Hebrew language they would be understood as so charged by the prophet. Thus the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Syriac versions all
agree in rendering the text, so that the people themselves, to whom the prophet wrote, are made the agents of doing that which, in the style of the Hebrews, is ascribed to the prophet himself. So also, it is manifest, that St. Paul, who quotes the same scripture, Acts 28:25-27, understood the prophet; “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes HAVE THEY closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Nor in the passage as it is given by St. John, is the blinding of the eyes of the Jews attributed to God. It stands, it is true, in our version, “He hath blinded their eyes,” &c. But the Greek verbs have no nominative case expressed, and it is left to be supplied by the reader. Nor does the context mention the agent; and farther, if we supply the pronoun he, we cannot refer it to God, since the passage closes with a change of person, “and I should heal them.” The agent blinding and hardening, and the agent attempting to “heal,” cannot, therefore, be the same, because they are opposed to each other, not only grammatically, but in design and operation. That agent, then, may be “the god of this world,” to whom the work of blinding them that believe not, is expressly attributed by the Apostle Paul; or St. John, familiar with the Hebrew style, might refer it to the prophet, who, consequentially, and through the willful perverseness of the Jews, was the occasion of their making their own “hearts gross, and closing their ears;” or finally, the personal verb may be used impersonally, and the active form for the passive, of which critics furnish parallel instances. But in all these views the true responsible agent and criminal doer is “THIS PEOPLE,” — this perverse and obstinate people themselves; a point to which every part of their Scriptures gives abundant testimony.

2. It may be denied that the prophecy of Isaiah here quoted is, as Mr. Scott represents it, “a declaration of God’s purpose, which could not be defeated.” A simple prophecy is not a declaration of purpose at all; but the declaration of a future event. If a purpose of GOD, to be hereafter accomplished, be declared, this declaration becomes more than a simple prophecy: it connects the act with an agent; and in the case before us, that agent is assumed to be GOD. But we have shown, that the agent in blinding the eyes, and closing the ears of these perverse Jews, is nowhere said to be GOD; and therefore the prophecy is not a declaration of HIS purpose.
Again, if it were a declaration of God’s purpose, it would not follow that it could not be defeated: for prophetic threatenings are not absolute; but imply conditions. This is so far from being a mere assumption, that it is established by the authority of Almighty God himself, who declares, Jeremiah 18:7, 8, “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.” Here we have a prophetic commination uttered; “at what instant I speak” — “that nation against whom I have pronounced.” We have also the purpose in the mind of God — “the evil that I thought;” and yet this prediction might fail, and this purpose be defeated. So in the case of repentant Nineveh, the predicted destruction failed, and the wrathful purpose was defeated, without any impeachment of the Divine attributes, on the contrary, they were illustrated by this manifestation of the mingled justice and grace of his administration. Mr. Scott, like many others, argues as though the prediction of an event gave certainty to it. But the certainty or uncertainty of events is not created by prophecy. Prophecy results from prescience; and prescience has respect to what will be, but not necessarily to what must be. Of this, however, more in its proper place.

3. If this prophecy could be made to bear all that the Calvinists impose upon it, it would not serve their purpose. It would, even then, afford no proof of general election and reprobation, since it has an exclusive application to the unbelieving part of the Jewish people only; and is never adduced, either by St. John or by St. Paul, as the ground of any general doctrine whatever.

Jude 1:4, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men,” &c.

The word which is here rendered ordained, is literally forewritten; and the word rendered condemnation, signifies legal punishment, or judgment. The passage means, therefore, either that the class of men spoken of had been foretold in the Scriptures, or that their punishment had been there formerly typified, in those examples of ancient times, of which several are cited in the following verses; as Cain, Balaam, Korah, and the cities of the plain. Mr. Scott, therefore, very well interprets the text, when he says, “the Lord had foreseen them, for they were of old, registered to this condemnation: many predictions had, from the beginning, been delivered to this effect.”
But when he adds, “Nay, these predictions had been extracts, as it were, from the registers of Heaven, even the secret and eternal decrees of God, in which he had determined to leave them to their pride and lusts, till they merited and received this condemnation,” we may well ask for the proof. All this is manifestly gratuitous; brought to the text, and not deduced from it; and is, therefore, very unworthy of a commentator. The “extracts” from the register of God’s decrees, as they are found in the Scriptures, contain no such sentiment as that these abusers of the grace of God only did that which they could not but do, in consequence of having been “left to their pride and lusts,” and excluded before they were born from the mercies of Christ. If this sentiment then is not in the “extracts,” it is not in the original register; or else something is there which God, in his own revealed word, has not extracted, and respecting which the commentator must either have had some independent revelation, or have been guilty of speaking very rashly. On the contrary, in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:1-3, where the same class of persons is certainly spoken of, so far are they from being represented as excluded from the benefits of Christ’s redemption, that they are charged with a specific crime, which necessarily implies their participation in it, with the crime of “denying the Lord that bought them.”

1 Corinthians 4:7, “For who maketh thee to differ from another?”

The context shows that the apostle was here endeavouring to repress that ostentation which had arisen among many persons in the Church of Corinth, on account of their spiritual gifts and endowments. This he does by referring those gifts to God, as the sole giver, — “for who maketh thee to differ?” or who confers superiority upon thee? as the sense obviously is; “and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Mr. Scott acknowledges that “the apostle is here speaking more immediately of natural abilities, and spiritual gifts; and not of special and efficacious grace.” If so, then the passage has nothing to do with this controversy. The argument he however affirms, concludes equally in one case, as in the other; and in his sermon on election he thus applies it: “Let the blessings of the Gospel be fairly proposed, with solemn warnings and pressing invitations, to two men of exactly the same character and disposition: if they are left to themselves in entirely similar circumstances, the effect must be precisely the same. But, behold, while one proudly scorns and resents the gracious offer, the other trembles, weeps, prays, repents, believes! Who maketh this man to differ from the other? or what hath he that he hath not received? The Scriptural
answer to this question, when properly understood, decides the whole controversy.”

As this is a favourite argument, and a popular dilemma in the hands of the Calvinists, and so much is supposed to depend upon its solution, we may somewhat particularly examine it.

Instead of supposing the case of two men “of exactly the same character and disposition,” why not suppose the same man in two moral states? for one man who “proudly scorns the Gospel” does not more differ from another who penitently receives it, than the same man who has once scoffingly rejected, and afterward meekly submitted to it, differs from himself; as for instance, Saul the Pharisee from Paul the apostle. Now, to account for the case of two men, one receiving the Gospel, and the other rejecting it, the theory of election is brought in; but in the case of the one man in two different states, this theory cannot be resorted to. The man was elect from eternity; he is no outcast from the mercy of his God, and the redemption of his Saviour, and yet, in one period of his life, he proudly scorns the offered mercy of Christ, at another he accepts it. It is clear, then, that the doctrine of election, simply considered in itself, will not solve the latter case; and by consequence it will not solve the former: for the mere fact, that one man rejects the Gospel while another receives it, is no more a proof of the non-election of the non-recipient, than the fact of a man now rejecting it, who shall afterward receive it, is a proof of his non-election. The solution, then, must be sought for in some communication of the grace of God, in some inward operation upon the heart, which is supposed to be a consequence of election; but this leads to another and distinct question. This question is not, however, the vincibility or invincibility of the grace of God, at least not in the first instance. It is, in truth, whether there is any operation of the grace of God in man at all tending to salvation, in cases where we see the Gospel rejected. Is the man who rejects perseveringly, and he who rejects but for a time, perhaps a long period of his life, left without any good motions or assisting influence from the grace of God, or not? This question seems to admit of but one of three answers. Either he has no gracious assistance at all, to dispose him to receive the Gospel; or he has a sufficient influence of grace so to dispose him; or that gracious influence is dispensed in an insufficient measure. If the first answer be given, then not only are the non-elect left without any visitations of grace throughout life; but the elect also are left without them, until the moment of their effectual calling. If the second be offered as the answer, then both
in the case of the non-elect man who finally rejects Christ, and that of the elect man, who rejects him for a great part of his life, the saving grace of God must be allowed so to work as to be capable of counteraction, and effectual resistance. If this be denied, then the third answer must be adopted, and the grace of God must be allowed so to influence as to be designedly insufficient for the ends for which it is given; that is, it is given for no saving end at all, either as to the non-elect, or as to the elect all the time they remain in a state of actual alienation from Christ. For if an insufficient degree of grace is bestowed, when a sufficient degree might have been imparted, then there must have been a reason for restraining the degree of grace to an insufficient measure; which reason could only be, that it might be insufficient, and therefore not saving. Now, two of the three of these positions are manifestly contrary to the word of God. To say that no gracious influence of the Holy Spirit operates upon the unconverted, is to take away their guilt; since they cannot be guilty of rejecting the Gospel if they have no power to embrace it, either from themselves, or by impartation, while yet the Scripture represents this as the highest guilt of men. All the exhortations, and reproofs, and invitations of Scripture, are, also, by this doctrine, turned into mockery and delusion; and, finally, there can be no such thing in this case, as “resisting the Holy Ghost;” as “grieving and quenching the Spirit;” as “doing despite to the Spirit of grace,” either in the case of the non-elect, who are never converted, or of the elect, before conversion: so that the latter have never been guilty of stubbornness, and obstinacy, and rebellion, and resistance of grace; though these are, by them, afterward, always acknowledged among their sins. Nor did they ever feel any good motion, or drawing from the Spirit of God, before what they term their effectual calling; though, it is presumed, that few, if any of them, will deny this in fact.

If the doctrine, that no grace is imparted before conversion, is then contradicted both by Scripture and experience, how will the case stand, as to the intentional restriction of that grace to a degree which is insufficient to dispose the subject to the acceptance of the Gospel? If this view be held, it must be maintained equally as to the elect before their conversion, and as to the non-elect. In that case, then, we have equal difficulty in accounting for the guilt of man, as when it is supposed that no grace at all is imparted; and for the reproofs, calls, and invitations, and threatenings of the word of God. For where lies the difference between the absolute non-impartation of grace, and grace so imparted as to be designedly insufficient for salvation?
Plainly there is none, except that we can see no end at all for giving insufficient grace; a circumstance which would only serve to render still more perplexing the principles and practice of the Divine administration. It has no end of mercy, and none of justice; nor, as far as can be perceived, of wisdom. Not of mercy, for it effects nothing merciful, and designs not to effect it; not of justice, for it places no man under equitable responsibility; not of wisdom, for it has no assignable end. The Scripture treats all men to whom the Gospel is preached as endowed with power, not indeed from themselves, but from the grace of God, to “turn at his reproof;” to come at his “call;” to embrace his “grace;” but they have no capacity for any of these acts, if either of these opinions be true: and thus the word of God is contradicted. So also is experience, in both cases; for there could be no sense of guilt for having rejected Christ, and grieved the Holy Spirit, either in the non-elect never converted, or in the elect before conversion, if either they had no visitations of grace at all; or if these were designedly granted in an insufficient degree.

It follows, then, that the doctrine of the impartation of grace to the unconverted, in a sufficient degree to enable them to embrace the Gospel, must be admitted; and with this doctrine comes in that of a power in man to use, or to spurn this heavenly gift and gracious assistance: in other words, a power of willing to come to Christ, even when men do not come; a power of considering their ways, and turning to the Lord, when they do not consider them, and turn to him; a power of praying, when they do not pray; and a power of believing, when they do not believe: powers all of grace; all the results of the work of the Spirit in the heart; but powers to be exerted by man, since it is man, and not God, who wills, and turns, and prays, and believes, while the influence under which this is done is from the grace of God alone. This is the doctrine which is clearly contained in the words of St. Paul, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure;” where, not only the operation of God, but the co-operation of man, are distinctly marked; and are both held up as necessary to the production of the grand result — “salvation.”

It will appear, then, from these observations, that the question, “Who maketh thee to differ?” as urged by Mr. Scott and others from the time of Calvin, is a very inapposite one to their purpose, for,
First, it is a question which the apostle asks with no reference to a
difference in religious state, but only with respect to gifts and endowments.
Secondly, the Holy Ghost gives no authority for such an application of his
words, as is thus made, in any other part of Scripture. Thirdly, it cannot be
employed for the purpose for which it is dragged forth so often from its
context and meaning; for, in the use thus made of it, it is falsely assumed,
that the two men instanced, the one who rejects, and the other who
embraces the Gospel, are not each endowed with sufficient grace to enable
them to receive God’s gracious offer. Now this, we may again say, must
either be denied or affirmed. If it be affirmed, then the difference between
the two men consists, not where they place it, in the destitution or
deficiency on the one hand, or in the plenitude on the other, of the grace of
GOD; but in the *use* of grace: and when they say, “it is God which maketh
them to differ,” they say in fact, that it is God that not only gives sufficient
grace to each; but *uses* that grace for them. For if it be allowed that
sufficient grace for repentance and faith is given to each, then the true
difference between them is, that one repents, and the other does not repent;
the one believes, and the other does not believe: if, therefore, this
difference is to be attributed to God directly, then the *act* of repenting, and
the *act* of believing, are both the acts of GOD. If they hesitate to avow this,
for it is an absurdity, then either they must give up the question as totally
useless to them, or else take the other side of the alternative, that to all
who reject the Gospel, sufficient grace to receive it is not given. How then
will that serve them? They may say, it is true, when they take the man who
embraces the Gospel, “Who maketh him to differ but God, who gives this
sufficient grace to him?” but then we have an equal right to take the man
who rejects the Gospel, and ask, “Who maketh him to differ” from the man
that embraces it? To this they cannot reply that he maketh *himself* to differ;
for that which they here lay down is, that he has either no grace at all
imparted to him to enable him to act as the other; or, what amounts to the
same thing, no sufficient degree of it to produce a true faith; that he never
had that grace; that he is, and always must remain, as destitute of it as
when he was born. He does not, therefore, *make himself* to differ from the
man who embraces the Gospel; for he has no power to imitate his example,
and to make himself equal with him; and the only answer to our question
is, “that it is God who maketh him to differ from the other,” by withholding
that grace by which alone he could be prevented from rejecting the Gospel;
and this, so far from “settling the whole controversy,” is the very point in
debate.
This dilemma, then, will prove, when examined, but inconvenient to themselves; for if sufficiency of grace be allowed to the unconverted then the Calvinists make the *acts* of grace, as well as the gift of grace itself to be the work of God in the elect: if sufficiency of grace is denied, then the unbelief and condemnation of the wicked are not from themselves, but from God. \(^{f128}\) The fact is, that this supposed puzzle has been always used *ad captandum*; and is unworthy so grave a controversy; and as to the pretence, that the admission of a power in man to use or to abuse the grace of God involves some merit or ground of glorying in man himself, this is equally fallacious. The power “to will and to do,” is the sole result of the working of God in man. All is of grace: “By the grace of God,” must every one say, “I am what I am.” Here is no dispute; every good thought, desire, and tendency of the heart, and all its power to turn these to practical account by prayer, by faith, by the use of the means of grace, through which new power “to will and to do,” new power to use grace, as well as new grace, is communicated, is of God. Every good act, therefore, is the use of a communicated power which is given of grace, as the stretching out of the withered hand of the healed man was the use of the power communicated to his imbecility, and still *working with the act*, though not the act itself; and to attempt to lay a ground of boasting and self sufficiency in the *assisted* acceptance of the grace of God by us; and the *empowered* submission of our hearts to it, is as manifestly absurd as it would be to say, that the man, whose arm was withered, had great reason to congratulate himself on his share in the glory of the miracle, because he himself stretched out the invigorated member at the command of Christ; and because it was not, in fact, lifted up by the hand of him who, in that act of faith and obedience, had healed him.

The question of the invincibility of Divine grace, is a point to be in another place considered.

\(^{<410>}\) Acts 18:9, 10, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for *I have much people in this city.*”

Mr. Scott, to whom the doctrine of election is always present, says, “In this Christ *evidently* spake of those who were *his* by election, the gift of the Father, and his own purchase; though, at that time, in an unconverted state.” (*Notes in loc.*) It would have been more “evident” had this been *said* by the writer of the Acts as well as by Mr. Scott, or any thing
approaching to it. The "evidence," we fear, was all in Mr. Scott’s predisposition of mind; for it nowhere else appears. The expression is, at least, capable of two very satisfactory interpretations, independent of the theory of Calvinistic election. It may mean, that there were many well disposed and serious inquirers among the “Greeks” in Corinth; for when Paul turned from the Jews, he “entered into the house of Justus, one that worshipped God.” This man was a Greek proselyte; and, from various parts of the Acts of the Apostles it is plain, that this class of people were not only numerous, but generally received the Gospel with joy, and were among the first who joined the primitive Churches. They manifested their readiness to receive the Gospel in Corinth itself when the Jews “opposed and blasphemed;” and it is not improbable, that to such proselytes, who were in many places “a people prepared of the Lord,” reference is made, when our Saviour, speaking to Paul in this vision, says, “I have much people in this city.” Suppose, however, he speaks prospectively and prophetically, making his foreknowledge of an event the means of encouraging the labours of his devoted apostle, the doctrine of election follows neither from the fact of the foreknowledge of God, nor from prophetic declarations grounded upon it. Even Calvin founds not election upon God’s foreknowledge; but upon his decree.

A few other passages might be added, which are sometimes adduced as proofs of the Calvinistic theory of “election” and “distinguishing grace;” but they are all either explained by that view of Scriptural election which has been at large adduced, or are of very obvious interpretation. I believe that I have omitted none, on which any great stress is laid in the controversy; and the reader will judge how far those which have been examined serve to support those inferences which tend to limit the universal import of those declarations which prove, in the literal sense of the terms, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.”
CHAPTER 28. — THEORIES WHICH LIMIT THE EXTENT OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

We have, in the foregoing attempt to establish the doctrine of the redemption of all mankind against our Calvinistic brethren, taken their scheme in the sense in which it is usually understood, without noticing those minuter shades with which the system has been varied. In this discussion, it is hoped, that no expression has hitherto escaped inconsistent with candour. Doctrinal truth would be as little served by this as Christian charity; nor ought it ever to be forgotten by the theological inquirer, that the system which we have brought under review has, in some of its branches, always embodied, and often preserved in various parts of Christendom, that truth which is vital to the Church, and salutary to the souls of men. It has numbered, too, among its votaries, many venerable names; and many devoted and holy men, whose writings often rank among the brightest lights of Scriptural criticism and practical divinity. We think the peculiarities of their creed clearly opposed to the sense of Scripture, and fairly chargeable in argument with all those consequences we have deduced from them; and which, were it necessary to the discussion, might be characterized in still stronger language. Those consequences, however, let it be observed, we only exhibit as logical ones. By many of this class of divines they are denied; by others modified; and by a third party explained away to their own satisfaction by means of metaphysical and subtle distinctions. As logical consequences only they are, therefore, in such cases, fairly to be charged upon our opponents, in any disputes which may arise. By keeping this distinction in view, the discussion of these points may be preserved unfettered; and candour and charity sustain no wound.

We shall now proceed to justify the general view we have taken of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, predestination, and partial redemption, by adducing the sentiments of Calvin himself, and of Calvinistic theologians and Churches; after which our attention may be directed, briefly, to some of those more modern modifications of the system, which, though they differ not, as we think, so materially, from the original model as some of their advocates suppose, yet make concessions not unimportant to the more liberal, and, as we believe, the only Scriptural theory.
Calvin has at large opened his sentiments on election, in the third book of his Institutes. (The following quotations are made from Allen’s translation. London, 1823.) “Predestination we call the eternal decree of God; by which he hath determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated, either to life, or to death.” After having spoken of the election of the race of Abraham, and then of particular branches of that race, he proceeds, “Though it is sufficiently clear that God, in his secret counsel, freely chooses whom he will, and rejects others, his gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner, that the certainty of the effect is liable to no suspense or doubt.”

He sums up the chapter, in which he thus generally states the doctrine, in these words: (chap. 21, book iii:) “In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of the Scripture, we assert, that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God hath once for all determined both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but that to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible judgment. In the elect, we consider calling as an evidence of election; and justification as another token of its manifestation, till they arrive in glory, which constitutes its completion. As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name, and sanctification of his Spirit, he affords an other indication of the judgment that awaits them.”

In the commencement of the following chapter (book iii, chap. 22,) he thus rejects the notion that predestination is to be understood as resulting from God’s foreknowledge of what would be the conduct of either the elect or the reprobate. “It is a notion commonly entertained, that God, foreseeing what would be the respective merits of every individual, makes a correspondent distinction between different persons; that he adepts as his children such as he foreknows will be deserving of his grace; and devotes to the damnation of death others, whose dispositions he sees will be inclined to wickedness and impiety. Thus they not only obscure election by covering it with the veil of foreknowledge, but pretend that it originates in
another cause.” Consistently with this, he a little farther on asserts, that election does not flow from holiness; but holiness from election. “For when it is said, that the faithful are elected that they should be holy, it is fully implied, that the holiness they were in future to possess, had its origin in election.” He proceeds to quote the example of Jacob and Esau, as loved and hated before they had done good or evil, to show that the only reason of election and reprobation is to be placed in God’s “secret counsel.” He will not allow the future wickedness of the reprobate to have been considered in the decree of their rejection, any more than the righteousness of the elect as influencing their better fate. “God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth. You see how he (the apostle) attributes both to the mere will of God. If, therefore, we can assign no reason why he grants mercy to his people, but because such is his pleasure, neither shall we find any other cause but his will for the reprobation of others. For when God is said to harden, or show mercy to whom he pleases, men are taught by this declaration, to seek no cause beside his will.” (Book iii, chap. 22.) — “Many, indeed, as if they wished to avert odium from God, admit election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated. But this is puerile and absurd; because election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation: — whom God passes by, he therefore reprobates; and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children.” (Book iii, chap. 23.)

This is the scheme of predestination as exhibited by Calvin; and it is remarkable, that the answers which he is compelled to give to objections did not unfold to this great and acute man its utter contrariety to the testimony of God, and to all established notions of equity among men. To the objection taken from justice, he replies, “They (the objectors) inquire by what right the Lord is angry with his creatures who had not provoked him by any previous offence; for that to devote to destruction whom he pleases, is more like the caprice of a tyrant, than the lawful sentence of a judge. If such thoughts ever enter into the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is, only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is, in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent on which it depends, which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be
considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it.” The evasions are here curious.

1. He assumes the very thing in dispute, that God has willed the destruction of any part of the human race, “for no other cause than because he wills it;” of which assumption there is not only not a word of proof in Scripture; but, on the contrary, all Scripture ascribes the death of him that dieth to his own will, and not to the will of God; and therefore contradicts his statement.

2. He pretends that to assign any cause to the Divine will is to suppose something antecedent to, something above God, and, therefore, “impious;” as if we might not suppose something in God to be the rule of his will, not only without any impiety, but with truth and piety; as, for instance, his perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness: or, in other words, to believe the exercise of his will to flow from the perfection of his whole nature; a much more honourable and Scriptural view of the will of God than that which subjects it to no rule, even in the nature of God himself.

3. When he calls the will of God, “the highest rule of justice,” beyond which we cannot push our inquiries, he confounds the will of God, as a rule of justice to us, and as a rule to himself. This will is our rule: yet even then, because we know that it is the will of a perfect being; but when Calvin represents mere will as constituting God’s own rule of justice, he shuts out knowledge, discrimination of the nature of things, and holiness; which is saying something very different to that great truth, that God cannot will any thing but what is perfectly just. It is to say that blind will, will which has no respect to any thing but itself, is God’s highest rule of justice; a position which, if presented abstractedly, many of the most ultra Calvinists would spurn.

4. He determines the question by the authority of his own metaphysics, and totally forgets that one dictum of inspiration overturns his whole theory, — God “willeth all men to be saved:” a declaration, which, in no part of the sacred volume, as opposed or limited by any contrary declaration.

Calvin is not, however, content thus to leave the matter; but resorts to an argument in which he has been generally followed by those who have adopted his system with some mitigations. “As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty; but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the
Lord predestinates to death are, in their natural condition, liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him?” To this Calvin very fairly states the obvious rejoinder made in his day; and which the common sense of mankind will always make, — “They object, were they not by the decree of God antecedently predestinated to that corruption which is now stated as the cause of their condemnation? When they perish in their corruption, therefore, they only suffer the punishment of that misery into which, in consequence of his predestination, Adam fell, and precipitated his posterity with him.” The manner in which Calvin attempts to refute this objection, shows how truly unanswerable it is upon his system. “I confess,” says he, “indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell, by the Divine will, into that miserable condition in which they are now involved; and this is what I asserted from the beginning, that we must always return at last to the sovereign determination of God’s will; the cause of which is hidden in himself. But it follows not, therefore, that God is liable to this reproach; for we will answer them in the language of Paul, ‘O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?’” — That is, in order to escape the pinch of the objection, he assumes, that St. Paul affirms that God has “formed” a part of the human race for eternal misery; and that by imposing silence upon them, he intended to declare that this proceeding in God was just. Now the passage may be proved from the context to mean no such thing; but, if that failed and it were more obscure in its meaning than it really is, such an interpretation would be contradicted by many other plain texts of Holy Writ, of which Calvin takes no notice. Even if this text would serve the purpose better, it gives no answer to the objection; for we are brought round again, as indeed Calvin confesses, to his former, and indeed only argument, that the whole matter, as he states it, is to be referred back to the Divine will; which will, though perfectly arbitrary, is, as he contends, the highest rule of justice. “I say, with Augustine, that the Lord created those whom he certainly foreknew would fall into destruction; and that this was actually so, because he willed it; but of his will, it belongs not to us to demand the reason, which we are incapable of comprehending; nor is it reasonable that the Divine will should be made the subject of controversy with us, which is only another name for the highest rule of justice.” Thus he shuts us out from pursuing the argument. When God places fences against our approach, we grant, that we are bound not “to break through and gaze;” but not so, when man, without authority, usurps this authority, and warns us off from his own inclosures, as though
we were trespassing upon the peculiar domains of God himself. Calvin’s evasion proves the objection unanswerable. For if all is to be resolved into the mere will of God as to the destruction of the reprobate; if they were created for this purpose, as Calvin expressly affirms; if they fell into their corruption in pursuance of God’s determination; if, as he had said before, “God passes them by, and reprobates them, from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance of his children,” why refer to their natural corruption at all, and their being odious to God in that state, since the same reason is given for their corruption as for their reprobation? — Not any fault of theirs; but the mere will of God, “the reprobation hidden in his secret counsel,” and not grounded on the visible and tangible fact of their demerit. Thus the election taught by Calvin is not a choice of some persons to peculiar grace from the whole mass, equally deserving of punishment; (though this is a sophism,) for, in that case, the decree of reprobation would rest upon God’s foreknowledge of those passed by as corrupt and guilty, which notion he rejects. “For since God foresees future events only in consequence of his decree that they shall happen, it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is evident that all things come to pass rather by ordination and decree. It is a HORRIBLE DECREE, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future fate of man before he created him; and that he did foreknow it, because it was appointed by his own decree.” Agreeably to this, he repudiates the distinction between will and permission. “For what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will? It is not probable, however, that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment of God.”

With this doctrine he again makes a singular attempt to reconcile the demerit of men: — “Their perdition depends on the Divine predestination in such a manner, that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had determined it should so happen. The reason of this determination is unknown to us. Man, therefore, falls according to the appointment of Divine providence; but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before pronounced every thing that he had made to be ‘very good.’ Whence, then, comes the depravity of man to revolt from his God? Lest it should be thought to come from creation, God approved and commended what had proceeded from himself. By his own wickedness, therefore, man corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord, and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him to destruction.”
It is in this way that Calvin attempts to avoid the charge of making God the author of sin. But how God should not merely permit the defection of the first man, but appoint it, and will it, and that his will should be the “necessity of things,” all which he had before asserted, and yet that Deity should not be the author of that which he appointed, willed, and imposed a necessity upon, would be rather a delicate inquiry. It is enough that Calvin rejects the impious doctrine, and even though his principles directly lead to it, since he has put in his disclaimer, he is entitled to be exempted from the charge; — but the logical conclusion is inevitable.

In much the same manner he contends that the necessity of sinning is laid upon the reprobate by the ordination of God, and yet denies God to be the author of their sin, since the corruption of men was derived from Adam, by his own fault, and not from God. Here, also, although the difficulty still remains of conceiving how a necessity of sinning should be laid on the descendants of Adam, and that without any counteraction of grace in the case of the reprobate, and that this should be attributable to the will of God as its cause, while yet God, in no sense injurious to his perfections, is to be regarded as the author of sin, we still admit Calvin’s disclaimer; but then he cannot have the advantage on both sides, and must renounce this or some of his former positions. He exhorts us “rather to contemplate the evident cause of condemnation, which is nearer to us, in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden, and altogether incomprehensible one, in the predestination of God.” “For, though, by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not God; since he is thus ruined, solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity.” Thus, almost in the same breath, he affirms that men became reprobate from no other cause than “the will of God,” and his “sovereign determination;” — that men have no reason “to expostulate with God, if they are predestinated to eternal death, without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will;” — and then, that the corrupt nature of mankind is the evident and nearer cause of condemnation: (which cause, however, was still a matter of “appointment,” and “ordination,” not “permission;”) and that man is “ruined solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure state in which God created him.” Now these propositions manifestly fight with each other; for if the reason of reprobation be laid in man’s corruption, it cannot be laid in the mere will and sovereign determination of God, unless we suppose him
to be the author of sin. It is this offensive doctrine only which can reconcile them. For if God so wills, and appoints, and necessitates the depravity of man, as to be the author of it, then there is no inconsistency in saying that the ruin of the reprobate is both from the mere will of God, and from the corruption of their nature, which is but the result of that will. The one is then, as Calvin states, the “evident and nearer cause,” the other the more remote and hidden one; yet they have the same source, and are substantially acts of the same will. But if it be denied that God is, in any sense, the author of evil, and if sin is from man alone, then is the “corruption of nature” the effect of an independent will; and if this be the “real source,” as he says, of men’s condemnation, then the decree of reprobation rests not upon the sovereign will of God, as its sole cause, which he affirms; but upon a cause dependent on the will of the first man. But as this is denied, then the other must follow. Calvin himself indeed contends for the perfect concurrence of these proximate and remote causes, although, in point of fact, to have been perfectly consistent with himself, he ought rather to have called the mere will of God THE CAUSE of the decree of reprobation, and the corruption of man THE MEANS by which it is carried into effect, language which he sanctions, and which many of his followers have not scrupled to adopt.

So fearfully does this opinion involve in it the consequences that in sin man is the instrument, and God the actor, that it cannot be maintained, as stated by Calvin, without this conclusion. For as two causes of reprobation are expressly laid down, they must be either opposed to each other, or be consenting. If they are opposed, the scheme is given up; if consenting, then are both reprobation and human corruption the results of the same will, the same decree and necessity. It would be trifling to say that the decree does not influence; for if so, it is no decree in Calvin’s sense, who understands the decree of God, as the foregoing extracts and the whole third book of his Institutes plainly show, as appointing what shall be, and by that appointment making it necessary. Otherwise he could not reject the distinction between will and permission, and avow the sentiment of St. Augustine, “that the will of God is the necessity of things; and that what he has willed will necessarily come to pass.” (Book iii, chap. 23, sec. 8.) So, in writing to Castalio, he makes the sin of Adam the result of an act of God. “You say Adam fell by his free will. I except against it. That he might not fall, he stood in need of that strength and constancy with which God armeth all the elect, as long as he will keep them blameless. Whom God
has elected, he props up with an invincible power unto perseverance. Why did he not afford this to Adam, if he would have had him stand in his integrity?” And with this view of necessity, as resulting from the decree of God, the immediate followers of Calvin coincide; the end and the means, as to the elect, and as to the reprobate, are equally fixed by the decree; and are both to be traced to the appointing and ordaining will of God. On such a scheme it is, therefore, worse than trifling to attempt to make out a case of justice in favour of this assumed Divine procedure, by alleging the corruption and guilt of man: a point which, indeed, Calvin himself, in fact, gives up when he says, “that the reprobate obey not the word of GOD, when made known to them, is justly imputed to the wickedness and depravity of their hearts, provided it be at the same time stated, that they are abandoned to this depravity, because they have been raised up by a just, but inscrutable judgment of GOD, to display his glory in their condemnation.” (Inst. book 3. chap. 24, sec. 14.)

It is by availing themselves of these ineffectual struggles of Calvin to give some colour of justice to his reprobating decree, by fixing upon the corruption of man as a cause of reprobation, that some of his followers have endeavoured, in the very teeth of his own express words, to reduce his system to supralapsarianism. This was attempted by Amyraldus; who was answered by Curcellœus, in his tract “De Jure Dei in Creaturas.” This last writer, partly by several of the same passages we have given above from Calvin’s Institutes, and by extracts from his other writings, proves that Calvin did by no means consider man, as fallen, to be the object of reprobation; but man not yet created; man as to be created, and so reprobated, under no consideration in the Divine mind of his fall or actual guilt, except as consequences of an eternal preterition of the persons of the reprobate, resolvable only into the sovereign pleasure of God. The references he makes to men as corrupt, and to their corrupt state as the proximate cause of their rejection, are all manifestly used to parry off rather than to answer objections, and somewhat to soften, as Curcellœus observes, the harsher parts of his system. And, indeed, for what reason are we so often brought back to that unfailing refuge of Calvin and his followers, “the presumption and wickedness of replying against God?” For if reprobation be a matter of human desert, it cannot be a mystery; if it be adequate punishment for an adequate fault, there is no need to urge it upon us to bow with submission to an unexplained sovereignty. We may add, there is no need to speak of a remote or first cause of reprobation, if the
proximate cause will explain the whole case; and that Calvin’s continual reference to God’s secret counsel, and will, and inscrutable judgment, could have no aptness to his argument. Among English divines, Dr. Twiss has sufficiently defended Calvin from the charge, as he esteems it, of sublapsarianism; and, whatever merit Twiss’s own supralapsarian creed may have, his argument on this point is unanswerable.

This then is the doctrine of Calvin, which was followed by several of the Churches of the reformation, who in this respect distinguished themselves from the Lutherans. It was a doctrine, however, unknown in the primitive Churches; and may be ranked among those errors which the pagan philosophy subsequently engrafted upon the faith of Christ.

Bishop Tomline’s “Refutation of Calvinism,” although very erroneous in some of its doctrinal views, has some valuable and conclusive quotations from the ancient fathers, proving “that the peculiar tenets of Calvinism are in direct opposition to the doctrines maintained in the first ages.” They also show that there is a great similarity between some points in that system and several of the most prevalent of the early heresies. “The Manicheans denied the freedom of the human will; and spoke of the elect as persons who could not sin, or fail of salvation.” The fruitful source of these notions was the Gnosticism of early times, which was the worst part of the speculative pagan philosophy, engrafted on a corrupted Christianity; and was vigorously opposed by the fathers, from the earliest date. In this system of affected and dreaming wisdom it was assumed, that some souls were created bad, and others good; and that they sprung, therefore, from different principles, or creators. Origen contended, in opposition to these speculations, that all souls were by nature of the same quality; that the use of the freedom of will made the differences we see in practice; and that this liberty rendered them liable to reward and to punishment; ascribing, however, this recovered freedom of the will, which had been lost in Adam, to the grace of Christ. The Platonism which he mixed up with his system was justly resisted in the Church; but his doctrine of the freedom of the will prevailed generally in the east. It was afterward carried to a dangerous extent by Pelagius, whose doctrine was modified by Cassian. These discussions called Augustine into a controversy, which carried him to the opposite extreme; and appears to have revived the Manichean notions of his youth in such a degree as greatly to tinge many parts of his system with that heresy. He was a powerful, but unsteady writer; and has expressed himself so inconsistently as to have divided the opinions of the Latin
Church, where his authority has always been greatest. He held, although
his writings afford many passages contradictory of the statement, that
“God, from the foundation of the world, decreed to save some men, and to
consign others to eternal punishment.” Notwithstanding his authority, his
views on predestination and grace appear to have made no great
impression upon even the western Church, where the Collations of Cassian,
a disciple of Chrysostom, a work which has been called semi-Pelagian, was
held in extensive estimation; so that substantially no great difference of
opinion appeared between the western and the Greek Churches, on these
points, for several centuries. In the ninth century St. Austin’s doctrines
were revived and asserted by Goteschale, who was as absurdly as wickedly
persecuted on that account. His doctrines were condemned in two
councils; and the controversy was laid to rest until the subtle questions
contained in it were revived by the schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas and the
Dominicans adopted the strongest views of Augustine on predestination
and necessity, and improved upon them; Scotus and the Franciscans took
the opposite side; and the infallibility of the pope has not yet been
employed to settle this point. By condemning Jansenius, however, while it
has honoured Augustine, that Church, as Bayle observes, (Dictionary, Art.
Augustine,) has involved itself in great perplexities. The authority of this
father with the Church of Rome was indeed an advantage which the first
reformers did not fail to make use of. From him they supported their views
on justification by faith; and finding so much of evangelical truth on this
and some other subjects in his writings, they were insensibly biassed to the
worst parts of his system. Luther recovered from this error in the latter part
of his life; and the Lutheran Churches settled in the doctrine of universal
redemption. Augustinism, as perfected and systematized by the able
hand of Calvin, was received by several of the reformed Churches; and
gave rise to a controversy which has remained to this day, though happily it
has of late been conducted with less asperity. The system, as issued by
Calvin, has, however, undergone various modifications: some theologians
and their followers, having carried out his principles to their full length, so
as to advocate or sanction the Antinomian heresy, while others, either to
avoid this fearful result, or perceiving the discrepancy of the harsher parts
of the theory with the word of God, have impressed upon it a more
mitigated aspect.

The three leading schemes of predestination, prevalent among the reformed
Churches previous to the synod of Dort, are thus stated in the celebrated
Declaration of Arminius before the states of Holland. They comprehend the theories generally known by the names of supralapsarian and sublapsarian.

“The FIRST, or Creabilitarian, or supralapsarian opinion, is,

1. That God has absolutely and precisely decreed to save certain particular men by his mercy or grace; but to condemn others by his justice; and to do all this, without having any regard in such decree to righteousness or sin, obedience or disobedience, which could possibly exist on the part of one class of men, or the other.

2. That for the execution of the preceding decree, God determined to create Adam, and all men in him, in an upright state of original righteousness; beside which, he also ordained them to commit sin, that they might thus become guilty of eternal condemnation, and be deprived of original righteousness.

3. That those persons whom God has thus positively wished to save, he has decreed, not only to salvation, but also to the means which pertain to it; that is, to conduct and bring them to faith in Christ Jesus, and to perseverance in that faith; and that he also leads them to these results by a grace and power that are irresistible; so that it is not possible for them to do otherwise than believe, persevere in faith, and be saved. 4. That to those, whom, by his absolute will, God has foreordained to perdition, he has also decreed to deny that grace which is necessary and sufficient for salvation; and does not, in reality, confer it upon them; so that they are neither placed in a possible condition, nor in any capacity of believing, or of being saved.”

The SECOND opinion differs from the former; but is still supralapsarian. It is, —

“1. That God determined within himself, by an eternal immutable decree, to make, according to his good pleasure, the smaller portion out of the general mass of mankind, partakers of his grace and glory. But, according to his pleasure, he passed by the greater portion of men, and left them in their own nature, which is incapable of any thing supernatural; and did not communicate to them that saving and supernatural grace by which their nature, if it still retained its integrity, might be strengthened; or by which, if it were corrupted, it might be restored, for a demonstration of his
own liberty: yet after God had made these men sinners, and guilty of death, he punished them with death eternal, for a demonstration of his justice.” — “As far as we are capable of comprehending their scheme of reprobation, it consists of two acts, that of PRETERITION, and that of PREDAMNATION. PRETERITION is antecedent to all things, and to all causes which are either in the things themselves, or which arise out of them; that is, it has no regard whatever to any sin, and only views man under an absolute and general aspect. Two means are foreordained for the execution of the act of PRETERITION: dereliction in a state of nature which, by itself, is incapable of every thing supernatural; and the non-communication of supernatural grace, by which their nature, if in a state of integrity, might be strengthened, and if in a state of corruption, might be restored. PREDAMNATION is antecedent to all things; yet it does by no means exist without a foreknowledge of the cause of damnation. It views man as a sinner obnoxious to damnation in Adam, and as, on this account, perishing through the necessity of Divine justice.”

This opinion differs from the first in this, that it does not lay down the creation or the fall as a mediate cause, foreordained of God for the execution of the decree of reprobation; yet this second kind of predestination places election, with regard to the end, before the fall, as also preterition, or passing by, which is the first part of reprobation. “But though the inventors of this scheme,” says Arminius, “have been desirous of using the greatest precaution, lest it might be concluded from their doctrine, that God is the author of sin with as much show of probability as it is deducible from the first scheme; yet we shall discover, that the fall of Adam cannot possibly, according to their views, be considered in any other manner than as a necessary means for the execution of the preceding decree of predestination. For, first, it states that God determined by the decree of reprobation to deny to man that grace which was necessary for the confirmation and strengthening of his nature, that it might not be corrupted by sin; which amounts to this, that God decreed not to bestow that grace which was necessary to avoid sin; and from this must necessarily follow the transgression of man, as proceeding from a law imposed upon him. The fall of man is, therefore, a means ordained for the execution of the decree of reprobation.”
“2. It states the two parts of reprobation to be preterition and pre-damnation. Those two parts, (although the latter views man as a sinner, and obnoxious to justice,) are, according to that decree, connected together by a necessary and mutual bond, and are equally extensive; for those whom God passed by in conferring grace, are likewise damned. Indeed, no others are damned except those who are the subjects of this act of preterition. From this, therefore, it must be concluded, that sin necessarily follows from the decree of reprobation or preterition; because, if it were otherwise, it might possibly happen, that a person who had been passed by might not commit sin, and from that circumstance might not become liable to damnation. This second opinion on predestination, therefore, falls into the same inconvenience as the first, — the making God the author of sin.” (Declaration.)

The THIRD opinion is sublapsarian; in which man, as the object of predestination, is considered as fallen. It is thus epitomized by Arminius: —

“Because God willed within himself from all eternity to make a decree by which he might elect certain men and reprobate the rest, he viewed and considered the human race not only as created, but likewise as fallen or corrupt; and, on that account, obnoxious to malediction. Out of this lapsed and accursed state God determined to liberate certain individuals, and freely to save them by his grace, for a declaration of his mercy; but he resolved in his own just judgment, to leave the rest under malediction, for a declaration of his justice. In both these cases God acts without the least consideration of repentance and faith in those whom he elects, or of impenitence and unbelief in those whom he reprobates. This opinion places the fall of man, not as a means foreordained for the execution of the decree of predestination, as before explained; but as something that might furnish a proæresis, or occasion for this decree of predestination.” (Declaration.)

With this opinion, however, the necessity of the fall is so generally connected, that it escapes the difficulties which environ the preceding scheme in words only; for whether, in the decree of predestination, man is considered as creatable, or created and fallen, if a necessity be laid upon any part of the race to sin, and to be made miserable, whether from that
which rendered the fall inevitable, or that which rendered the fall the
inevitable means of corrupting their nature, and producing entire moral
disability without relief, the condition of the reprobate remains substantially
the same; and the administration under which they are placed, is equally
opposed to justice as to grace. For let us shut out all these fine distinctions
between acts of sovereignty and acts of justice, preterition and
predamnation, and fully allow the principle, that all are fallen in Adam, in
what way can even the sublapsarian doctrine be supported? It has two
objects: to avoid the imputation of making God the author of sin, and to
repel the charge of his dealing with his creatures unjustly. We need only
take the latter as necessary to the argument, and show how utterly they fail
to turn aside this most fatal objection drawn from the justice of the Divine
nature and administration.

It is an easy and plausible thing to say, in the usual loose and general
manner of stating the sublapsarian doctrine, that the whole race having
fallen in Adam, and become justly liable to eternal death, God might,
without any impeachment of his justice, in the exercise of his sovereign
grace, appoint some to life and salvation by Christ, and leave the others to
their deserved punishment. But this is a false view of the case, built upon
the false assumption that the whole race were personally and individually,
in consequence of Adam’s fall, absolutely liable to eternal death. That very
fact which is the foundation of the whole scheme, is easy to be refuted on
the clearest authority of Scripture; while not a passage can be adduced, we
may boldly affirm, which sanctions any such doctrine.

“The wages of sin is death.” That the death which is the wages or penalty
of sin extends to eternal death, we have before proved. But “sin is the
transgression of the law;” and in no other light is it represented in
Scripture, when eternal death is threatened as its penalty, than as the act of
a rational being sinning against a law known or knowable: and as an act
avoidable, and not forced or necessary.

Taking these principles, let them be applied to the case before us.

The scheme of predestination in question contemplates the human race as
fallen in Adam. It must, therefore, contemplate them either as seminally in
Adam, not being yet born; or as to be actually born into the world.

In the former case, the only actual beings to be charged with sin, “the
transgression of the law,” were Adam and Eve; for the rest of the human
race not being actually existent, were not capable of transgressing; or if
they were, in a vague sense, capable of it by virtue of the federal character
of Adam; yet then only as potential, and not as actual beings, beings, as
the logicians say, in posse, not in esse. Our first parents rendered
themselves liable to eternal death. This is granted; and had they died “IN
THE DAY” they sinned, which, but for the introduction of a system of mercy
and long suffering, and the appointment of a new kind of probation, for any
thing that appears, they must have done, the human race would have
perished with them, and the only conscious sinners would have been the
only conscious sufferers. But then this lays no foundation for election and
reprobation; — the whole race would thus have perished without the
vouchsafement of mercy to any.

This predestination must, therefore, respect the human race fallen in Adam,
as to be born actually, and to have a real as well as a potential existence;
and the doctrine will be, that the race so contemplated were made
unconditionally liable to eternal death. In this case the decree takes effect
immediately upon the fall, and determines the condition of every individual,
in respect to his being elected from this common misery, or his being left in
it; and it rests its plea of justice upon the assumed fact, that every man is
absolutely liable to eternal death wholly and entirely for the sin of Adam, a
sin to which he was not a consenting party, because he was not in actual
existence. But if eternal death be the “wages of sin;” and the sin which
receives such wages be the transgression of a law by a voluntary agent,
(and this is the rule as laid down by God himself,) then on no Scriptural
principle is the human race to be considered absolutely liable to personal
and conscious eternal death for the sin of Adam; and so the very ground
assumed by the advocates of this theory is unfounded.

But perhaps they will bring into consideration the foreknowledge of actual
transgression as contemplated by the decree, though this notion is
repudiated by Calvin, and the rigid divines of his school; but we reply to
this, that either the sin of Adam was a sufficient reason for the actual
infliction of a sentence of eternal death upon his descendants, or it was not.
If not, then no man will be punished with eternal death, as the consequence
of Adam’s sin, and that sentence will rest upon actual transgressions alone.
If, then, this be allowed, there comes in an important inquiry: Are the
actual transgressions of the non-elect evitable, or necessary? If the former,
then even the reprobate, without the grace of Christ, which they cannot
have, because he died not for them, may avoid all sin, and consequently
keep the whole law of God. and claim, though still reprobates, to be justified by their works. But if sin be unavoidable and necessary as to them, in consequence both of the corrupt nature they have derived from Adam, and the withholding of that sanctifying influence which can be imparted only to the elect, for whom alone Christ died, how are they to be proved justly liable, on that account, to eternal death? This is the penalty of sin, of sin as the transgression of the law; but then law is given only to creatures in a state of trial, either to those who, from their unimpaired powers, are able to keep it; or to those to whom is made the promise of gracious assistance, upon their asking it, in order that they may be enabled to obey the will of God; and in no case are those to whom God issues his commands supposed in Scripture to be absolutely incapable of obedience, much less liable to be punished, without remedy, for not obeying, if so incapacitated. This would, indeed, make the Divine Being a hard master, “reaping where he has not sown;” which is the language only of the “wicked servant;” and therefore to be abhorred by all good men. But if a point so obviously at variance with truth and equity be maintained, the doctrine comes to this, that men are considered, in the Divine decree, as justly liable to eternal death, (their actual sins being foreseen,) because they have been placed by some previous decree, or higher branch of the same decree, in circumstances which necessitate them to sin: a doctrine which raises sublapsarianism into supralapsarianism itself. This is not the view which God gives us of his own justice; and it is contradicted by every notion of justice which has ever obtained among men: nor is it at all relieved by the subtilty of Zanchius and others, who distinguish between being necessitated to sin, and being forced to sin; and argue, that because in sinning the reprobate follow the motions of their own will, they are justly punishable; though in this they fulfil the predestination of God. The true question is, and it is not at all affected by such merely verbal distinctions, Can the reprobate do otherwise than sin, and could they ever do otherwise? They sin willingly, it is said. This is granted; but could they ever will otherwise? The will is but one of many diseased powers of the soul. Is there, as to them, any cure for this disease of the will? According to this scheme, there is not; and they will from necessity, as well as act from necessity: so that the difficulty, though thrown a step backward, remains in full force.

In support of their notion, that the penalty attached to original sin is eternal death, they allege, it is true, that the Apostle Paul represents all men under
condemnation in consequence of their connection with the first Adam; and attributes the salvation of those who are rescued from the ruin, only to the obedience of the second Adam. This is granted; but it will not avail to establish their position, that the human race being all under an absolute sentence of condemnation to eternal death, almighty God, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, elected a part of them to salvation, and left the remainder to the justice of their previous sentence.

For,

1. Supposing that the whole human race were under condemnation in their sense, this will not account for the punishment of those who reject the Gospel. Their rejecting the Gospel is represented in Scripture as the sole cause of their condemnation, and never merely as an aggravating cause, as though they were under an irreversible previous sentence of death, and that this refusal of the Gospel only heightened a previously certain and inevitable punishment. An aggravated cause of condemnation it is; but for this reason, that it is the rejection of a remedy, and an abuse of mercy, neither of which could have any place in a previously fixed condition of reprobation. If, therefore, it is true that “THIS is the condemnation, that light is come it, to the world, and men love darkness rather than light,” we must conclude, that the previous state of condemnation was not irremediable and unalterable, or this circumstance, the rejection “of the light,” or revelation of mercy in the Gospel, could not be their condemnation.

2. Leaving the meaning of the apostle in Romans v, out of our consideration for a moment, the Scriptures never place the final condemnation of men upon the ground of Adam’s offence, and their connection with him. ACTUAL sin forms the ground of every reproving charge; of every commination; and, beyond all doubt, of the condemnatory sentence at the day of judgment. To what ought we to refer, as explaining the true cause of the eternal punishment of any portion of our race, but to the proceedings of that day, when that eternal punishment is to be awarded? Of the reason of this proceeding, of the facts to be charged, and of the sins to be punished, we have very copious information in the Scriptures; but these are evil works, and disbelief of the Gospel. Nowhere is it said, or even hinted in the most distant manner, that men will be sentenced to eternal death, at that day, either because of Adam’s sin or because their connection with Adam made them inevitably corrupt in
nature, and unholy in conduct; from which effects they could not escape, because God had from eternity resolved to deny them the grace necessary to this end.

3. The true view of the apostle’s doctrine in Romans 5, is to be ascertained, not by making partial extracts from his discourse; but by taking the argument entire, and in all its parts.

The Calvinists assume, that the apostle represents what the penal condition of the human race would have been had not Christ interposed as our Redeemer. Here is one of their great and leading mistakes, for St. Paul does not touch this point. The Calvinist assumes, that the whole race of men, but for the decree of election, would not only have come into actual being, but have been actually and individually punished for ever; and, on this assumption, endeavours to justify his doctrine of the arbitrary selection of a part of mankind to grace and salvation, the other being left in the state in which they were found. Even this is contrary to other parts of their own system; for the reprobate are placed in an infinitely worse condition than had they been merely thus left without a share in Christ’s redemption; because, even according to Calvinistic interpreters, their condemnation is fearfully aggravated; and by that which they have no means of avoiding, by actual sin and unbelief. But the assumption itself is wholly imaginary. For the apostle speaks not of what the human race would have been, that is, he affirms nothing as to their penal condition, in case Christ had not undertaken the office of Redeemer; but he looks at their moral state and penal condition, as the case actually stands: in other words, he takes the state of man as it was actually established after the fall, as recorded in the book of Genesis. No child of Adam was actually born into the world until the promise of a Redeemer had been given, and the virtue of his anticipated redemption had begun to apply itself to the case of the fallen pair; consequently, all mankind are born under a constitution of mercy, which actually existed before their birth. What the race would have been, had not the redeeming plan been brought in, the Scriptures nowhere tell us, except that a sentence of death to be executed “in the day” in which the first pair sinned, was the sanction of the law under which they were placed; and it is great presumption to assume it as a truth, that they would have multiplied their species only for eternal destruction. That the race would have been propagated under an absolute necessity of sinning, and of being made eternally miserable, we may boldly affirm to be impossible; because it supposes an administration contradicted by every attribute which the
Scriptures ascribe to God. What the actual state of the human race is, in consequence both of the fall of Adam and of the interposition of Christ; of the imputation of the effects of the offence of the one, and of the obedience of the other; is the only point to which our inquiries can go, and to which, indeed, the argument of the apostle is confined.

There is, it is true, an imputation of the consequences of Adam’s sin to his posterity, independent of their personal offences; but we can only ascertain what these consequences are by referring to the apostle himself. One of these consequences is asserted explicitly, and others are necessarily implied in this chapter and in other parts of his writings. That which is here explicitly asserted is, that death passed upon all men, though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, that is, not personally; and therefore this death is to be regarded as the result of Adam’s transgression alone, and of our having been so far “constituted sinners” in him, as to be liable to it. But then the death of which he here speaks, is the death of the body; for his argument, that “death reigned from Adam to Moses,” obliges us to understand him as speaking of the visible and known fact, that men in those ages died as to the body, since he could not intend to say that all the generations of men, from Adam to Moses, died eternally. The death of the body, then, is the first effect of the imputation of Adam’s sin to his descendants, as stated in this chapter. A second is necessarily implied; a state of spiritual death, — the being born into the world with a corrupt nature, always tending to actual offence. This is known to be the apostle’s opinion, from other parts of his writings; but that passage in this chapter in which it is necessarily implied, is verse 16. “The free gift is of many offences unto justification.” If men need justification of “many offences;” if all men need this, and that under a dispensation of help and spiritual healing; then the nature which universally leads to offences so numerous must be inherently and universally corrupt. A third consequence is a conditional liability to eternal death; for that state which makes us liable to actual sin, makes us also liable to actual punishment. But this is conditional, not absolute; for since the apostle makes the obedience of Christ available to the forgiveness of the “many offences” we may commit in consequence of the corrupt nature we have derived from Adam, and extends this to all men, they can only perish by their own fault. Now beyond these three effects we do not find that the apostle carries the consequence of Adam’s sin. Of unpardoned “offences” eternal death is the consequence; but these are personal. Of the sin of
Adam, imputed, these are the consequences, — the death of the body, — and our introduction into the world with a nature tending to actual offences, and a conditional liability to punishment. But both are connected with a remedy as extensive as the disease. For the first, the resurrection from the dead; for the other the healing of grace and the promise of pardon, and thus though “condemnation” has passed upon “all men,” yet the free gift unto justification of life passes upon “all men” also, — the same general terms being used by the apostle in each case. The effects of “the free gift” are not immediate; the reign of death remains till the resurrection; but “in Christ shall all be made alive,” and it is every man’s own fault, not his fate, if his resurrection be not a happy one. The corrupt nature remains till the healing is applied by the Spirit of God; but it is provided, and is actually applied in the case of all those dying in infancy as we have already showed; (See chapter xviii, p. 3;) while justification and regeneration are offered, through specified means and conditions, to all who are of the age of reason and choice, and thus the sentence of eternal death may be reversed. What then becomes of the premises in the sublapsarian theory which we have been examining, that in Adam all men are absolutely condemned to eternal death? Had Christ not undertaken human redemption, we have no proof, no indication in Scripture, that for Adam’s sin any but the actually guilty pair would have been doomed to this condemnation; and though now the race having become actually existent, is for this sin, and for the demonstration of God’s hatred of sin in general, involved, through a federal relation and by an imputation of Adam’s sin, in the effects above mentioned; yet a universal remedy is provided.

But we are not to be confined even to this view of the grace of God, when we speak of actual offences. Here the case is even strengthened. The redemption of Christ extends not merely to the removal of the evils laid upon us by the imputation of Adam’s transgression; but to those which are the effects of our own personal choice — to the forgiveness of “many offences,” upon our repentance and faith, however numerous and aggravated they may be; — to the bestowing of “abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness;” — and not merely to the reversal of the sentence of death, but to our “reigning in life by Jesus Christ:” so that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life:” — which phrase, in the New Testament, does never mean less than the glorification of the bodies and souls of believers in the
kingdom of God, and in the presence and enjoyment of the eternal glory of Christ.

So utterly without foundation is the leading assumption in the sublapsarian scheme, that the decree of election and reprobation finds the human race in a state of common and absolute liability to personal eternal punishment; and that by making a sovereign selection of a part of mankind, God does no injustice to the rest by passing them by. The word of God asserts no such doctrine as the absolute condemnation of the race to eternal death, merely for Adam’s offence; and if it did, the merciful result of the obedience of Christ is declared to be not only as extensive as the evil, in respect of the number of persons so involved; but in “grace” to be more abounding. Finally, this assumption falls short of the purpose for which it is made; because the mere “passing by” of a part of the race, already, according to them, under eternal condemnation, and which they contend inflicts no injustice upon them, does not account for their additional and aggravated punishment for doing what they had never the natural or dispensed power of avoiding, — breaking God’s holy laws, and rejecting his Gospel. Upon a close examination of the sublapsarian scheme, it will be found, therefore, to involve all the leading difficulties of the Calvinistic theory as it is broadly exhibited by Calvin himself. In both cases reprobation is grounded on an act of mere will, resting on no reason: it respects not in either, as its primary cause, the demerit of the creature; and it punishes eternally without personal guilt, arising either from actual sin, or from the rejection of the Gospel. Both unite in making sin a necessary result of the circumstances in which God has placed a great part of mankind, which, by no effort of theirs, can be avoided; or, what is the same thing, which they shall never be disposed to avoid; and how either of these schemes, in strict consequence, can escape the charge of making God the author of sin, which the synod of Dort acknowledges to be “blasphemy,” is inconceivable. For how does it alter the case of the reprobate, whether the fall of Adam himself was necessitated, or whether he acted freely? They, at least, are necessitated to sin; they come into the world under a necessitating constitution, which is the result of an act to which they gave no consent; and their case differs nothing, except in circumstances which do not alter its essential character, from that of beings immediately created by God with a nature necessarily producing sinful acts, and to counteract which there is no remedy: — a case which few have been bold enough to suppose.
The different views of the doctrine of predestination, as stated above, greatly agitated the Protestant world, from the time of Calvin to the sitting of the celebrated synod of Dort, whose decisions on this point, having been received as a standard by several Churches and by many theologians, may next be properly introduced; although, after what has been said, they call only for brief remark.

“The Judgment of the synod of the Reformed Belgic Churches,” to which many divines of note of other Reformed Churches were admitted, “on the articles controverted in the Belgic Churches,” was drawn up in Latin, and read in the great church at Dort, in the year 1619; and a translation into English of this “Judgment,” with the synod’s “Rejection of Errors,” was published in the same year. (London, printed by John Bill.) This translation having become scarce, or not being known to Mr. Scott, he published a new translation in 1818, from which, as being in more modern English, and, as far as I have compared it unexceptionably faithful, I shall take the extracts necessary to exhibit the synod’s decision on the point before us.

Art. 1. “As all men have sinned in Adam, and have become exposed to the curse and eternal death, God would have done no injustice to any one, if he had determined to leave the whole human race under sin and the curse, and to condemn them on account of sin; according to the words of the apostle, ‘all the world is become guilty before God,’ Romans 3:19. ‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,’ 23; and ‘the wages of sin is death,’ Romans 6:23.”

The synod here assumes that all men, in consequence of Adam’s sin, have become exposed to the curse of “eternal death;” and they quote passages to prove it, which manifestly prove nothing to the point. The two first speak of actual sin; the third, of the wages, or penalty of actual sin, as the context of each will show. The very texts adduced, show how totally at a loss the synod was for any thing like Scriptural evidence of this strange doctrine; which, however, as we have seen, would not, if true, help them through their difficulties, seeing it leaves the punishment of the reprobate for actual sin and for disbelief of the Gospel, still unaccounted for on every principle of justice.

Art. 4. “They who believe not the Gospel, on them the wrath of God remaineth; but those who receive it, and embrace the Saviour
Jesus with a true and living faith, are, through him, delivered from the wrath of God, and receive the gift of everlasting life.”

To this there is nothing to object; only it is to be observed, that those who are not elected to eternal life out of the common mass, are not according to this article, merely left and passed by; but are brought under an obligation of believing the Gospel, which, nevertheless, is no “good news” to them, and in which they have no interest at all; and yet, in default of believing, “the wrath of God abideth upon them.” Thus there is, in fact, no alternative for them. They cannot believe, or else it would follow that those reprobated might be saved; and, therefore, the wrath of God “abideth upon them,” for no fault of their own. This, however, the next article denies.

Art. 5. “The cause or fault of this unbelief, as also of all other sins, is by no means in God; but in man. But faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation by him, is the free gift of God. ‘By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,’ Ephesians 2:8. In like manner, ‘it is given to you to believe in Christ,’ Philippians 1:29.”

These passages would be singular proofs that the fault of unbelief is in men themselves, did not the next article explain the connection between them and the premises in the minds of the synodists. A much more appropriate text, but a rather difficult one on their theory, would have been, “ye have not, because ye ask not.”

Art. 6. “That some, in time, have faith given them by God, and others have it not given, proceeds from his eternal decree; for ‘known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,’ Acts 15:18. According to which decree, he gradually softens the hearts of the elect, however hard, and he bends them to believe; but the non-elect he leaves, in just judgment, to their own perversity and hardness. — And here, especially, a deep discrimination, at the same time both merciful and just; a discrimination of men equally lost, opens itself to us, or that decree of election and reprobation which is revealed in the word of God; which as perverse, impure, and unstable persons do wrest to their own destruction, so it affords ineffable consolation to holy and pious souls.”
To this article the synod appends no Scripture proofs; which if the doctrines it contains were, as the synodists say, “revealed in the word of God,” would not have been wanting. The passage which stands in the middle of the article could scarcely be intended as a proof, since it would equally apply to any other doctrine which does not shut out the prescience of God. The doctrine of the two articles just quoted, will be seen by taking them together. The position laid down is, that “the fault” of not believing the Gospel is “in man.” The alleged proof of this is that faith is the gift of God. But this only proves that the fault of not believing is in man, just as it allows that God, the giver of faith, is willing to give faith to those who have it not, and that they will not receive it. In no other way can it prove the faultiness of man; for to what end are we taught that faith is the gift of God in order to prove the fault of not believing to be in man, if God will not bestow the gift, and if man cannot believe Without such bestowment? This, however, is precisely what the synod teaches. It argues, that faith is the gift of God; that it is only given to “some;” and that this proceeds from God’s “eternal decree.” So that, by virtue of this decree, he gives faith to some, and withholds it from others, who are, thereupon, left without the power of believing; and for this act of God, therefore, and not for a fault of their own, they are punished eternally. And yet the synod calls this a “just judgment; affording ineffable consolation to holy souls,” and a “doctrine only rejected by the perverse and impure!”

As we have already quoted and commented on the 7th and 8th articles on election, we proceed to

Art. 10. “Now the cause of this gratuitous election is the sole good pleasure of God; not consisting in this, that he elected into the condition of salvation certain qualities or human actions, from all that were possible; but in that, out of the common multitude of sinners, he took to himself certain persons as his peculiar property, according to the Scripture, ‘for the children being not born, neither having done any good or evil, &c, it is said (that is to Rebecca) the elder shall serve the younger; even as it is written, Jacob have I loved; but Esau have I hated,’ Romans 9:11-13. ‘And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,’ Acts 13:48.”

Thus the ground of this election is resolved wholly into the “good pleasure of God,” (est solum Dei beneplacitum,) “having no respect, as to its REASON, or CONDITION, though it may have as to its END, to any foreseen
faith, obedience of faith, or any other good quality and disposition,” as it is expressed in the preceding article. Let us, then, see how the case stands with the reprobate.

Art. 15. “Moreover, Holy Scripture doth illustrate and commend to us this eternal and free grace of our election, in this more especially, that it doth also testify all men not to be elected; but that some are non-elect, or passed by in the eternal election of God: whom, truly, God, from most free, just, irreprehensible, and immutable good pleasure, decreed to leave in the common misery into which they had, by their own fault, cast themselves, and not to bestow on them living faith, and the grace of conversion; but having left them in their own ways, and under just judgment, at length, not only on account of their unbelief, but also of all their other sins, to condemn, and eternally punish them for the manifestation of his own justice. And this is the decree of reprobation which determines that God is in no wise the author of sin; (which, to be thought of, is blasphemy;) but a tremendous, irreprehensible, just Judge and avenger.”

Thus we hear the synodists confessing, in the same breath in which they plausibly represent reprobation as a mere passing by and leaving men “in the common misery,” that the reprobate are punishable for their “unbelief and other sins,” and so this decree imports, therefore, much more than leaving men in the “common misery.” For this “common misery” can mean no more than the misery common to all mankind by the sin of Adam, into which his fall plunged the elect, as well as the reprobate; and to be “left” in it, must be understood of being left to the sole consequences of that offence. Now, were it even to be conceded that these consequences extend to personal and conscious eternal punishment, which has been disproved; yet, even then, their decree has a much more formidable aspect, terrible and repulsive as this alone would be. For we are expressly told, that God not only “decreed to leave them in this misery,” but “not to bestow on them living faith, and the grace of conversion;” and then to condemn, and eternally punish them, “on account of their unbelief,” which by their own showing, these reprobates could not avoid; and for “all their other sins,” which they could not but commit, since it was “decreed” to deny to them “the grace of conversion.” Thus the case of the reprobate is deeply aggravated, beyond what it could have been if they had been merely “left in the common misery;” and the synod and its followers have, therefore, the
task of showing, how the punishing of men for what they never could avoid, and which, it was expressly decreed they never should avoid, “is a manifestation of the justice” of almighty GOD.

From the above extracts it will be seen how little reason Mr. Scott had to reprove Dr. Heylin with “bearing false witness against his neighbour,” (Scott’s Translation of the Articles of the Synod of Dort, p. 120,) on account of having given a summary of the eighteen articles of the synod, on predestination, in the following words: — “That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever; and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation, without any regard to their infidelity and impenitency.” Whether Mr. Scott understood this controversy or not, Dr. Heylin shows, by this summary, that he neither misapprehended it, nor bore “false witness against his neighbour,” in so stating it; for as to the stir made about his rendering “multitudo” a very small number, this verbal inaccuracy affects not the merits of the doctrine; and neither the synodists, nor any of their followers, ever allowed the elect to be a very great number. The number, less or more, alters not the doctrine. With respect to the elect, the synod confesses, that the decree of election has no regard, as a cause, to faith and obedience foreseen in the persons so elected; and with respect to the reprobate, although it is not so explicit in asserting that the decree of reprobation has no regard to their infidelity and impenitency, the foregoing extracts cannot possibly be interpreted into any other meaning. For it is manifestly in vain for the synodists to attempt, in the 15th article, to gloss over the doctrine, by saying that men “cast themselves into the common misery by their own fault,” when they only mean that they were cast into it by Adam and by his fault. If they intended to ground their decree of reprobation on foresight of the personal offences of the reprobate, they would have said this in so many words; but the materials of which the synod was composed forbade such a declaration; and they themselves, in the “Rejection of Errors,” appended to their chapter “De divina Praedestinatione,” place in this list “the errors of those who teach that God has not decreed, from his own mere just will, to leave any in the fall of Adam, and in the common state of sin and damnation, or to pass them by in the communication of grace necessary to faith and conversion;” quoting as a proof of this dogma, “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,” and giving no intimation that they understand
this passage in any other sense than Calvin and his immediate followers have uniformly affixed to it. What Dr. Heylin has said is here, then, abundantly established; for if the decree of reprobation is to be referred to God’s “mere will,” and if its operation is to leave the reprobate “in the fall of Adam,” and “to pass them by in that communication of grace which is necessary to faith and conversion,” the decree itself is that which prevents both penitence and faith, and stands upon some other ground than the personal infidelity and impenitency of the reprobate, and cannot have “any regard” to either, except as a part of its own dread consequences: a view of the matter which the supralapsarians would readily admit. How their doctrine, so stated by themselves, could give the synod any reason to complain, as they do in their conclusion, that they were slandered by their enemies when they were charged with teaching, “that God, by the bare and mere determination of his will, without any respect of the sin of any man, predestinated and created the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation,” will not be very obvious; or why they should startle at the same doctrine in one dress which they themselves have but clothed in another. The fact is, that the divisions in the synod obliged the leading members, who were chiefly stout supralapsarians, to qualify their doctrine somewhat in words, while substantially it remained the same; but what they lost by giving up a few words in one place, they secured by retaining them in another, or by resorting to subtleties not obvious to the commonalty. Of this subtilty, the apparent disclaimer just quoted is in proof. When they seem to deny that God reprobates without any respect to the sin of any man, they may mean that he had respect to the sin of Adam, or to sin in Adam; for they do not deny that they reject personal sin as a ground of reprobation. Even when they appear to allow that God had, in reprobation, respect to the corruption of human nature, or even to personal transgression, they never confess that God had respect to sin, in either sense, as the impulsive or meritorious cause of reprobation. But the greatest subtilty remains behind; for the synod says nothing, in this complaint and apparent rejection of the doctrine charged upon them by their adversaries, but what all the supralapsarian divines would say. — These, as we have seen, make a distinction between the two parts of the decree of reprobation, — PRETERITION and PREDAMNATION, the latter of which most always have respect to actual sin; and hence arises their distinction between “destruction” and “damnation.” For they say, it is one thing to predestinate and create to damnation, and another to predestinate and create to destruction. Damnation, being the sentence of a judge, must
be passed in consideration of sin; but destruction may be the act of a
sovereign, and so inflicted by right of dominion. \[1136\] The synod would have
disallowed something substantial, had they denied that God created any
man to destruction, without respect to sin, and were safe enough in
allowing that he has created none, without respect to sin, unto damnation.
But among the errors on predestination, which they formally “reject,” and
which they place under nine distinct heads, thus attempting to guard the
pure and orthodox doctrine as to this point on the right hand and on the
left, they are careful not to condemn the supralapsarian doctrine, or to
place even its highest branches among the doctrines disavowed.

The doctrine of the Church of Scotland, on these topics, is expressed in the
answers to the 12th and 13th questions of its large catechism: “God’s
decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will; whereby,
from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained
whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men”
— “God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the
praise of his glorious grace to be manifested in due time, hath elected some
angels to glory; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life and the
means thereof; and also, according to his sovereign power and the
unsearable counsel of his own will, ( whereby he extendeth or
withholdeth favour as he pleaseth,) hath passed by and foreordained the
rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the
glory of his justice.”

In this general view there appears a strict conformity to the opinions of
Calvin, as before given. All things are the subjects of decree and
pre-ordination; election and reprobation are grounded upon the mere will
of God; election is the choosing men, not only to salvation, but to the means
of salvation; from which the reprobates are therefore excluded, as
passed by, and foreordained to wrath; and yet though the “means of
salvation” are never put within their reach, this wrath is inflicted upon them
“for their sin;” and to the praise of God’s justice! The Church of Scotland
adopts, also, the notion that decrees of election and reprobation extend to
angels as well as men; a pretty certain proof that the framers of this
catechism were not sublapsarians, for as to angels, there could be no
election out of a “common misery;” and with Calvin, therefore, they choose
to refer the whole to the arbitrary pleasure and will of GOD. — “The angels
who stood in their integrity, Paul calls elect; if their constancy rested on
the Divine pleasure, the defection of others argues their having been
forsaken: (direlectos,) a fact, for which no other cause can be assigned, than the reprobation hidden in the secret counsel of GOD.”

The ancient Church of the Vaudois, in the valleys of Piedmont, have a confession of faith, bearing date A.D. 1120; and which, probably, transmits the opinions of much more ancient times. The only article which bears upon the extent of the death of Christ is drawn up, as might be expected in an age of the Church when it was received, as a matter almost entirely undisputed, that Christ died for the salvation of the whole world. Art. 8. “Christ is our life. truth, peace, and righteousness; also our pastor, advocate, sacrifice, and priest, who died for the salvation of all those that believe, and is risen again for our justification.”

The Confession of Faith, published by the Churches of Piedmont in 1655, bears a different character. In the year 1630, a plague which was introduced from France into these valleys, swept off all the ministers but two, and with them ended the race of their ancient barbes, or pastors. (See “Historical Defense, &c, of the Waldenses,” by Sim’s.) The Vaudois were then under the necessity of applying to the reformed Churches of France and Geneva for a supply of ministers; and with them came in the doctrine of Calvin in an authorized form. It was thus embodied in the Confession of 1655. Art. 11. “God saves from corruption and condemnation those whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness, that he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Jesus Christ his Son: passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of his free will and justice.” The last clause is expressed in the very words of Calvin.

The 12th article in the Confession of the French Churches, 1558, is, in substance, Calvinistic, though brief and guarded in expression. “We believe, that out of this general corruption and condemnation in which all men are plunged, God doth deliver them whom he hath, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, chosen of his mere goodness and mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, without any consideration of their works, leaving the rest in their sins, and damnable estate, that he may show forth in them his justice, as, in the elect, he doth most illustriously declare the riches of his mercy. For one is not better than another, until such time as God doth make the difference, according to his unchangeable purpose which he hath determined in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world.” (Quick’s “Synodicon in Gallia Reformata.”) This confession was drawn up by
Calvin himself, though not in language so strong as he usually employs; which, perhaps, indicates that the majority of the French pastors were inclined to the sublapsarian theory, and did not, in every point, coincide with their great master.

The Westminster Confession gives the sentiments both of the English Presbyterian Churches, and the Church of Scotland. Chapter 2. treats of the predestination.

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly, and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot either be increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

Here we have no attempts at qualification after the example of the synod of Dort; but the whole is conformed to the higher and most unmitigated parts of the Institutes of Calvin. By the side of the Presbyterian Confession, the seventeenth article of the Church of England must appear exceedingly
moderate; and, as to *Calvinistic predestination*, to say the least, equivocal.

It never gave satisfaction to the followers of Calvin, who had put his stronger impress upon the Augustinianism which floated in the minds of many of the divines of the reformation, who generally, as appears from the earliest Protestant confessions and catechisms, thought fit to recommend that either these points should not be touched at all, or so speak of them as to admit great latitude of interpretation, and that, probably, in charitable respect to the varying opinions of the theologians and Churches of the day. It is of the perfected form of Calvinism that Arminius speaks, when he says,

“It neither agrees nor corresponds with the harmony of those confessions which were published together in one volume at Geneva, in the name of the reformed and Protestant Churches. If that harmony of confessions be faithfully consulted, it will appear, that many of them do not speak in the same manner concerning predestination; that some of them only incidentally mention it, and that they evidently never once touch upon those heads of the doctrine which are now in great repute, and particularly urged in the preceding scheme of predestination. The confessions of Bohemia, England, and Wirtemburg, and the first Helvetian Confession, and that of the four cities of Strasburgh, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau, make no mention of this predestination: those of Basle and Saxony only take a very cursory notice of it in three words. The Augustan Confession speaks of it in such a manner as to induce the Genevan editors to think that some annotation was necessary on their part to give us a previous warning. The last of the Helvetian Confessions, to which a great portion of the reformed Churches have expressed their assent, likewise speaks of it in such a strain as makes me very desirous to see what method can possibly be adopted to give it any accordance with that doctrine of the predestination which I have stated. Without the least contention or cavilling it may be very properly made a subject of doubt, whether this doctrine agrees with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.” (*Nichol’s Works of Arminius*, vol. i, p. 557.)

I have given these extracts to show that nothing in the preceding discussion has been assumed as Calvinism, but what is to be found in the writings of
the founder of the system, and in the confessions and creeds of Churches which professedly admitted his doctrine.

With respect to modifications of this system, the sublapsarian theory has been already considered and shown to be substantially the same as the system which it professes to mitigate and improve. We may now adduce another modified theory; but shall, upon examination, find it but little, if at all, removed out of the reach of those objections which have been stated to the various shades of the predestinating scheme already noticed.

That scheme is in England usually called Baxterianism, from the celebrated Baxter, who advocated it in his Treatise of Universal Redemption, and in his Methodus Theologiae. He was, however, in this theory but the disciple of certain divines of the French Protestant Church, whose opinions created many dissensions abroad, and produced so much warmth of opposition from the Calvinistic party, that they were obliged first to engage in the hopeless attempt of softening down the harsher aspects of the doctrine of Calvin and the synod of Dort, in order to keep themselves in countenance; then to attack the Arminians with asperity, in order to purge themselves of the suspicion of entire heterodoxy in a Calvinistic Church; and, finally, to withdraw from the contest. The Calvinism of the Church of France was, however, much mitigated in subsequent times by the influence of the writings of these theologians; a result which also has followed in England from the labours of Baxter, who, though he formed no separate school, has had numerous followers in the Calvinistic Churches of this country. The real author of the scheme, at least, in a systematized form, was Camero, who taught divinity at Saumur, and it was unfolded and defended by his disciple Amyraldus, to whom Curcellæus replied in the work from which I have above made some quotations. Baxter says, in his preface to his Saints’ Rest, “The middle way which Camero, Crocius, Martinius, Amyraldus, Davenant, with all the divines of Britain and Bremen, in the synod of Dort go, I think is nearest the truth of any that I know who have written on these points.” This system he laboured powerfully to defend, and his works on this subject, although his system is often spoken of, being but little known to the general reader, the following exhibition of this scheme, from his work entitled “Universal Redemption,” may be acceptable. It makes great concessions to that view of the Scriptural doctrine which we have attempted to establish; but, for want of going another step, it is, perhaps, the most inconsistent theory to which the varied attempts to modify Calvinism have given rise. Baxter first differs
from the majority of Calvinists, though not from all, in his statement of the doctrine of satisfaction.

“Christ’s sufferings were not a fulfilling of the law’s threatening, (though he bore its curse materially;) but a satisfaction for our not fulfilling the precept, and to prevent God’s fulfilling the threatening on us.”

“Christ paid not, therefore, the idem, but the tantundem, or æquivalens; not the very debt which we owed and the law required, but the value; (else it were not strictly satisfaction, which is redditio æquivalentis:) and (it being improperly called the paying of a debt, but properly a suffering for the guilty) the idem is nothing but supplicium delinquentis. In criminals, dum alius solvet simul aliud solvitur. The law knoweth no vicarius pænae; though the law maker may admit it, as he is above law; else there were no place for pardon, if the proper debt be paid and the law not relaxed but fulfilled.”

“Christ did neither obey nor suffer in any man’s stead, by a strict, proper representation of his person in point of law; so as that the law should take it as done or suffered by the party himself. But only as a third person as a mediator, he voluntarily bore what else the sinner should have borne.”

“To assert the contrary (especially as to particular persons considered in actual sin) is to overthrow all Scripture theology, and to introduce all Antinomianism; to overthrow all possibility of pardon, and assert justification before we sinned or were born, and to make ourselves to have satisfied God.

“Therefore we must not say that Christ died nostro loco, so as to personate us, or represent our persons in law sense; but only to bear what else we must have borne.” (Universal Redemption, pp. 48-51.)

This system explicitly asserts, that Christ made a satisfaction by his death equally for the sins of every man; and thus Baxter essentially differs both from the rigid Calvinists, and also from the sublapsarians, who, though they may allow that the reprobate derive some benefits from Christ’s death, so that there is a vague sense in which he may be said to have died for all
men, yet they, of course, deny to such the benefit of Christ’s satisfaction or atonement which Baxter contends for.

“Neither the law, whose curse Christ bore, nor God, as the legislator to be satisfied, did distinguish between men as elect and reprobate, or as believers and unbelievers, de presenti vel de futuro; and to impose upon Christ, or require from him satisfaction for the sins of one sort more than of another, but for mankind in general.

“God the Father, and Christ the Mediator, now dealeth with no man upon the mere rigorous terms of the first law; (obey perfectly and live, else thou shalt die;) but giveth to all much mercy, which, according to the tenor of that violated law, they could not receive, and calleth them to repentance, in order to their receiving farther mercy offered them. And accordingly he will not judge any at last according to the mere law of works, but as they have obeyed or not obeyed his conditions or terms of grace.

“It was not the sins of the elect only, but of all mankind fallen, which lay upon Christ satisfying. And to assert the contrary, injuriously diminisheth the honour of his sufferings; and hath other desperate ill consequences.” (Universal Redemption, pp. 36, 37, and 50.)

The benefits derived to all men equally, from the satisfaction of Christ, he thus states, —

“All mankind immediately upon Christ’s satisfaction, are redeemed and delivered from that legal necessity of perishing which they were under, (not by remitting sin or punishment directly to them, but by giving up God’s jus puniendi into the hands of the Redeemer; nor by giving any right directly to them, but per meram resultantiam this happy change is made for them in their relation, upon the said remitting of God’s right and advantage of justice against them,) and they are given up to the Redeemer as their owner and ruler; to be dealt with upon terms of mercy which have a tendency to their recovery.

“God the Father and Christ the Mediator hath freely, without any prerequisite condition on man’s part, enacted a law of grace of universal extent, in regard of its tenor, by which he giveth, as a
deed of gift, Christ himself, with all his following benefits which he bestoweth; (as benefactor and legislator;) and this to all alike, without excluding, any upon condition they believe, and accept the offer.

“By this law, testament, or covenant, all men are conditionally pardoned, justified, and reconciled to God already, and no man absolutely; nor doth it make a difference, nor take notice of any till men’s performance or non-performance of the condition makes a difference.

“In the new law Christ hath truly given himself with a conditional pardon, justification, and conditional right to salvation, to all men in the world, without exception.” (Universal Redemption, p. 36, &c.)

On the case of the heathen: —

“Though God hath been pleased less clearly to acquaint us on what terms he dealeth with those that hear not of Christ, yet it being most clear and certain, that he dealeth with them on terms of general grace, and not on the terms of the rigorous law of works; this may evince them to be the Mediator’s subjects, and redeemed.

“Though it be very difficult, and not very necessary, to know what is the condition prescribed to them that hear not of Christ, or on what terms Christ will judge them; yet, to me it seems to be the covenant made with Adam, Genesis 3:15, which they are under, requiring their taking God to be their only God and Redeemer, and to expecting mercy from him and loving him above all, as their end and chief good; and repenting of sin, and sincere obedience, according to the laws promulgated to them, to lead them farther.

“All those that have not heard of Christ, have yet much mercy which they receive from him, and is the fruit of his death: according to the well or ill using whereof it seems possible that God will judge them.

“It is a course to blind, and not to inform men, to lay the main stress in the doctrine of redemption upon our uncertain conclusions of God’s dealing with such as never heard of Christ, seeing all proof is per notiora; and we must reduce points uncertain to the
certain, and not the certain to the uncertain, in our trial.”
(Universal Redemption, pp. 37, 38, and 54.)

In arguments drawn from the consequences which follow the denial of “universal satisfaction,” Baxter is particularly terse and conclusive.

“The doctrine which denieth universal satisfaction hath all these inconveniences and absurd consequents following: therefore it is not of God, nor true.

“It either denieth the universal promise or conditional gift of pardon and life to all men if they will believe, and then it overturneth the substance of Christ’s law and Gospel promise; or else It maketh God to give conditionally to all men a pardon and salvation which Christ never purchased, and without his dying for men.

“It maketh God either not to offer the effects of Christ’s satisfaction (pardon and life) to all, but only to the elect; or else to offer that which is not, and which he cannot give.

“It denieth the direct object of faith, and of God’s offer, that is Christum qui satisfect, (a Christ that hath satisfied.)

“It either denieth the non-elect’s deliverance from that flat necessity of perishing, which came on man for sinning against the first law, by its remediless, unsuspended obligation; (and so neither Christ, Gospel, or mercy, had ever any nature of a remedy to them, nor any more done toward their deliverance than toward the deliverance of the devils;) or else it maketh this deliverance and remedy to be without satisfaction by Christ for them.

“It either denieth that God commandeth all to believe, (but only the elect;) or else maketh God to assign them a deceiving object for their faith, commanding them to believe in that which never was, and to trust in that which would deceive them if they did trust it.

“It maketh God either to have appointed and commanded the non-elect to use no means at all for their recovery and salvation, or else to have appointed them means which are all utterly useless and insufficient, for want of a prerequisite cause without them; yea, which imply a contradiction.
“It maketh the true and righteous God to make promises of pardon and salvation to all men on condition of believing, which he neither would nor could perform, (for want of such satisfaction to his justice,) if they did believe.

“It denieth the true sufficiency of Christ’s death for the pardoning and saving of all men, if they did believe.

“It makes the cause of men’s damnation to be principally for want of an expiatory sacrifice and of a Saviour, and not of believing.

“It leaveth all the world, elect as well as others, without any ground and object for the first justifying faith, and in an utter uncertainty whether they may believe to justification or not.

“It denieth the most necessary humbling aggravation of men’s sins, so that neither the minister can tell wicked men that they have sinned against him that bought them, nor can any wicked man so accuse himself; no, nor any man that doth not know himself to be elect: they cannot say, my sins put Christ to death, and were the cause of his sufferings: nay, a minister cannot tell any man in the world, certainly, (their sins put Christ to death,) because he is not certain who is elect or sincere in the faith.

“It subverteth Christ’s new dominion and government of the world, and his general legislation and judgment according to his law, which is now founded in his title of redemption, as the first dominion and government was on the title of creation.

“It maketh all the benefits that the non-elect receive, whether spiritual or corporal; and so even the relaxation of the curse of the law, (without which relaxation no man could have such mercies,) to befall men without the satisfaction of Christ; and so either make satisfaction, as to all those mercies, needless, or else must find another satisfier.

“It maketh the law of grace to contain far harder terms than the law of works did in its utmost rigour.

“It maketh the law of Moses either to bind all the non-elect still to all ceremonies and bondage ordinances, (and so sets up Judaism,)
or else to be abrogated and taken down, and men delivered from it, without Christ’s suffering for them.

“It destroys almost the whole work of the ministry, disabling ministers either to humble men by the chiefest aggravations of their sins, and to convince them of ingratitude and unkind dealing with Christ, or to show them any hopes to draw them to repentance, or any love and mercy tending to salvation to melt and win them to the love of Christ; or any sufficient object for their faith and affiance, or any means to be used for pardon or salvation, or any promise to encourage them to come in, or any threatening to deter them.

“It makes God and the Redeemer to have done no more for the remedying of the misery of most of fallen mankind than for the devils, nor to have put them into any more possibility of pardon or salvation.

“Nay, it makes God to have dealt far hardlier with most men than with the devils; making them a law which requireth their believing in one that never died for them, and taking him for their Redeemer that never redeemed them, and that on the mere foresight that they would not believe it, or decree that they should not; and so to create by that law a necessity of their far sorer punishment, without procuring them any possibility of avoiding it.

“It makes the Gospel of its own nature to be the greatest plague and judgment to most of men that receive it, that ever God sendeth to men on earth, by binding them over to a greater punishment, and aggravating their sin, without giving them any possibility of remedy.

“It maketh the case of all the world, except the elect, as deplorate, remediless, and hopeless, as the case of the damned, and so denieth them to have any day of grace, visitation, or salvation, or any price for happiness put into their hands.

“It maketh Christ to condemn men to hell fire for not receiving him for their Redeemer that never redeemed them, and for not resting on him for salvation by his blood, which was never shed for them, and for not repenting unto life, when they had no hope of mercy, and faith and repentance could not have saved them.
“It putteth sufficient excuses into the mouths of the condemned.

“It maketh the torments of conscience in hell to be none at all, and teacheth the damned to put away all their sorrows and self accusations.

“It denieth all the privative part of those torments which men are obliged to suffer by the obligation of Christ’s law, and so maketh hell either no hell at all, or next to none.

“And I shall anon show how it leads to infidelity and other sins, and after this, what face of religion is left unsubverted? Not that I charge those that deny universal satisfaction with holding all these abominations; but their doctrine of introducing them by necessary consequence: it is the opinion and not the men that I accuse.”

A thorough Arminian could say nothing stronger than what is asserted in several of the above quotations; and, perhaps, what might not be borne from him, may call attention from Baxter, and happy would it be if every advocate of Calvin’s reprobation would give these “CONSEQUENTS,” a candid consideration.

The peculiarity of Baxter’s scheme will be seen from the following farther extracts; and, after all, it singularly leaves itself open to almost all the objections which he so powerfully urges against Calvinism itself.

“Though Christ died equally for all men, in the aforesaid law sense, as he satisfied the offended legislator, and as giving himself to all alike in the conditional covenant; yet he NEVER PROPERLY INTENDED OR PURPOSED THE ACTUAL JUSTIFYING AND SAVING OF ALL, nor of ANY but those that come to be justified and saved: he did not, therefore, die for all, nor for any that perish, with a decree or resolution to save them, MUCH LESS DID HE DIE FOR ALL ALIKE, AS TO THIS INTENT.

“Christ hath given FAITH to none by his law or testament, though he hath revealed, that to some he will, as benefactor and DOMINUS ABSOLUTUS, give that grace which shall infallibly produce it; and God hath given some to Christ that he might prevail with them accordingly; yet this is no giving it to the person, nor hath he in himself ever the more title to it, nor can any lay claim to it as their due.
“It belongeth not to Christ as satisfier, nor yet as legislator, to make wicked refusers to become willing, and receive him and the benefits which he offers; therefore he may do all for them that is fore-expressed, though he cure not their unbelief.

“Faith is a fruit of the death of Christ, (and so is all the good which we do enjoy,) but not directly, as it is satisfaction to justice; but only remotely, as it proceedeth from that JUS DOMINII which Christ has received to send the Spirit in what measure and TO WHOM HE WILL, and to succeed it accordingly; and as it is necessary to the attainment of the farther ends of his death in the certain gathering and saving of THE ELECT.” (Universal Redemption, p. 63, &c.)

Thus, then, the whole theory comes to this, that, although a conditional salvation has been purchased by Christ for all men, and is offered to them, and all legal difficulties are removed out of the way of their pardon as sinners by the atonement, yet Christ hath not purchased for any man the gift of FAITH, or the power of performing the condition of salvation required; but gives this to some, and does not give it to others, by virtue of that absolute dominion over men which he has purchased for himself; so that, in fact, the old scheme of election and reprobation still comes in, only with this difference, that the Calvinists refer that decree to the sovereignty of the Father, Baxter to the sovereignty of the Son; one makes the decree of reprobation to issue from the Creator and Judge; the other, (which is indeed the more repulsive view,) from the Redeemer himself, who has purchased even those to whom he denies the gift of faith with his own most precious blood. This is plain from the following quotation: —

“God did not give Christ faith for his blood shed in exchange; the thing that God was to give the Son for his satisfaction, was dominion and rule of the redeemed creature, and power therein to use what means he saw fit for the bringing in of souls to himself, even to send forth so much of his word and Spirit as he pleased; both the Father and Son resolving, from eternity, to prevail infallibly with all the elect; but never did Christ desire at his Father’s hands that all whom he satisfied for, should be infallibly and irresistibly brought to believe, nor did God ever grant or promise any such thing. Jesus Christ, as a ransom, died for all, and as Rector per leges, or legislator, he hath conveyed the fruits of his death to all, that is, those fruits which it appertained to him as
legislator, to convey, which is right to what his new law or covenant doth promise; but those mercies which he gives as Dominus absoluts, arbitrarily beside or above his engagement, he neither gives nor ever intended to give to all that he died for.” (Universal Redemption, p. 425.)

The only quibble which prevents the real aspect of this scheme from being at first seen, is, that Baxter, and the divines of this school, give to the elect irresistible effectual grace; but contend, that others have sufficient grace. This kind of grace is called, aptly enough, by Baxter himself, “sufficient ineffectual grace;” and that it is worthy the appellation, his own account of it will show.

“I say it again, confidently, all men that perish (who have the use of reason) do perish directly, for rejecting sufficient recovering grace. By grace, I mean mercy contrary to merit: by recovering, I mean such as TENDETH in its own nature toward their recovery, and leadeth or helpeth them thereto. By sufficient, I mean, NOT SUFFICIENT DIRECTLY TO SAVE THEM; (for such none of the elect have till they are saved;) NOR YET SUFFICIENT TO GIVE THEM FAITH OR CAUSE THEM SAVINGLY TO BELIEVE. But it is sufficient to bring them NEARER Christ than they are, though not to put them into immediate possession of Christ by union with him, as faith would do. It is an easy truth, that all men naturally are far from Christ, and that some, by custom in sinning, for want of informing and restraining means, are much farther from him than others, (as the heathens are,) and that it is not God’s usual way (nor to be expected) to bring these men to Christ at once, by one act, or without any preparation, or first bringing them nearer to him. It is a similitude used by some that oppose what I now say: suppose a man in a lower room should go no more steps than he in the middle room, he must go many steps before he came to be as near you as the other is. Now, suppose you offer to take them by the hand when they come to the upper stairs, and give them some other sufficient help to come up the lower steps: if these men will not use the help given them to ascend the first steps, (though entreated,) who can be blamed but themselves if they came not to the top? It is not your fault but theirs, that they have not your hand to lift them up at the last step. So is our present case. Worldlings, and sensual ignorant sinners, have many steps to ascend before they come to
justifying faith; and heathens have many steps before they come as far as ungodly Christians, (as might easily be manifested by enumeration of several necessary particulars.) Now, if these will not use that sufficient help that Christ gives them to come the first, or second, or third step, whose fault is it that they have not faith?”

(Universal Redemption, p. 434.)

But we have no reason to conclude, from this system, that if they took the steps required, it would bring them “nearer to Christ than they are.” or, at least, bring them up to saving faith, which is the great point, since Mr. Baxter’s own doctrine is, that Christ “never properly intended or purposed the actual justifying, and saving of all, and did not, therefore, die for all, nor for any that perish, with a design or resolution to save them, much less did he die for all, as to this intent.” Those, then, for whom Christ died, not with intent to give saving faith, cannot be saved; yet we are told that to these sufficient grace is given, to take a step or two which would bring them “nearer to Christ.” Suppose such persons, then, to take these steps, yet, as Christ died not for them, with intent to give them saving faith, without this intent they cannot have saving faith, since it is not a part of Christ’s purchase, but his arbitrary gift. The truth then is, that their salvation is as impossible as that of the reprobates under the supralapsarian scheme, and the reason of their doom is no act of their own, but an act of Christ himself, who, as “absolute Lord,” denies that to them which is necessary to their salvation.

It is, however, but fair that Mr. Baxter should himself answer this objection.

“Objection. — Then, they that come not the first step are excusable; for, if they had come to the step next believing, they had no assurance that Christ would have given them faith.

“Answer. — No such matter: for though they had no assurance, they had both God’s command to seek more grace, and sufficient encouragement thereto; they had such as Mr. Cotton calls half promises, that is, a discovery of a possibility, and high degree of probability of obtaining; as Peter to Simon, pray, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven. They may think God will not appoint men vain means, and he hath appointed some means to all men to get more grace, and bring them nearer Christ than they are. Yea, no man can name that man since the world was made, that did
his best in the use of these means, and lost his labour. So that if all
men have not faith it is their own fault; not only as originally
sinners, but as rejecting sufficient grace to have brought them
nearer Christ than they were; for which it is that they justly perish,
as is more fully opened in the dispute of sufficient grace.”

One argument from Scripture demolishes this whole scheme. Mr. Baxter
makes the condemnation of men to rest upon their not coming “nearer to
Christ” than they are in their natural state; but the Scripture places their
guilt in not fully “coming to him;” or, in other words, in their not believing
in Christ “to salvation,” since it has made faith their duty, and has
connected salvation with faith. That they must take previous steps, such as
consideration and repentance, is true, and that they are guilty for not taking
them; but then their guilt arises from their rejection of a strength and grace
to consider and repent which is imparted to them, in order to lead them,
through this process, to saving faith itself; and they are condemned for not
having this faith, because not only the preparatory steps, but the faith itself
is put within their reach, or they could not be condemned for unbelief. If
Baxter really meant that any steps these non-elect persons could take,
would actually put them into possession of saving faith, he would have said
so in so many plain words, and then between him and the Arminians there
would have been no difference, so far as they who perish are concerned.
But coming nearer to Christ, and nearer to saving faith are with him quite
distinct. His concern was not to show how the non-elect might be saved,
but how they might with some plausibility be damned.

“What then,” says Dr. Womack, “is the universal redemption you
or they speak of? Doth it consist in the oblation of the curse or
pain, the imperation of grace and righteousness, and the collation
of life and glory? Man’s misery consists but of two parts, sin and
punishment. Doth your universal redemption make sufficient
 provision to free the non-elect from both, or from either of these?
From the wrath to come, the damnation of hell, or from iniquity
and their vain conversation? Indeed in your assize sermons, you
did very seasonably preach up Christ to be a Lord Chief Justice to
judge the reprobate; but I cannot find that ever you declare him to
be their Lord Keeper, or their Lord Treasurer, to communicate his
saving grace for their conversion, or to secure them against the
assaults and rage of their ghostly enemy. These last offices you
suppose him to bear in favour of the elect only, so that your
universal redemption holds a very fair correspondence with your sufficient grace, (as to the non-elect,) — there is not one single person sanctified by this, or saved by that.” (Calvinistic Cabinet Unlocked.)

The remark of Curcellæus on the same system, as delivered by Amyraldus, is conclusive.

“Beside, since faith is necessary, in order to make us partakers of the benefits which are procured by the death of Christ, and since no one can obtain it by his natural powers, (for it is imparted through a special gift, from which God, by an absolute decree, has excluded the greatest portion of mankind,) of what avail is it that Christ has died for those to whom faith is denied? Does not the affair revert to the same point, as if he had never entertained an intention of redeeming them?” (De Jure Dei Creaturas, &c.)

This cannot consistently be denied. Mr. Baxter, indeed, says, that “none can name the man since the world was made, that did his best in the use of the means to obtain more grace, and lost his labour.” So we believe, but this helps not Mr. Baxter. One of his main principles is, that there is a class of men to whom Christ has resolved to give saving faith; to the rest he has resolved not to give it. The man, then, who seeks more than common grace, and obtains saving grace, is either in the class to whom Christ has resolved, by right of dominion, to give saving grace, or he is not. If the former, then he is one of the elect, and so the instance given proves nothing as to the case of the non-elect; but, if he be of the latter class, then one of those to whom Christ never resolved to give saving grace, by some means obtains it, — how, it will be difficult to say. In fact, it was never allowed by Mr. Baxter, or his followers, that any but the elect would be saved.

The remarks of a Calvinist upon the “middle scheme” of the French divines, the same in substance as that which was afterward advocated by Baxter, may properly close our remarks.

“This mitigated view of the doctrine of predestination has only one defect; but it is a capital one. It represents God as desiring a thing (that is, salvation and happiness) for ALL, which, in order to its attainment, requires a degree of his assistance and succour, which he refuseth to MANY. This rendered grace and redemption
UNIVERSAL only in *words*, but PARTIAL in *reality*; and, therefore, did not at all mend the matter. The supralapsarians were consistent with themselves, but their doctrine was harsh and terrible, and was founded on the most unworthy notions of the Supreme Being; and, on the other hand, the system of Amyraut was full of inconsistencies: nay, even the sublapsarian doctrine has its difficulties, and rather palliates than removes the horrors of supralapsarianism. What, then, is to be done? From what quarter shall the candid and well-disposed Christian receive that solid satisfaction and wise direction which neither of these systems is adapted to administer? These he will receive by turning his dazzled and feeble eye from the secret decrees of God, which were neither designed to be rules of action, nor sources of comfort to mortals here below; and, by fixing his view upon the mercy of God, as it is manifested through Christ, the pure laws and sublime promises of his Gospel, and the equity of his present government and future tribunal.” (*Maclaine’s Notes on Mosheim’s History.*)

The theory, to which the name of Baxter has given some weight in this country, has been introduced more at length, because with it stands or falls every system of moderated or modified Calvinism, which by more modern writers has been advocated. The scheme of Dr. Williams, of Rotherham, is little beside the old theory of supralapsarian reprobation, in its twofold enunciation of *preterition*, by which God refuses help to a creature which cannot stand without help, and his consequent *damnation* for the crimes committed in consequence of this withholding of supernatural aid. The dress is altered, and the system has a *dash* of Cameronism, but it is in substance the same. All other mitigated schemes rest on two principles, the sufficiency of the atonement for all mankind, and the sufficiency of grace to those who believe not. For the first, it is enough to say, that the synod of Dort and the higher Calvinistic school will agree with them upon this point, and so nothing is gained; for the second, that the sufficiency of grace in these schemes is always understood in Baxter’s sense, and is mere verbiage. It is not “the grace of God which *bringeth* salvation;” for no man is actually saved without something more than this “sufficient grace” provides. That which is contended for, is, in fact, not a sufficiency of grace in order to salvation; but, in order to justify the condemnation which inevitably follows. For this alone the struggle is made, but without success. The main characteristic of all these theories, from the first to the last, from
the highest to the lowest is, that a part of mankind are shut out from the mercies of God, on some ground irrespective of their refusal of a sincere offer to them of salvation through Christ, made with a communicated power of embracing it. Some power they allow to the reprobate as natural power, and degrees of superadded moral power; but in no case the power to believe unto salvation; and thus, as one well observes, “when they have cut some fair trenches, as if they would bring the water of life unto the dwellings of the reprobate, on a sudden they open a sluice which carries it off again.” The whole labour of these theories is to find out some decent pretext for the infliction of punishment on them that perish, independent of the only reason given by Scripture, their rejection of a mercy free for all.

Having exhibited the Calvinistic system on its own authorities, it may be naturally asked from what mode or bias of thinking a scheme could arise so much at variance with the Scriptures, and with all received notions of just and benevolent administration among men; properties of government which must be found more perfectly in the government of God, by reason of the perfection of its author, than in any other. That it had its source in a course of induction from the sacred Scriptures, though erroneous, is not probable; for, if it had been left to that test, it is pretty certain it would not have maintained itself. It appears rather to have arisen from metaphysical hypotheses and school subtilties, to which the sense of Scripture has been accommodated, often very violently; and by subtleties of this kind, it has, at all times, been chiefly supported.

It has, for instance, been assumed by the advocates of this theological theory, that all things which come to pass have been fixed by ETERNAL DECREES; and that as many men actually perish, it must, therefore, have been decreed that they should perish: and, consistently with such a scheme, it became necessary to exclude a part of the human race from all share in the benefits of Christ’s redemption. The argument employed to confirm the premises is, “that it is agreeable to reason and to the analogy of nature, that God should conduct all things according to a deliberate and fixed plan, independent of his creatures, rather than that he should be influenced, even in his purposes, by the foresight of their capricious conduct.” (Dr. RANKIN’S Institutes.) “It is not easy to reconcile the immutability and efficacy of the Divine counsel which enters into our conceptions of the first cause, with a purpose to save all, suspended upon a condition which is not fulfilled with regard to many.” (Dr. HILL’S Lectures.) This has, indeed, all along been the main stress of the argument for absolute decrees, that a
conditional decree reflects dishonour upon the Divine attributes, “by leaving God, as it were, in suspense, and waiting to see what men will do, before he passes a firm and irrevocable decree;” which, as they say, seems to imply want of power and prescience in God, and to be inconsistent with other of his Divine perfections. They especially think, that this is irreconcilable with the immutability of God, and that to subject his decrees to the changes of a countless number of mutable beings, must render him the most mutable being in the universe.

The whole of this objection, however, seems to involve a petitio principii. It is taken for granted, either that the decrees of God are absolute appointments from eternity, and then any change of his decrees, dependent upon the acts of creatures, would be a contradiction; or else that the acts of creatures being free, it follows, that God had from eternity no plan, and conducts his own government only as circumstances may arise. But, that either the decrees of God are fixed and absolute, or, that God can have no plan of government if that be denied, is the very alternative to be proved, the matter which is in debate. It becomes necessary, therefore, in order to ascertain the truth, to fix the sense of the favourite term “decrees,” and for this we have no sound guide but the Holy Scriptures, which, as to what relates to man’s salvation at least, contain the only exposition of the purposes of God.

The term “decree” is nowhere in Scripture used in the sense in which it is taken in the theology of the Calvinists. It is properly a legislative or judicial term, importing the solemn decision of a court, and was adopted into that system, probably, because of the absolute meaning it conveys, which quality of absoluteness is, in fact, the point debated. The “purpose” and “counsel” of God are the Scriptural terms applicable to this subject; one of which, “counsel,” expresses an act of wisdom, and the other necessarily implies it, as it is the “purpose,” design, or determination of a Being of infinite perfection, who can purpose, design, will, and determine nothing but under the direction of his intelligence, and the regulation of his moral attributes.

Terms are not indeed to be objected to merely because they are not found in the word of God; but their signification must be controlled by it, otherwise, as in the case of the term decrees, a meaning is often silently brought in under covert of the term, which becomes a postulate in argument: a practice which has been a fruitful source of misapprehension
and error. The decrees of God, if the phrase then must be continued, can only Scripturally signify the determinations of his will in his government of the world he has made; and those determinations are plainly, in Scripture, referred to two classes, what he has himself determined to do, and what he has determined to permit to be done by free and accountable creatures. He determined, for instance, to create man, and he determined to permit his fall; he determined also the only method of dispensing pardon to the guilty, but he determined to permit men to reject it, and to fall into the punishment of their offences. Calvin, indeed, rejects the doctrine of permission. “It is not probable,” he says, “that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment of God.” He had reason for this; for to have allowed this distinction would have been contrary to the main principles of his theological system, which are, that “the will of God is the necessity of things,” and that all things are previously fixed by an absolute decree; so that they must happen. The consequence is, that he and his followers involve themselves in the tremendous consequence of making God the author of sin; which, after all their disavowals, and we grant them sincere, will still logically cleave to them: for it is obvious, that by nothing can we fairly avoid this consequence but by allowing the distinction between determinations TO DO, on the part of God, and determinations TO PERMIT certain things to be done by others. The principle laid down by Calvin is destructive of all human agency, seeing it converts man into a mere instrument; while the other maintains his agency in its proper sense, and, therefore, his proper accountability. On Calvin’s principle, man is no more an agent than the knife in the hand of the assassin; and he is not more responsible, therefore, in equity, to punishment, than the knife by which the assassination is committed, were it capable of being punished. For if man has not a real agency, that is, if there is a necessity above him so controlling his actions as to render it impossible that they should have been otherwise, he is in the hands of another, and not master of himself, and so his actions cease to be his own.

A decree to permit involves no such consequences. This is indeed acknowledged; but then, on the other hand, it is urged that this imposes an uncertainty upon the Divine plans, and makes him dependent upon the acts of the creature. In neither of these allegations is there any weight; for as to the first, there can be no uncertainty in the principles of the administration of a Being who regulates the whole by the immutable rules of righteousness, holiness truth, and goodness; so that all the acts of the
creature do but call forth some new illustration of his unchangeable regard
to these principles. Nor can any act of a creature render his plans uncertain
by coming upon him by surprise, and thus oblige him to alter his intentions
on the spur of the moment. What the creature will do, in fact, is known
beforehand with a perfect prescience, which yet, as we have already
proved, (Part ii, c. 4,) interferes not with the liberty of our actions; and
what God has determined to do in consequence, is made apparent by what
he actually does, which with him can be no new, no sudden thought, but
known and purposed from eternity, in the view of the actual circumstances.
As to the second objection, that this makes his conduct dependent upon the
acts of the creature, so far from denying it we may affirm it to be one of
the plainest doctrines of the word of God. He punishes or blesses men
according to their conduct; and he waits until the acts of their sin or their
obedience take place, before he either punishes or rewards. The dealings of
a sovereign judge must, in the nature of things themselves, be dependent
upon the conduct of the subjects over whom he rules: they must vary
according to that conduct; and it is only in the principles of a righteous
government that we ought to look, for that kind of immutability which has
any thing in it of moral character. Still it is said, that though the acts of
God, as a sovereign, change, and are, apparently, dependent upon the
conduct of creatures, yet that he, from all eternity, decreed, or determined
to do them: as for instance, to exalt one nation and to abase another; to
favour this individual, or to punish that; to save this man, to destroy the
other. This may be granted; but only in this sense, that his eternal
determination or decree was as dependent and consequent upon his
prescience of the acts which, according to the immutable principles of his
nature and government, are pleasing or hateful to him, as the actual
administration of favour or punishment is upon the actual conduct of men
in time. This brings on the question of decrees absolute or conditional; and
we are, happily, not left to the reasonings of men on this point; but have
the light of the word of God, which abounds with examples of decrees, to
which conditions are annexed, on the performance or neglect of which, by
his creatures, their execution is made dependent. “If thou doest well, shalt
thou not be accepted? but if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” If
this was God’s eternal decree concerning Cain, then it was plainly
conditional from eternity; for his decrees in time cannot contradict his
decrees from eternity, as to the same persons and events. But Cain did “not
well;” was it not, then, says a Calvinist, eternally and absolutely decreed
that he should not “do well?” The reply is, NO; because this supposed
absolute decree of the Calvinist would contradict the revealed decree or determination of God, to put both the doing well and the doing ill into Cain’s own power, which is utterly inconsistent with an absolute decree that he should have it in his power only to do ill; and the inevitable conclusion, therefore, is, that the only eternal decree, or Divine determination concerning Cain in this matter was, that he should be conditionally accepted, or conditionally left to the punishment of his sins. To this class of conditional decrees belong also all such passages, as, “If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be devoured by the sword.” “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This last, especially, is God’s decree or determination, as to all who hear the Gospel, to the end of time. It professes to be so on the very face of it, for its general and unrestricted nature cannot be denied; but if we are told, that there is a decree affecting numbers of men as individuals, by which God determined absolutely to pass them by, and to deny to them the grace of faith, such an allegation cannot be true; because it contradicts the decree as revealed by God himself. His decree gives to all who hear the news of Christ’s salvation, the alternative of believing and being saved, of not believing and being damned; but there is no alternative in the absolute decree of Calvinism: as to the reprobate, no one can believe and be saved who is under such decree: God never intended he should; and, therefore, he is put by one decree in one condition, and by another decree in an entirely opposite condition, which is an obvious contradiction.

But we have instances of the revocation of God’s decrees, as well as of their conditional character, one of which will be sufficient for illustration. In the case of Eli, “I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” No passage can more strongly refute the Calvinistic notion of God’s immutability, which they seem to place in his never changing his purpose, whereas, in fact, the Scriptural doctrine is, that it consists in his never changing the principles of his administration. One of those principles is laid down in this passage. It is, “them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” To this principle God is immutably true; but it was his unchangeable regard to that very principle which brought on the change of his conduct toward the
house of Eli, and induced him to revoke his former promise. This is the only immutability worthy of God, or which can be reconciled to the facts of his government. For either the advocate of absolute predestination must say that the promises and threatenings are declarations of his will and purposes, or they are not. If they are not, they contradict his truth; but if the point, that they do in fact declare his will is conceded, that will is either absolute or conditional. Let us then try the case of Eli by this alternative. If the promise of continuing the priesthood in the family of Eli were absolute, then it could not be revoked. If the threatening expressed an absolute and eternal will and determination to divert the priesthood from Eli’s progeny, then the promise was a mockery; and God is in this, and a similar instances, made to engage himself to do what is contrary to his absolute intention and determination: in other words, he makes no engagement in fact, while he seems to do it in form, which involves a charge against the Divine Being which few Calvinists would be bold enough to maintain. But if these declarations to Eli be regarded as the expressions of a determination always taken, in the mind of God, under the conditions implied in the fixed principles of his government, then the language and the acts of God harmonize with his sincerity and faithfulness, and, instead of throwing a shade over his moral attributes, illustrate his immutable regard to those wise, equitable, and holy rules by which he conducts his government of moral agents. Nor will the distinction which some Calvinists have endeavoured to establish between the promises and threatenings of God and his decrees, serve them; for where is it to be found except in their own imagination? We have no intimation of such a distinction in Scripture, which, nevertheless, professes to reveal the eternal “purpose” and “counsel” of God on those matters to which his promises and threatenings relate, — the salvation or destruction of men. That counsel and purpose has, also, no manifestation in his word, but by promises and threatenings; these make up its whole substance, and, therefore, in order to make their distinction good, those who hold it must discover a distinction not only between God’s promises and threatenings and his decrees; but between the eternal “counsels and purposes” of God and his decrees, which they acknowledge to be identical.

The fallacy which seems to mislead them appears to be the following: They allege that of two consequences, say the obedience or disobedience of Eli’s house, we acknowledge, on both sides, that one will happen. That which actually happens we also see taken up into the course of the Divine
administration, and made a part of his subsequent plan of government, as
the transfer of the priesthood from the house of Eli: they, therefore, argue
that the Divine Being, having his plan before him, and this very
circumstance entering into it, it was fixed from eternity as a part of that
general scheme by which the purposes of God were to be accomplished,
and which would have been uncertain and unarranged but for this
preordination. The answer to this is,

1. That the circumstance of an event being taken up into the Divine
administration, and being made use of to work out God’s purposes, is no
proof that he willed and decreed it. He could not will the wickedness of
Eli’s sons, and could not, therefore, ordain and appoint it, or his decrees
would be contrary to his will. The making use of the result of the choice of
a free agent, only proves that it was foreseen, and that there are, so to
speak, infinite resources in the Divine mind to turn the actions of men into
the accomplishment of his plans, without either willing them when they are
evil, or imposing fetters upon their freedom.

2. That though an event be interwoven with the course of the Divine
government, it does not follow that it was necessary to it. The ends of a
course of administration might have been otherwise accomplished; as, in
the case before us, if Eli’s house had remained faithful, and the family of
Zadok had not been chosen in its stead. The general plan of God’s
government does not, therefore, necessarily include every event which
happens as a necessary part of its accomplishment, since the same results
might, in many cases, have been brought out of other events; and,
therefore, it cannot be conclusively argued, that as God wills the
accomplishment of the general plan, he must will in the same manner the
particular events which he may overrule to contribute to it. But,

3. As to the general plan, it is also an unfounded assumption, that it was
the subject of an absolute determination. From this has arisen the notion
that the fall of Adam was willed and decreed by God. To this doctrine,
which, for the sake of a metaphysical speculation, draws after it so many
abhorrent and antiscr iptural consequences, we must demur. God could not
will that event actively without willing sin: he could not absolutely decree it
without removing all responsibility, and, therefore, all fault from the first
offender. If God be holy, he could not will Adam’s offence, though he
might determine not to prevent it by interfering with man’s freedom, which
is a very different case; and if in guarding his law from violation by a severe
sanction, he proceeded with sincerity, he could not appoint its violation. We may confidently say, that he willed the contrary of Adam’s offence; and that he used all means consistent with his determination to give and maintain free agency to his creatures, to secure the accomplishment of that will. It was against his will, therefore, that our progenitors sinned and fell; and his “purpose” and “counsel,” or his decree, if the term please better, to govern the world according to the principles and mode now in operation was dependent upon an event which he willed not; but which, as being foreseen, was the plan he in wisdom, justice, and mercy, adopted in the view of this contingency. And suppose we were to acknowledge with some, that the result will be more glorious to him, and more beneficial to the universe, through the wisdom with which he overrules all things, than if Adam and his descendants had stood in their innocency, it will not follow, even from this, that the present was that order of events which God absolutely ordered and decreed. We are told, indeed, that if this was the best of possible plans, God was, by the perfection of his nature, bound to choose it; and that if he chose it, his will, in this respect, made all the rest necessary. But, to say nothing of the presumption of determining what God was bound to do in any hypothetic case, the position that God must choose the best of possible plans is to be taken with qualification. We can neither prove that the state of things which shall actually issue is the best among those possible; nor that among possible systems there can be a best, since they are all composed of created things, and no system can actually exist, to which the Creator, who is infinite in power, could not add something. Were no sin involved in the case it would be clearer; but it is not only unsupported by any declaration of Scripture, but certainly contrary to many of its principles, to assume that God originally, so to speak, and, in the first instance, willed and decreed a state of things which should necessarily include the introduction of moral evil into his creation, in order to manifest his glory, and work out future good to the creature; because we know that sin is that “abominable thing” which he hateth. A monarch is surely not bound secretly to appoint and decree the circumstances which must necessarily lead to a rebellion, in order that his clemency may be more fully manifested in pardoning the rebels, or the strength of his government displayed in their subjugation; although his subjects, upon the whole, might derive some higher benefit. We may, therefore, conclude that God willed with perfect truth and sincerity that man should not fall, although he resolved not to prevent that fall by interfering with his freedom, which would have changed the whole character of his government toward rational
creatures; and that his plan, or decree, to govern the world upon the principle of redemption and mediation was no absolute ordination, but conditional upon man’s offence; and was an “eternal purpose,” only in the eternal foresight of the actual occurrence of the fall of man, which yet, it is no contradiction to say, was against his will.

So fallacious are all such notions as to God’s fixed plans. Fixed they may be, without being absolutely decreed; because fixed, in reference to what takes place, even in opposition to his will and intention; and as to the argument drawn by Calvinists from the perfections of God, it is surely a more honourable view of him to suppose that his will and his promulgated law accord and consent, than that they are in opposition to each other; more honourable to him, that he is immutable in his adherence to the principles, rather than in the acts of government; more honourable to him, that he can make the conduct of his free creatures to work out either his original purposes, or purposes more glorious to himself and beneficial to the universe, than that he should frame plans so fixed as to have no reference to the free actions of creatures, whom, by a strange contradiction, he is represented as still holding accountable for their conduct; plans which all these creatures shall be necessitated to fulfil, so as to be capable of no other course of action whatever, or else that his government must become loose and uncertain. This is, indeed, to have low thoughts, even of the infinite wisdom of God; and either involves his justice and truth in deep obscurity, or presents them to us under very equivocal aspects. Which of these views is the most consonant with the Bible, may be safely left with the candid reader.

The PRESCIENCE OF GOD is also a subject by which Calvinists have endeavoured to give some plausibility to their system. The argument as popularly stated, has been, that, as the destruction or salvation of every individual is foreseen, it is, therefore, certain, and, as certain, it is inevitable and necessary. The answer to this is, that certainty and necessity are not at all connected in the nature of things, and are, in fact, two perfectly distinct predicaments. Certainty has no relation to an event at all as evitable or inevitable, free or compelled, contingent or necessary. It relates only to the issue itself, the act of any agent, not to the quality of the act or event with reference to the circumstances under which it is produced. A free action is as much an event as a necessitated one, and, therefore, is as truly an object of foresight, which foresight cannot change the nature of the action, or of the process through which it issues, because
the simple knowledge of an action, whether present, past, or to come, has no influence upon it of any kind. Certainty is, in fact, no quality of an action at all; it exists, properly speaking, in the mind foreseeing, and not in the action foreseen; but freedom or constraint, contingency or necessity qualify the action itself, and determine its nature, and the rewardableness, or punitive demerit of the agent. When, therefore, it is said, that what God foresees, will *certainly* happen, nothing more can be reasonably meant, than that HE is certain that it will happen; so that we must not transfer the certainty from God to the action itself, in the false sense of necessity, or, indeed, in any sense; for the certainty is in the Divine mind, and stands there opposed, not to the contingency of the action, but to doubtfulness as to his own prescience of the result. There is this certainty in the Divine mind as to the actions of men, that they *will* happen: but that they *must* happen cannot follow from this circumstance. If they must happen, they are under some control which prevents a different result; but the most certain knowledge has nothing in it which, from its nature, can control an action in any way, unless it should lead the being endowed with it, to adopt measures to influence the action, and then it becomes a question, not of foreknowledge, but of *power* and *influence*, which wholly changes the case. This is a sufficient reply to the popular manner of stating the argument. The scholastic method requires a little more illustration.

The knowledge of *possible* things, as existing from all eternity in the Divine understanding, has been termed “*scientia simplicis intelligentiae,*** or by the schoolmen, “*scientia indefinita,*** as not determining the existence of any thing. The knowledge which God had of all real existences is termed “*scientia visionis,*** and by the schoolmen, “*scientia definita,*** because the existence of all objects of this knowledge is determinate and certain. To these distinctions another was added by those who rejected the predestinarian hypothesis, to which they gave the name “*scientia media,*** as being supposed to stand in the middle between the two former. By this is understood, the knowledge, neither of things as possible, nor of events appointed and decreed by God; but of events which are to happen upon certain conditions. \[140\]

The third kind of knowledge, or *scientia media,*** might very well be included in the second, since *scientia visionis* ought to include not what God will do, and what his creatures will do under his appointment, but what they will do by his permission as free agents, and what he will do, as a consequence of this, in his character of Governor and Lord. But since the
predestinarians had confounded *scientia visionis* with a predestinating decree, the *scientia media* well expressed what they had left quite unaccounted for, and which they had assumed did not really exist, — the actions of creatures endowed with free will, and the acts of Deity which from eternity were consequent upon them. If such actions do not take place, then men are not free; and if the rectoral acts of God are not consequent upon the actions of the creature in the *order* of the Divine intention, and the conduct of the creature is consequent upon the foreordained rectoral acts of GOD, then we reach a necessitating eternal decree, which, in fact, the predestinarian contends for: but it unfortunately brings after it consequences which no subtilties have ever been able to shake off, — that the only *actor* in the universe is GOD himself; and that the only distinction among events is, that one class is brought to pass by GOD directly, and the other indirectly; not by the *agency*, but by the mere *instrumentality* of his creatures.

The manner in which absolute predestination is made identical with *scientia visionis*, will be best illustrated by an extract from the writings of a tolerably fair and temperate modern Calvinist. Speaking of the two distinctions, *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and *scientia visionis*, he says,

“Those who consider all the objects of knowledge as comprehended under one or other of the kinds that have been explained, are naturally conducted to that enlarged conception of the extent of the Divine decree, from which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination unavoidably follows. The Divine decree is the determination of the Divine will to produce the universe, that is, the whole series of beings and events that were then future. The parts of this series arise in succession: but all were, from eternity, present to the Divine mind; and no cause was, at any time, to operate, or no effect that was at any time to be produced in the universe, can be excluded from the original decree, without supposing that the decree was at first imperfect and afterward received accessions. The determination to produce this world, understanding by that word the whole combination of beings, and causes, and effects, that were to come into existence, arose out of the view of all possible worlds, and proceeded upon reasons to us unsearchable, by which this world that now exists appeared to the Divine wisdom the fittest to be produced. I say, the determination to produce this world
proceeded upon reasons; because we must suppose, that in forming the decrees, a choice was exerted, that the Supreme Being was at liberty to resolve either that he would create or that he would not create; that he would give his work this form or that form, as he chose; otherwise we withdraw from the Supreme Intelligence, and subject all things to blind fatality. But if a choice was exerted in forming the decree, the choice must have proceeded upon reasons; for a choice made by a wise Being, without any ground of choice, is a contradiction in terms. At the same time it is to be remembered, that as nothing then existed but the Supreme Being, the only reason which could determine him in choosing what he was to produce, was as appearing to him fitter for accomplishing the end which he proposed to himself than any thing else which he might have produced. Hence *scientia visionis* is called by theologians *scientia libera*. To *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, they gave the epithet *naturalis*, because the knowledge of all things possible arises necessarily from the nature of the Supreme mind; but to *scientia visionis* they gave the epithet *libera*, because the qualities and extent of its objects are determined, not by any necessity of nature, but by the will of the Deity. Although in forming the Divine decree there was a choice of this world, proceeding upon a representation of all possible worlds, it is not to be conceived, that there was any interval between the choice and representation, or any succession in the parts of the choice. In the Divine mind there was an intuitive view of that immense subject, which it is not only impossible for our minds to comprehend at once, but in travelling through the parts of which we are instantly bewildered; and one decree, embracing at once the end and means, ordained with perfect wisdom all that was to be.

“*The condition of the human race entered into this decree. It is not, perhaps, the most important part of it when we speak of the formation of the universe, but it is a part which, even were it more insignificant than it is, could not be overlooked by the Almighty, whose attention extends to all his works, and which appears, by those dispensations of his providence that have been made known to us, to be interesting in his eyes. A decree respecting the condition of the human race includes the history of every individual: the time of his appearing upon the earth; the manner of his
existence while he is an inhabitant of the earth, as it is diversifed by
the actions which he performs, and by the events, whether
prosperous or calamitous, which befall him, and the manner of his
existence after he leaves the earth, that is, future happiness or
misery. A decree respecting the condition of the human race also
includes the relations of the individuals to one another: it fixes their
connections in society, which have a great influence upon their
happiness and their improvement; and it must be conceived as
extending to the important events recorded in Scripture, in which
the whole species have a concern. Of this kind is the sin of our first
parents, the consequence of that sin reaching to all their posterity,
the mediation of Jesus Christ appointed by God as a remedy for
these consequences, the final salvation, through his mediation, of
one part of the descendants of Adam, and the final condemnation of
another part, notwithstanding the remedy. These events arise at
long intervals of time, by a gradual preparation of circumstances,
and the operation of various means. But by the Creator, to whose
mind the end and means were at once present, these events were
beheld in intimate connection with one another, and in conjunction
with many other events to us unknown, and consequently all of
them, however far removed from one another as to the time of their
actual existence, were comprehended in that one decree by which
he determined to produce the world.” (Hill’s Lectures, vol. iii, page
38.)

Now some things in this statement may be granted; as for instance, that
when the choice, speaking after the manner of men, was between creating
the world and not creating it, it appeared fitter to God to create than not to
create; and that all actual events were foreseen, and will take place, so far
as they are future, as they are foreseen; but where is the connection
between these points, and that absolute decree which in this passage is
taken for either the same thing as foreseeing, or as necessarily involved in
it? “The Divine decree,” says Dr. Hill, “is the determination of the Divine
will to produce the universe, that is, the whole series of beings and
events that were then future.” If so, it follows, that it was the Divine will
to produce the fall of man, as well as his creation; the offences which made
redemption necessary, as the redemption itself: to produce the destruction
of human beings, and their vices which are the means of that destruction;
the salvation of another part of the race, and their faith and obedience, as
the means of that salvation: — for by “one decree, embracing at once the end and the means, he ordained, with perfect wisdom, all that was to be.” This is in the true character of the Calvinistic theology; it dogmatizes with absolute confidence on some metaphysical assumption, and forgets for the time, that any such book as the Bible, a revelation of God, by God himself, exists in the world. If the determination of the Divine will, with respect to the creation of man, were the same kind of determination as that which respected his fall, how then are we to account for the means taken by God to prevent the fall, which were no less than the communication of an upright and perfect nature to man, from which his ability to stand in his uprightness arose, and the threatening of the greatest calamity, death, in order to deter him from the act of offence? How, in that case, are we to account for the declarations of God’s hatred to sin, and for his own express declaration that “he willeth not the death of him that dieth?” How, for the obstructions he has placed in the way of transgression, which would be obstructions to his own determinations, if they can be allowed to be obstructions at all? How, for the intercession of Christ? How, for his tears shed over Jerusalem? Finally, how, for the declaration that “he willeth all men to be saved,” and for his invitations to all, and the promises made to all? Here the discrepancies between the metaphysical scheme and the written word are most strongly marked; are so totally irreconcilable to each other, as to leave us to choose between the speculations of man, as to the operations of the Divine mind, and the declared will of God himself. The fact is, that Scripture can only be interpreted by denying that the determination of the Divine will is, as to “beings and events.” the same kind of determination; and we are necessarily brought back again to the only distinction which is compatible with the written word, a determination in God to do, and a determination to permit. For if we admit that the decree to effect or produce is absolute, both “as to the end and means,” then, beside the consequences which follow as above stated, and which so directly contradict the testimony of God himself another equally revolting also arises, namely, that as the end decreed is, as we are told, most glorious to God, so the means, being controlled and directed to that end, are necessarily and directly connected with the glorification of God; and so men glorify God by their vices, because by them they fulfil his will, and work out his designs according to the appointment of his “wisdom.” That this has been boldly contended for by leading Calvinistic divines in former times, and by some, though of a lower class, in the present day, is well known: and that they are consistent in their deductions from the above
premises, is so obvious, that it is matter of surprise, that those Calvinists
who are shocked at this conclusion should not either suspect the principles
from which it so certainly flows, or that, admitting the doctrine, they
should shun the explicit avowal of the inevitable consequence.

The sophistry of the above statement of the Calvinistic view of prescience
and the decrees, as given by Dr. Hill, lies in this, that the determination of
the Divine will to produce the universe is made to include a determination
as absolute “to produce the whole series of beings and events that were
then future;” and in assuming that this is involved in a perfect prescience of
things, as actually to exist and take place. But among the “BEINGS” to be
produced, were not only beings bound by their instincts, and by
circumstances which they could not control, to act in some given manner;
but also beings endowed with such freedom that they might act in different
and opposite ways, as their own will might determine. Either this must be
allowed or denied. If it is denied, then man is not a free agent, and,
therefore, not accountable for his personal offences, if offences those acts
can be called, to the doing of which there is “a determination of the Divine
will,” of the same nature as to the “producing of the universe” itself. This,
however, is so destructive of the nature of virtue and vice; it so entirely
subverts the moral government of God by merging it into his natural
government; and it so manifestly contradicts the word of God, which, from
the beginning to the end, supposes a power bestowed on man to avoid sin,
and on this establishes his accountableness; that, with all these fatal
consequences hanging upon it, we may leave this notion to its own fate.
But if any such freedom be allowed to man, (either actually enjoyed or
placed within his reach by the use of means which are within his power,
that he may both will and act differently, in any given case, from his
ultimate volitions and the acts resulting therefrom, then cannot that which
he actually does, as a free agent, say some sinful act, have been
“determined” in the same manner by the Divine will, as the “production” of
the universe and the “beings” which compose it. For if man is a being free
to sin or not to sin; and it was the “determination of the Divine will” to
produce such a being; it was his determination to give to him this liberty of
not doing that which actually he does; which is wholly contrary to a
determination that he should act in one given manner, and in that alone.
For here, on the one hand, it is alleged that the Divine will absolutely
determines to produce certain “events,” and yet on the other it is plain that
he absolutely determined to produce “beings” who should, by his will and
consequent endowment, have in themselves the power to produce contrary events; propositions which manifestly fight with each other, and cannot both be true. We must either, then, give up man’s free agency and true accountability, or this absolute determination of events. The former cannot be renounced without involving the consequences above stated; and the abandoning of the latter brings us to the only conclusion which agrees with the word of God, — that the acts of free agents are not determined, but foreseen and permitted; and are thus taken up, not as the acts of God, but as the acts of men, into the Divine government. “Ye devised evil against me,” says Joseph to his brethren, “but God meant it for good.” Thus the principle which vitiates Dr. Hill’s statement is detected. Grotius has much better observed, “When we say that God is the cause of all things, we mean of all such things as have a real existence; which is no reason why those things themselves should not be the cause of some accidents, such as actions are. God created men, and some other intelligences superior to man, with a liberty of acting; which liberty of acting is not in itself evil, but may be the cause of something that is evil; and to make GOD the author of evils of this kind, which are called moral evils, is the highest wickedness.” (Truth of the Christian Religion, s. 8.)

Perhaps the notions which Calvinists form as to the will may be regarded as a consequence of the predestinarian branch of their system; but whether they are among the metaphysical sources of their error, or consequents upon it, they may here have a brief notice.

If the doctrine just refuted were allowed, namely, that all events are produced by the determination of the Divine will; and that the end and means are bound up in “one decree;” the predestinarian had sagacity enough to discern that the volitions, as well as the acts of men, must be placed equally under bondage, to make the scheme consistent; and, that whenever any moral action is the end proposed, the choice of the will, as the means to that end, must come under the same appointment and determination. It is, indeed not denied, that creatures may lose the power to will that which is morally good. Such is the state of devils, and such would have been the state of man, had he been left wholly to the consequences of the fall. The inability is, however, not a natural but a moral one; for volition, as a power of the mind, is not destroyed, but brought so completely under the dominion of a corrupt nature, as not to be morally capable of choosing any thing but evil. If man is not in this condition, it is owing, not to the remains of original goodness, as some
suppose, but to that “grace of God” which is the result of the “free gift” bestowed upon all men; but that the power to choose that which is good, in some respects, and as a first step to the entire and exclusive choice of good in the highest degree, is in man’s possession, must be certainly concluded from the calls so often made upon him in the word of God to change his conduct, and, in order to this, his will. “Hear, ye deaf, and see, ye blind,” is the exhortation of a prophet, which, while it charges both spiritual deafness and blindness upon the Jews, supposes a power existing in them both of opening the eyes, and unstopping the ears. Such are all the exhortations to repentance and faith addressed to sinners, and the threatenings consequent upon continued impenitence and unbelief; which equally suppose a power of considering, willing, and acting, in all things adequate to the commencement of a religious course. From whatever source it may be derived, and no other can be assigned to it consistently with the Scriptures than the grace of God, this power must be experienced to the full extent of the call and the obligation to these duties. A power of choosing only to do evil, and of remaining impenitent, cannot be reconciled to such exhortations. This would but be a mockery of men, and a mere show of equitable government on the part of God, without anything correspondent to this appearance of equity in point of fact. The Calvinistic doctrine, however, takes another course. As the sin and the destruction of the reprobate is determined by the decree, and their will is either left to its natural proneness to the choice of evil, or is, by coaction, impelled to it; so the salvation of the elect being absolutely decreed, the will, at the appointed time, comes under an irresistible impulse which carries it to the choice of good. Nor is this only an occasional influence, leaving men afterward, or by intervals, to freedom of choice, which might be allowed; but, in all cases, and at all times, the will, when directed to good, moves only under the unfrustrable impulses of grace. That man, therefore, has no choice, or at least no alternative in either case, is the doctrine assumed; and no other view can be consistently taken by those who admit the scheme of absolute predestination. To one class of objects is the will determined; no other being, in either case, possible; and thus one course of action, fulfilling the decree of God, is the only possible result, or the decree would not be absolute and fixed.

Some Calvinists have adopted all the consequences which follow this view of the subject. They ascribe the actions and volitions of man to God, and regard sinful men as impelled to a necessity of sinning, in order to the
infliction of that punishment which they think will glorify the sovereign wrath of him who made “the wicked” intentionally “for the day of evil.” Enough has been said in refutation of this gross and blasphemous opinion, which, though it inevitably follows from absolute predestination, the more modest writers of the same school have endeavoured to hide under various guises, or to reconcile to some show of justice by various subtilties.

It has, for instance, been contended, that as in the case of transgressors, the evil acts done by them are the choice of their corrupt will, they are, therefore, done willingly; and that they are in consequence punishable although their will could not but choose them. This may be allowed to be true in the case of devils, supposing them at first to have voluntarily corrupted an innocent nature endowed with the power of maintaining its innocence, and that they were under no absolute decree determining them to this offence. For, though now their will is so much under the control of their bad passions, and is in itself so vicious, that it has no disposition at all to good, and from their nature, remaining in its present state, can have no such tendency; yet the original act, or series of acts, by which this state of their will and affections was induced, being their own, and the result of a deliberate choice between moral good and evil, both being in their own power, they are justly held to be culpable for all that follows, having had, originally, the power to avoid both the first sin and all others consequent upon it. The same may be said of sinful men, who have formed in themselves, by repeated acts of evil, at first easily avoided, various habits to which the will opposes a decreasing resistance in proportion as they acquire strength. Such persons, too, as are spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, those whom “it is impossible to renew unto repentance,” may be regarded as approaching very nearly to the state of apostate spirits, and being left without any of the aids of that Holy Spirit whom they have “quenched,” cannot be supposed capable of willing good. Yet are they themselves justly chargeable with this state of their wills, and all the evils resulting from it. But the case of devils is widely different to that of men who, by their hereditary corruption, and the fall of human nature, to which they were not consenting parties, come into the world with this infirm, and, indeed, perverse state of the will, as to all good. It is not their personal fault that they are born with a will averse from good; and it cannot be their personal fault that they continue thus inclined only to evil if no assistance has been afforded, no gracious influence imparted, to counteract this fault of nature, and to set the will so far free, that it can choose either the good
urged upon it by the authority and exciting motives of the Gospel, or, “making light” of that, to yield itself, in opposition to conviction, to the evil to which it is by nature prone. It is not denied, that the will, in its purely natural state, and independent of all grace communicated to man through Christ, can incline only to evil; but the question is, whether it is so left; and whether, if this be contended for, the circumstance of a sinful act being the act of a will not able to determine otherwise, from whatever cause that may arise, whether from the influence of circumstances or from coaction, or from its own invincible depravity, renders him punishable who never had the means of preventing his will from lapsing into this diseased and vitiated state; who was born with this moral disease; and who, by an absolute decree, has been excluded from all share in the remedy? This is the only simple and correct way of viewing the subject; and it is quite independent of all metaphysical hypothesis as to the will. The argument is, that an act which has the consent of the will is punishable, although the will can only choose evil: we reply, that this is only true where the time of trial is past, as in devils and apostates; and then only, because these are personally guilty of having so vitiated their wills as to render them incapable of good. But the case of men who have fallen by the fault of another, and who are still in a state of trial, is one totally different. The sentence is passed upon devils, and it is as good as passed upon such apostates as the apostle describes in the Epistle to the Hebrews; but the mass of mankind are still probationers, and are appointed to be judged according to their works, whether good or evil. We deny, then, first, that they are in any case, left without the power of willing good; and we deny it on the authority of Scripture. For, in no sense, can “life and death be set before us,” in order that we may “choose life,” if man is wholly derelict by the grace of God, and if he remains under his natural, and, but for the grace of God given to all mankind, his invincible inclination to evil. For if this be the natural state of mankind, and if to a part of them that remedial grace is denied, then is not “LIFE” set before them as an object of “choice;” and if to another part that grace is so given, that it irresistibly and constantly works so as to compel the will to choose predetermined and absolutely appointed acts, no “death” is set before them as an object of choice. If, therefore, according to the Scriptures, both life and death are set before men, then have they power to choose or refuse either, which is conclusive, on the one hand, against the doctrine of the total dereliction of the reprobate, and on the other, against the unfrustrable operation of grace upon the elect. So, also, when our Lord says, “I WOULD have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under
her wings, and YE WOULD not,” the notion that men who finally perish have no power of willing that which is good, is totally disproved. The blame is manifestly, and beyond all the arts of cavilling criticism, laid upon their not WILLING IN A CONTRARY MANNER, which would be false upon the Calvinistic hypothesis. “I would not, and ye COULD not,” ought, in that case, to have been the reading; since they art bound to one determination only, either by the external or internal influence of another, or by a natural and involuntary disease of the will, for which no remedy was ever provided.

Thus it is decided by the word of GOD itself, that men who perish might have “chosen life.” It is confirmed, also, by natural reason; for it is most egregiously to trifle with the common sense of mankind to call that a righteous procedure in God which would by all men be condemned as a monstrous act of tyranny and oppression in a human judge namely, to punish capitally, as for a personal offence, those who never could will or act otherwise, being impelled by an invincible and incurable natural impulse over which they never had any control. — Nor is the case at all amended by the quibble that they act willingly, that is, with consent of the will; for since the will is under a natural and irresistible power to incline only one way, obedience is full as much out of their power by this state of the will, which they did not bring upon themselves, as if they were restrained from all obedience to the law of God by an external and irresistible impulse always acting upon them.

The case thus kept upon the basis of plain Scripture, and the natural reason of mankind, stands, as we have said, clear of all metaphysical subtilties, and cannot be subjected to their determination; but as attempts have been made to establish the doctrine of necessity, from the actual phenomena of the human will, we may glance, also, at this philosophic attempt to give plausibility to the predestinarian hypothesis.

The philosophic doctrine is, that the will is swayed by motives; that motives arise from circumstances; that circumstances are ordered by a power above us, and beyond our control; and that, therefore, our volitions necessarily follow an order and chain of events appointed and decreed by infinite wisdom. President Edwards, in his well known work on the will, applied this philosophy in aid of Calvinism; and has been largely followed by the divines of that school. But who does not see that this attempt to find a refuge in the doctrine of philosophical necessity affords no shelter to the
Calvinian system, when pressed either by Scripture or by arguments founded upon the acknowledged principles of justice? For what matters it, whether the will is obliged to one class of volitions by the immediate influence of God, or by the denial of his remedial influence, the doctrine of the elder Calvinists; or that it is obliged to a certain class of volitions by motives which are irresistible in their operation, which result from an arrangement of circumstances ordered by God, and which we cannot control? Take which theory you please you are involved in the same difficulties; for the result is, that men can neither will nor act otherwise than they do, being, in one case, inevitably disabled by an act of God, and in the other bound by a chain of events established by an almighty power. The advocates for this philosophic theory of the will must be content to take this conclusion, therefore, and reconcile it as they can with the Scriptures; but they have the same task as their elder brethren of the same faith, and have made it no easier by their philosophy.

It is in vain, too, that they refer us to our own consciousness in proof of this theory. Nothing is more directly contradicted by what passes in every man’s mind; and if we may take the terms human language has used on these subjects, as an indication of the general feelings of mankind, it is contradicted by the experience of all ages and countries. For if the will is thus absolutely dependent upon motives, and motives arise out of uncontrollable circumstances, for men to praise or to blame each other is a manifest absurdity; and yet all languages abound in such terms. So, also, there can be no such thing as conscience, which, upon this scheme, is a popular delusion which a better philosophy might have dispelled. For why do I blame or commend myself in my inward thoughts, any more than I censure or praise others, if I am, as to my choice, but the passive creature of motives and predetermined circumstances?

But the sophistry is easily detected. The notion inculcated is, that motives influence the will just as an additional weight thrown into an even scale poises it and inclines the beam. This is the favourite metaphor of the necessitarians; yet, to make the comparison good, they ought to have first proved the will to be as passive as the balance, or, in other words, they should have annihilated the distinction between mind and matter. But this necessary connection between motive and volition may be denied. For what are motives, as rightly understood here? Not physical causes, as a weight thrown into a scale; but reasons of choice, views and conceptions of things in the mind, which, themselves, do not work the will as a machine;
but in consideration of which, the mind itself wills and determines. But if the mind itself were obliged to determine by the strongest motive, as the beam is to incline by the heaviest weight, it would be obliged to determine always by the best reason; for motive being but a reason of action considered in the mind, then the best reason, being in the nature of things the strongest, must always predominate. But this is, plainly, contrary, to fact and experience. If it were not, all men would act reasonably, and none foolishly; or, at least, there would be no faults among them but those of the understanding, none of the heart and affections. The weakest reason, however, too generally succeeds when appetite and corrupt affection are present; that is to say, the weakest motive. For if this be not allowed, we must say, that under the influence of appetite the weakest reason always appears the strongest, which is also false, in fact; for then there would be no sins committed against judgment and conviction, and that many of our sins are of this description, our consciences painfully convict us. That the mind wills and acts generally under the influence of motives, may, therefore, be granted; but that it is passive, and operated upon by them necessarily, is disproved by the fact of our often acting under the weakest reason or motive, which is the character of all sins against our judgment.

But were we even to admit that present reasons or motives operate irresistibly upon the will, the necessary connection between motive and volition would not be established; unless it could be proved that we have no power to displace one motive by another, nor to control those circumstances from which motives flow. Yet, who will say that a person may not shun evil company, and fly from many temptations? Either this must be allowed, or else it must be a link in the necessary chain of events fixed by a superior power, that we should seek and not fly evil company; and so the exhortations, “when sinners entice thee consent thou not,” and “go not into the way of sinners,” are very impertinent, and only prove that Solomon was no philosopher. But we are all conscious that we have the power to alter, and control, and avoid the force of motives. If not, why does a man resist the same temptation at one time, and yield to it at another, without any visible change of the circumstances? He can also both change his circumstances by shunning evil company; and fly the occasions of temptation; and control that motive at one time to which he yields at another, under similar circumstances. Nay, he sometimes resists a powerful temptation, which is the same thing as resisting a powerful motive, and yields at another to a feeble one, and is conscious that he does so: a
sufficient proof that there is an irregularity and corruptness in the self-determining, active power of the mind, independent of motive. Still, farther, the motive or reason for an action may be a bad one, and yet be prevalent for want of the presence of a better reason or motive to lead to a contrary choice and act; but, in how many instances is this the true cause why a better reason or stronger motive is not present, that we have lived thoughtless and vain lives, little considering the good or evil of things? And if so, then the thoughtless might have been more thoughtful, and the ignorant might have acquired better knowledge, and hereby have placed themselves under the influence of stronger and better motives. Thus this theory does not accord with the facts of our own consciousness, but contradicts them. It is, also, refuted by every part of the moral history of man; and it may be, therefore, concluded that those speculations on the human will, to which the predestinarian theory has driven its advocates, are equally opposed to the words of Scripture, to the philosophy of mind, to our observation of what passes in others, and to our own convictions.

Our moral liberty manifestly consists in the united power of thinking and reasoning, and of choosing and acting upon such thinking and reasoning; so that the clearer our thought and conception is of what as fit and right, and the more constantly our choice is determined by it, the more nearly we rise to the highest acts and exercises of this liberty. The best beings have, therefore, the highest degree of moral liberty, since no motive to will or act wrong is anything else but a violation of this established and original connection between right reason, choice, and conduct; and if any necessity bind the irrational motive upon the will, it is either the result of bad voluntary habit, for which we are accountable; or necessity of nature and circumstances, for which we are not accountable. In the former case the actually influencing motive is evitable, and the theory of the necessitarians is disproved: in the latter it is confirmed; but then man is neither responsible to his fellow man, nor to God.

Certain notions as to the Divine Sovereignty have also been resorted to by Calvinists, in order to render that scheme plausible which cuts off the greater part of the human race from the hope of salvation by the absolute decree of God.

That the sovereignty of God is a Scriptural doctrine no one can deny, but it does not follow that the notions which men please to form of it should be
received as Scriptural; for religious errors consist not only in denying the doctrines of the word of God, but also in interpreting them fallaciously.

The Calvinistic view of God’s sovereignty appears to be, his doing what he wills, only because he wills it. So Calvin himself has stated the case, as we have noticed above; but as this view is repugnant to all worthy notions of an infinitely wise Being, so it has no countenance in Scripture. The doctrine which we are there taught is, that God’s sovereignty consists in his doing many things by virtue of his own supreme right and dominion; but that this right is under the direction of his “counsel” or “wisdom.” The brightest act of sovereignty is that of creation, and one in which, if in any, mere will might seem to have the chief place; yet, even in this act, by which myriads of beings of diverse powers and capacities were produced, we are taught that all was done in “wisdom.” Nor can it be said that the sovereignty of God in creation, is uncontrolled by either justice or goodness. If the final cause of creation had been the misery of all sentient creatures, and all its contrivances had tended to that end: if, for instance, every sight had been disgusting, every smell a stench, every sound a scream, and every necessary function of life had been performed with pain, we must necessarily have referred the creation of such a world to a malignant being; and if we are obliged to think it impossible that a good being could have employed his almighty power with the direct intention to inflict misery, we then concede that his acts of sovereignty are, by the very perfection of his nature, under the direction of his goodness, as to all creatures potentially existing, or actually existing while still innocent. Nor can we think it borne out by Scripture, or by the reasonable notions of mankind, that the exercise of God’s sovereignty in the creation of things is exempt from any respect to justice, a quality of the Divine nature, which is nothing but his essential rectitude in exercise. It is true, that as existence, under all circumstances in which to exist is better upon the whole than not to exist, leaves the creature no claim to have been otherwise than it is made; and that God has a sovereign right to make one being an archangel and another an insect; so that “the thing formed” may not say “to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” it could deserve nothing before creation, its being not having commenced: all that it is, and has, (its existent state being better than non-existence,) is, therefore, a boon conferred; and, in matters of grace, no axiom can be more clear, than that he who gratuitously bestows has the right “to do what he will with his own.” But every creature, having been formed without any consent of its
own, if it be innocent of offence, either from the rectitude of its nature, or from a natural incapacity of offending, as not being a moral agent, appears to have a claim, in natural right, upon exemption from such pains and sufferings, as would render existence a worse condition than never to have been called out of nothing. For, as a benevolent being, which God is acknowledged to be, cannot make a creature with such an intention and contrivance, that, by its very constitution, it must necessarily be wholly miserable; and we see in this, that his sovereignty is regulated by his goodness as to the commencement of the existence of sentient creatures; so, from the moment they begin to be, the government of God over them commences, and sovereignty in government necessarily grounds itself upon the principles of equity and justice, and “the Judge of the whole earth” must and will “do right.”

This is the manifest doctrine of Scripture; for, although Almighty God often gives “no account of his matters,” nor, in some instances, admits us to know how he is both just and gracious in his administration, yet are we referred constantly to those general declarations of his own word, which assure us that he is so, that we may “walk by faith,” and wait for that period, when, after the faith and patience of good men have been sufficiently tried, the manifestation of these facts shall take place to our comfort and to his glory. In many respects, so far as we are concerned, we see no other reason for his proceedings, than that he so wills to act. But the error into which our brethren often fall, is to conclude, from their want of information in such cases, that God acts merely because he wills so to act; that because he gives not those reasons for his conduct which we have no right to demand, he acts without any reasons at all; and because we are not admitted to the secrets of his council chamber, that his government is perfectly arbitrary, and that the main spring of his leading dispensations is to make a show of power: a conclusion which implies a most unworthy notion of God, which he has himself contradicted in the most explicit manner. Even his most mysterious proceedings are called “judgments;” and he is said to work all things “according to the counsel of his own will,” a collation of words, which sufficiently show that not blind will, but will subject to “counsel,” is that SOVEREIGN WILL which governs the world.

“Whenever, therefore, God acts as a governor, as a rewarder, or punisher, he no longer acts as a mere sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure, but as an impartial judge, guided in all things by invariable justice.
“Yet it is true, that in some cases, mercy rejoices over justice, although severity never does. God may reward more, but he will never punish more than strict justice requires. It may be allowed, that God acts as sovereign in convincing some souls of sin, arresting them in their mad career by his resistless power. It seems also, that, at the moment of our conversion, he acts irresistibly. There may likewise be many irresistible touches in the course of our Christian warfare; but still, as St. Paul might have been either obedient or ‘disobedient to the heavenly vision,’ so every individual may, after all that God has done, either improve his grace, or make it of none effect.

“Whatsoever, therefore, it has pleased God to do, of his sovereign pleasure, as Creator of heaven and earth; and whatever his mercy may do on particular occasions, over and above what justice requires, the general rule stands firm as the pillars of heaven. ‘The Judge of all the earth will do right:’ ‘he will judge the world in righteousness,’ and every man therein, according to the strictest justice. He will punish no man for doing any thing which he could not possibly avoid; neither for omitting any thing which he could not possibly do. Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished, otherwise to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our governor.” (Wesley’s Works, vol. vi, p. 136.)

The case of HEATHEN NATION’S has sometimes been referred to by Calvinists, as presenting equal difficulties to those urged against their scheme of election and reprobation. But the cases are not at all parallel, nor can they be made so, unless it could be proved that heathens, as such, are inevitably excluded from the kingdom of heaven; which is not, as some of them seem to suppose, a conceded point. Those, indeed, if there be any such, who, believing in the universal redemption of mankind, should allow this, would be most inconsistent with themselves, and give up many of those principles on which they successfully contend against the doctrine of absolute reprobation; but the argument lies in small compass, and is to be determined by the word of God, and not by the speculations of men. The actual state of pagan nations is affectingly bad; but nothing can be deduced from what they are in fact against their salvability; for although there is no ground to hope for the salvation of great numbers of them, actual salvation is one thing, and possible salvation is another. Nor does it affect this
question, if we see not how heathens may be saved; that is, by what means repentance, and faith, and righteousness, should be in any such degree wrought in them, as that they shall become acceptable to God. The dispensation of religion under which all those nations are to whom the Gospel has never been sent, continues to be the patriarchal dispensation. That men were saved under that in former times we know, and at what point, if any, a religion becomes so far corrupted, and truth so far extinct, as to leave no means of salvation to men, nothing to call forth a true faith in principle, and obedience to what remains known or knowable of the original law, no one has the right to determine, unless he can adduce some authority from Scripture. That authority is certainly not available to the conclusion, that, in point of fact, the means of salvation are utterly withdrawn from heathens. We may say that a murderous, adulterous, and idolatrous heathen will be shut out from the kingdom of heaven; we must say this, on the express exclusion of all such characters from future blessedness by the word of God; but it would be little to the purpose to say, that, as far as we know, all of them are wicked and idolatrous. As far as we know they may, but we do not know the whole case; and, were these charges universally true, yet the question is not what the heathen are, but what they have the means of becoming. We indeed know that all are not equally vicious, nay, that some virtuous heathens have been found in all ages; and some earnest and anxious inquirers after truth, dissatisfied with the notions prevalent in their own countries respectively; and what these few were, the rest might have been likewise. But, if we knew no such instances of superior virtue and eager desire of religious information among them, the true question, “what degree of truth is, after all, attainable by them?” would still remain a question which must be determined not so much by our knowledge of facts which may be very obscure; but such principles and general declarations as we find applicable to the case in the word of God.

If all knowledge of right and wrong, and all gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, and all objects of faith, have passed away from the heathen, through the fault of their ancestors “not liking to retain God in their knowledge,” and without the present race having been parties to this wilful abandonment of truth, then they would appear no longer to be accountable creatures, being neither under law nor under grace; but as we find it a doctrine of Scripture that all men are responsible to GOD, and that the “whole world” will be judged at the last day, we are bound to admit the
accountability of all, and with that, the remains of law and the existence of a merciful government toward the heathen on the part of God. With this the doctrine of St. Paul accords. No one can take stronger views of the actual danger and the corrupt state of the Gentiles than he; yet he affirms that the Divine law had not perished wholly from among them; that though they had received no revealed law, yet they had a law “written on their hearts;” meaning, no doubt, the traditionary law, the equity of which their consciences attested; and, farther, that though they had not the written law, yet, that “by nature,” that is, “without an outward rule, though this, also, strictly speaking, is by preventing grace,” (Wesley’s Notes, in loc.) they were capable of doing all the things contained in the law. He affirms, too, that all such Gentiles as were thus obedient, should be “justified, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to his Gospel.” The possible obedience and the possible “justification” of heathens who have no written revelation, are points, therefore, distinctly affirmed by the apostle in his discourse in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the whole matter of God’s sovereignty, as to the heathen, is reduced, not to the leaving of any portion of our race without the means of salvation, and then punishing them for sins which they have no means of avoiding; but to the fact of his having given superior advantages to us, and inferior ones only; to them: a proceeding which we see exemplified in the most enlightened of Christian nations every day; for neither every part of the same nation is equally favoured with the means of grace, nor are all the families living in the same town and neighbourhood equally circumstanced as to means of religious influence and improvement. The principle of this inequality is, however, far different from that on which Calvinistic reprobation is sustained: since it involves no inevitable exclusion of any individual from the kingdom of God, and because the general principle of God’s administration in such cases is elsewhere laid down to be the requiring of much where much is given, and the requiring of little where little is given: — a principle of the strictest equity.

An unguarded opinion as to the IRRESISTIBILITY OF GRACE, and the passiveness, of man in conversion, has also been assumed, and made to give an air of plausibility to the predestinarian scheme. It is argued, if our salvation is of God and not of ourselves, then those only can be saved to whom God gives the grace of conversion; and the rest, not having this grace afforded them, are, by the inscrutable counsel of God passed by, and reprobated.
This is an argument à posteriori; from the assumed passiveness of man in conversion to the election of a part only of mankind to life. The argument à priori is from partial election to life to the doctrine of irresistible grace, as the means by which the Divine decree is carried into effect. The doctrine of such an election has already been refuted, and it will be easy to show that it derives no support from the assumption that grace must work irresistibly in man, in order that the honour of our salvation may be secured to God, which is the plausible dress in which the doctrine is generally presented.

It is allowed, and all Scriptural advocates of the universal redemption of mankind will join with the Calvinists in maintaining the doctrine, that every disposition and inclination to good which originally existed in the nature of man is lost by the fall; that all men, in their simply natural state, are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and have neither the will nor the power to turn to God; and that no one is sufficient of himself to think or do any thing of a saving tendency. But, as all men are required to do those things which have a saving tendency, we contend, that the grace to do them has been bestowed upon all. Equally sacred is the doctrine to be held, that no person can repent or truly believe except under the influence of the Spirit of God; and that we have no ground of boasting in ourselves, but that all the glory of our salvation, commenced and consummated, is to be given to God alone, as the result of the freeness and riches of his grace.

It will also be freely allowed, that the visitations of the gracious in finances of the Holy Spirit are vouchsafed in the first instance, and in numberless other subsequent cases, quite independent of our seeking them or desire for them; and that when our thoughts are thus turned to serious considerations, and various exciting and quickened feelings are produced within us, we are often wholly passive; and also, that men are sometimes suddenly and irresistibly awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger by the Spirit of God, either through the preaching of the word instrumentally, or through other means, and sometimes, even, independent of any external means at all; and are thus constrained to cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” All this is confirmed by plain verity of Holy Writ; and is, also, as certain a matter of experience as that the motions of the Holy Spirit do often silently intermingle themselves with our thoughts, reasonings, and consciences, and breathe their milder persuasions upon our affections.

From these premises the conclusions which legitimately flow, are in direct opposition to the Calvinistic hypothesis. They establish,
1. The justice of God in the condemnation of men, which their doctrine leaves under a dark and impenetrable cloud. More or less of these influences from on high visit the finally impenitent, so as to render their destruction their own act by resisting them. This is proved, from the “Spirit” having “strove” with those who were finally destroyed by the flood of Noah; from the case of the finally impenitent Jews and their ancestors, who are charged with “always resisting the Holy Ghost;” from the case of the apostates mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who are said to have done “despite to the Spirit of grace;” and from the solemn warnings given to men in the New Testament, not to “grieve” and “quench” the Holy Spirit. If, therefore, it appears that the destruction of men is attributed to their resistance of those influences of the Holy Spirit, which, but for that resistance, would have been saving, according to the design of God in imparting them, then is the justice of God manifested in their punishment; and it follows, also, that his grace so works in men, as to be both sufficient to lead them into a state of salvation, and even actually to place them in this state, and yet so as to be capable of being finally and fatally frustrated.

2. These premises, also, secure the glory of our salvation to the grace of God; but not by implying the Calvinistic notion of the continued and uninterrupted irresistibility of the influence of grace and the passiveness of man, so as to deprive him of his agency; but by showing that his agency, even when rightly directed, is upheld and influenced by the superior power of God, and yet so as to be still his own. For, in the instance of the mightiest visitation we can produce from Scripture, that of St. Paul, we see where the irresistible influence terminated, and where his own agency recommenced. Under the impulse of the conviction struck into his mind, as well as under the dazzling brightness which fell upon his eyes, he was passive, and the effect produced for the time necessarily followed; but all the actions consequent upon this were the results of deliberation and personal choice. He submits to be taught in the doctrine of Christ; “he confers not with flesh and blood;” “he is not disobedient to the heavenly vision;” “he faints not” under the burdensome ministry he had received; and he “keeps his body under subjection, lest, after having preached to others, he should himself become a castaway.” All these expressions, so descriptive of consideration and choice, show that the irresistible impulse was not permanent, and that he was subsequently left to improve it or not, though under a powerful but still a resistible motive operating upon him to remain faithful.
For the gentler emotions produced by the Spirit, these are, as the experience of all Christians testifies, the ordinary and general manner in which the Holy Spirit carries on his work in man; and, if all good desires, resolves, and aspirations, are from him, and not from our own nature, (and, if we are utterly fallen, from our own nature they cannot be,) then if any man is conscious of having ever checked good desires, and of having opposed his own convictions and better feelings, he has in himself abundant proof of the resistibility of grace, and of the superability of those good inclinations which the Spirit is pleased to impart. He is equally conscious of the power of complying with them though still in the strength of grace, which yet, while it works in him “to will and to do,” neither wills nor acts for him, nor even by him, as a passive instrument. For if men were wholly and at all times passive under Divine influence; not merely in the reception of it, for all are, in that respect, passive; but in the actings of it to practical ends, then would there be nothing to mark the difference between the righteous and the wicked but an act of God, which is utterly irreconcilable to the Scriptures. They call the former “obedient,” the latter “disobedient;” one “willing,” the other “unwilling;” and promise or threaten accordingly. They attribute the destruction of the one to their refusal of the grace of God, and the salvation of the other, as the instrumental cause, to their acceptance of it; and to urge that that personal act by which we receive the grace of Christ, detracts from his glory as our Saviour by attributing our salvation to ourselves, is to speak as absurdly as if we should say that the act of obedience and faith required of the man who was commanded to stretch out his withered arm, detracted from the glory of Christ’s healing virtue, by which, indeed, the power of complying with the command, and the condition of his being healed, was imparted.

It is by such reasonings, made plausible to many minds by an affectation of metaphysical depth and subtlety, or by pretensions of magnifying the sovereignty and grace of God (often, we doubt not, very sincere) that the theory of election and reprobation, as held by the followers of Calvin with some shades of difference, but in all substantially the same, has had currency given to it in the Church of Christ in these latter ages. How unsound and how contrary to the Scriptures they are, may appear from that brief refutation of them just given; but I repeat what was said above, that we are never to forget that this system has generally had interwoven with it many of the most vital points of Christianity. It is this which has kept it in existence; for otherwise it had never, probably, held itself up against the
opposing evidence of so many plain scriptures, and that sense of the benevolence and equity of God, which his own revelations, as well as natural reason, has riveted in the convictions of mankind. In one respect the Calvinistic and the Socinian schemes have tacitly confessed the evidence of the word of God to be against them. The latter has shrunk from the letter and common sense interpretation of Scripture within the clouds raised by a licentious criticism, the other has chosen rather to find refuge in the mists of metaphysical theories. Nothing is, however, here meant by this juxtaposition of theories, so contrary to each other, but that both thus confess, that the *prima facie* evidence afforded by the word of God is not in their favour. If we intended more by thus naming on the same page systems so opposite, one of which, with all its faults, contains all that truth by which men may be saved, while the other excludes it, “we should offend against the generation of the children of God.”
CHAPTER 29. — REDEMPTION —
FARTHER BENEFITS.

HAVING endeavoured to establish the doctrine of the universal redemption of the human race, the enumeration of the leading blessings which flow from it may now be resumed. We have already spoken of justification, adoption, regeneration, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, and we proceed to another as distinctly marked, and as graciously promised in the Holy Scriptures: this is the ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION, or the perfected HOLINESS of believers; and as this doctrine, in some of its respects, has been the subject of controversy, the Scriptural evidence of it must be appealed to and examined. Happily for us, a subject of so great importance is not involved in obscurity.

That a distinction exists between a regenerate state and a state of entire and perfect holiness will be generally allowed. Regeneration, we have seen, is concomitant with justification; but the apostles, in addressing the body of believers in the Churches to whom they wrote their epistles, set before them, both in the prayers they offer in their behalf, and in the exhortations they administer, a still higher degree of deliverance from sin, as well as a higher growth in Christian virtues. Two passages only need be quoted to prove this: — 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 7:1, “Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” In both these passages deliverance from sin is the subject spoken of; and the prayer in one instance, and the exhortation in the other, goes to the extent of the entire sanctification of “the soul” and “spirit,” as well as of the “flesh” or “body,” from all sin; by which can only be meant our complete deliverance from all spiritual pollution, all inward depravation of the heart, as well as that which, expressing itself outwardly by the indulgence of the senses, is called “filthiness of the flesh.”

The attainableness of such a state is not so much a matter of debate among Christians as the time when we are authorized to expect it. For as it is an axiom of Christian doctrine, that “without holiness no man can see the Lord;” and is equally clear that if we would “be found of him in peace,” we
must be found “without spot and blameless;” and that the Church will be presented by Christ to the Father without “fault;” so it must be concluded, unless, on the one hand, we greatly pervert the sense of these passages, or, on the other, admit the doctrine of purgatory or some intermediate purifying institution, that the entire sanctification of the soul, and its complete renewal in holiness, must take place in this world.

While this is generally acknowledged, however, among spiritual Christians, it has been warmly contended by many, that the final stroke which destroys our natural corruption, is only given at death; and that the soul, when separated from the body, and not before, is capable of that immaculate purity which these passages, doubtless, exhibit to our hope.

If this view can be refuted, then it must follow, unless a purgatory of some description be allowed after death, that the entire sanctification of believers, at any time previous to their dissolution, and in the full sense of these evangelic promises, is attainable.

To the opinion in question, then, there appear to be the following fatal objections: —

1. That we nowhere find the promises of entire sanctification restricted to the article of death, either expressly, or in fair inference from any passage of Holy Scripture.

2. That we nowhere find the circumstance of the soul’s union with the body represented as a necessary obstacle to its entire sanctification.

The principal passage which has been urged in proof of this from the New Testament, is that part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul, speaking in the first person of the bondage of the flesh, has been supposed to describe his state, as a believer in Christ. But whether he speaks of himself, or describes the state of others in a supposed case, given for the sake of more vivid representation in the first person, which is much more probable, he is clearly speaking of a person who had once sought justification by the works of the law, but who was then convinced, by the force of a spiritual apprehension of the extent of the requirements of that law, and by constant failures in his attempts to keep it perfectly, that he was in bondage to his corrupt nature, and could only be delivered from this thraldom by the interposition of another. For, not to urge that his strong expressions of being “carnal,” “sold under sin,” and doing always “the things which he would not,” are utterly inconsistent with that moral
state of believers in Christ which he describes in the next chapter; and, especially, that he there declares that such as are in Christ Jesus “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” the seventh chapter itself contains decisive evidence against the inference which the advocates of the necessary continuance of sin till death have drawn from it. The apostle declares the person whose case he describes, to be under the law, and not in a state of deliverance by Christ; and then he represents him not only as despairing of self deliverance, and as praying for the interposition of a sufficiently powerful deliverer, but as thanking God that the very deliverance for which he groans is appointed to be administered to him by Jesus Christ. “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank GOD through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This is, also, so fully confirmed by what the apostle had said in the preceding chapter, where he unquestionably describes the moral state of true believers, that nothing is more surprising than that so perverted a comment upon the seventh chapter, as that to which we have adverted, should have been adopted or persevered in. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that OUR OLD MAN is crucified with him, THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DESTROYED, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead IS FREED FROM SIN.” So clearly does the apostle show that he who is BOUND to the “body of death,” as mentioned in the seventh chapter, is not in the state of a believer; and that he who has a true faith in Christ, “is FREED from sin.”

It is somewhat singular, that the divines of the Calvinistic school should be almost uniformly the zealous advocates of the doctrine of the continuance of indwelling sin till death; but it is but justice to say, that several of them have as zealously denied that the apostle, in the seventh chapter of the Romans, describes the state of one who is justified by faith in Christ, and very properly consider the case there spoken of as that of one struggling in LEGAL bondage, and brought to that point of self despair and of conviction
of sin and helplessness which must always precede an entire trust in the merits of Christ’s death, and the power of his salvation.

3. The doctrine before us is disproved by those passages of Scripture which connect our entire sanctification with subsequent habits and acts, to be exhibited in the conduct of believers before death. So in the quotation from Romans 6, just given, — “knowing this, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” So the exhortation in 2 Corinthians 7:1, also given above, refers to the present life: and not to the future hour of our dissolution; and in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the apostle first prays for the entire sanctification of the Thessalonians, and then for their preservation in that hallowed state, “unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. It is disproved, also, by all those passages which require us to bring forth those graces and virtues which are usually called the fruits of the Spirit. That these are to be produced during our life, and to be displayed in our spirit and conduct, cannot be doubted; and we may then ask whether they are required of us in perfection and maturity? If so, in this degree of maturity and perfection, they necessarily suppose the entire sanctification of the soul from the opposite and antagonist evils. Meekness in its perfection supposes the extinction of all sinful anger; perfect love to God, supposes that no affection remains contrary to it; and so of every other perfect internal virtue. The inquiry, then, is reduced to this, whether these graces, in such perfection as to exclude the opposite corruptions of the heart, are of possible attainment. If they are not, then we cannot love God with our whole hearts; then we must be sometimes sinfully angry; and how, in that case, are we to interpret that perfectness in these graces which GOD hath required of us, and promised to us in the Gospel? For if the perfection meant (and let it be observed that this is a Scriptural term, and must mean something) be so comparative as that we may be sometimes sinfully angry, and may sometimes divide our hearts between God and the creature, we may apply the same comparative sense of the term to good words and to good works, as well as to good affections. Thus when the apostle prays for the Hebrews, “Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will,” we must understand this perfection of evangelical good works so that it shall sometimes give place to opposite evil works, just as good affections must necessarily sometimes give place to the opposite bad affections. This
view can scarcely be soberly entertained by any enlightened Christian; and it must, therefore, be concluded, that the standard of our attainable Christian perfection, as to the affections, is a love of God so perfect as to “rule the heart,” and exclude all rivalry, and a meekness so perfect as to cast out all sinful anger, and prevent its return; and that as to good works, the rule is, that we shall be so “perfect in every good work,” as to “do the will of God” habitually, fully, and constantly. If we fix the standard lower, we let in a license totally inconsistent with that Christian purity which is allowed by all to be attainable, and we make every man himself his own interpreter of that *comparative* perfection which is often contended for as that only which is attainable.

Some, it is true, admit the extent of the promises and the requirements of the Gospel as we have stated them; but they contend, that this is the mark at which we are to aim, the standard toward which we are to aspire, though neither is attainable fully till death. But this view cannot be true as applied to *sanctification*, or deliverance from all inward and outward sin. That the degree of every virtue implanted by grace is not limited, but advances and grows in the living Christian throughout life, may be granted; and through eternity also: but to say that these virtues are not attainable, through the work of the Spirit, in that degree which shall destroy all opposite vice, is to say, that God, under the Gospel, requires us to be what we cannot be, either through want of efficacy in his grace, or from some defect in its administration; neither of which has any countenance from Scripture, nor is at all consistent with the terms in which the promises and exhortations of the Gospel are expressed. It is also contradicted by our own consciousness, which charges our criminal neglects and failures upon ourselves, and not upon the grace of God, as though it were insufficient. Either the consciences of good men have in all ages been delusive and over scrupulous; or this doctrine of the necessary, though occasional, dominion of sin over us is false.

5. The doctrine of the necessary indwelling of sin in the soul till death involves other antiscientific consequences. It supposes that the seat of sin is in the flesh, and thus harmonizes with the pagan philosophy, which attributed all evil to matter. The doctrine of the Bible, on the contrary, is, that the seat of sin is in the soul; and it makes it one of the proofs of the fall and corruption of our spiritual nature, that we are in bondage to the appetites and motions of the flesh. Nor does the theory which places the necessity of sinning in the connection of the soul with the body account for
the whole moral case of man. There are sins, as pride, covetousness, malice, and others, which are wholly spiritual; and yet no exception is made in this doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin till death as to them. There is, surely, no need to wait for the separation of the soul from the body in order to be saved from evils which are the sole offspring of the spirit; and yet these are made as inevitable as the sins which more immediately connect themselves with the excitements of the animal nature.

This doctrine supposes, too, that the flesh must necessarily not only lust against the Spirit, but in no small degree, and on many occasions, be the conqueror: whereas, we are commanded, to "mortify the deeds of the body;" to "crucify," that is, to put to death, "the flesh;" "to put off the old man," which, in its full meaning, must import separation from sin in fact, as well as the renunciation of it in will; and "to put on the new man." Finally, the apostle expressly states, that though the flesh stands victoriously opposed to legal sanctification, it is not insuperable by evangelical holiness. — "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Romans 8:3, 4. So inconsistent with the declarations and promises of the Gospel is the notion that, so long as we are in the body, "the flesh" must of necessity have at least the occasional dominion.

We conclude, therefore, as to the time of our complete sanctification, or, to use the phrase of the Apostle Paul, "the destruction of the body of sin;" that it can neither be referred to the hour of death, nor placed subsequently to this present life. The attainment of perfect freedom from sin is one to which believers are called during the present life; and is necessary to that completeness of "holiness," and of those active and passive graces of Christianity by which they are called to glorify God in this world, and to edify mankind.

Not only the time, but the manner also, of our sanctification has been matter of controversy: some contending that all attainable degrees of it are acquired by the process of gradual mortification and the acquisition of holy habits; others alleging it to be instantaneous, and the fruit of an act of faith in the Divine promises.

That the regeneration which accompanies justification is a large approach to this state of perfected holiness; and that all dying to sin, and all growth
in grace, advances us nearer to this point of *entire* sanctity, is so obvious, that on these points there can be no reasonable dispute. But they are not at all inconsistent with a more instantaneous work, when, the depth of our natural depravity being more painfully felt, we plead in faith the accomplishment of the promises of GOD. The great question to be settled is, whether the deliverance sighed after be held out to us in these promises as a present blessing? And, from what has been already said, there appears no ground to doubt this, since no small violence would be offered to the passages of Scripture already quoted, as well as to many others, by the opposite opinion. All the promises of GOD which are not expressly, or from their *order*, referred to future time, are objects of present *trust*; and their fulfilment now is made conditional *only* upon our faith. They cannot, therefore, be pleaded in our prayers, with an entire reliance upon the truth of God, in vain. The general promise that we shall receive “all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing,” comprehends, of course, “all things” suited to our case which God has engaged to bestow; and if the entire renewal of our nature be included in the number, without any limitation of time, except that in which we ask it in faith, then to this faith shall the promises of entire sanctification be given; which, in the nature of the case, supposes an instantaneous work immediately following upon our entire and unwavering faith.

The only plausible objections made to this doctrine may be answered in few words.

It has been urged, that this state of entire sanctification supposes future *impeccability*. Certainly not; for if angels and our first parents fell when in a state of immaculate sanctity, the renovated man cannot be placed, by his entire deliverance from inward sin, out of the reach of danger. This, remark, also, answers the allegation, that we should thus be removed out of the reach of temptation, for the example of angels, and of the first man, who fell by temptation when in a state of native purity, proves that the absence of inward evil is not inconsistent with a state of probation; and that this, in itself, is no guard against the attempts and solicitations of evil.

It has been objected, too, that this supposed state renders the atonement and intercession of Christ superfluous in future. But the very contrary of this is manifest when the case of an evangelical renewal of the soul in righteousness is understood. This proceeds from the grace of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as the efficient cause; it is received by faith
as the instrumental cause; and the state itself into which we are raised is maintained, not by inherent native power, but by the continual presence and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit himself, received and retained in answer to ceaseless prayer; which prayer has respect solely to the merits of the death and intercession of Christ.

It has been farther alleged, that a person delivered from all inward and outward sin has no longer need to use the petition of the Lord’s prayer, — “and forgive us our trespasses;” because he has no longer need of pardon. To this we reply,

1. That it would be absurd to suppose that any person is placed under the necessity of “trespassing,” in order that a general prayer designed for men in a mixed condition might retain its aptness to every particular case.

2. That trespassing of every kind and degree is not supposed by this prayer to be continued, in order that it might be used always in the same import, or otherwise it might be pleaded against the renunciation of any trespass or transgression whatever.

3. That this petition is still relevant to the case of the entirely sanctified and the evangelically perfect, since neither the perfection of the first man nor that of angels is in question; that is, a perfection measured by the perfect law, which, in its obligations, contemplates all creatures as having sustained no injury by moral lapse, and admits, therefore, of no excuse from infirmities and mistakes of judgment; nor of any degree of obedience below that which beings created naturally perfect, were capable of rendering. There may, however, be an entire sanctification of a being rendered naturally weak and imperfect, and so liable to mistake and infirmity, as well as to defect in the degree of that absolute obedience and service which the law of God, never bent or lowered to human weakness, demands from all. These defects, and mistakes, and infirmities, may be quite consistent with the entire sanctification of the soul and the moral maturity of a being still naturally infirm and imperfect. Still, farther, if this were not a sufficient answer it may be remarked, that we are not the ultimate judges of our own case as to our “trespasses,” or our exemption from them; and we are not, therefore, to put ourselves into the place of God, “who is greater than our hearts.” So, although St. Paul says, “I know nothing by myself,” that is, I am conscious of no offence, he adds, “yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord:” to whom, therefore, the appeal is every moment to be made through Christ the
Mediator, and who, by the renewed testimony of his Spirit, assures every true believer of his acceptance in his sight.

Another benefit which accrues to all true believers, is the **RIGHT TO PRAY**, with the special assurance that they shall be heard in all things which are according to the will of God. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.” It is under this gracious institution that all good men are constituted intercessors for others, even for the whole world; and that God is pleased to order many of his dispensations, both as to individuals and to nations, in reference to “his elect who cry day and night unto him.”

With respect to every real member of the body or Church of Christ, the **PROVIDENCE** of God is **special**; in other words, they are individually considered in the administration of the affairs of this life by the Sovereign Ruler, and their measure of good and of evil is appointed with constant reference to their advantage, either in this life or in eternity. “The hairs of their head,” are, therefore, said to be “numbered,” and “all things” are declared “to work together for their good.”

To them also **VICTORY OVER DEATH** is awarded. They are freed from its fear in respect of consequences in another state; for the apprehension of future punishment is removed by the remission of their sins, and the attestation of this to their minds by the Holy Spirit, while a patient resignation to the will of God, as to the measure of their bodily sufferings, and the strong hopes and joyful anticipations of a better life cancel and subdue that horror of pain and dissolution which is natural to man. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage,” Hebrews 2:14, 15.

**THE IMMEDIATE RECEPTION OF THE SOUL INTO A STATE OF BLESSEDNESS** after death, is also another of the glorious promises of the new covenant to all them that endure to the end, and “die in the Lord.”

This is so explicitly taught in the New Testament, that, but for the admission of a philosophical error, it would, probably, have never been doubted by any persons professing to receive that book, as of Divine authority. Till, in recent times, the belief in the materiality of the human
soul was chiefly confined to those who entirely rejected the Christian revelation; but, when the Socinians adopted this notion, without wholly rejecting the Scriptures, it was promptly perceived that the doctrine of an intermediate state, and the materiality of the soul, could not be maintained together; and the most violent and disgraceful criticisms and evasions have, therefore, by this class of interpreters been resorted to, in order to save a notion as unphilosophical as it is contrary to the word of God. Nothing can be more satisfactory than the observations of Dr. Campbell on this subject.

“Many expressions of Scripture, in the natural and obvious sense, imply that an intermediate and separate state of the soul is actually to succeed death. Such are the words of the Lord to the penitent thief upon the cross, Luke 23:43. Stephen’s dying petition, Acts 7:59. The comparisons which the Apostle Paul makes in different places, (2 Corinthians 5:6, &c; Philippians 1:21,) between the enjoyment which true Christians can attain by their continuance in this world, and that which they enter on at their departure out of it, and several other passages. Let the words referred to be read by any judicious person, either in the original or in the common translation, which is sufficiently exact for this purpose, and let him, setting aside all theory or system, say, candidly, whether they would not be understood, by the gross of mankind, as presupposing that the soul may and will exist separately from the body, and be susceptible of happiness or misery in that state. If any thing could add to the native evidence of the expressions, it would be the unnatural meanings that are put upon them, in order to disguise that evidence. What shall we say of the metaphysical distinction introduced for this purpose between absolute and relative time? The Apostle Paul, they are sensible, speaks of the saints as admitted to enjoyment in the presence of God, immediately after death. Now, to palliate the direct contradiction there is in this to their doctrine, that the vital principle, which is all they mean by the soul, remains extinguished between death and the resurrection, they remind us of the difference there is between absolute or real and relative or apparent time. They admit, that if the apostle be understood as speaking of real time, what is said flatly contradicts their system; but, say they, his words must be interpreted as spoken only of apparent time. He talks, indeed, of entering on a state of enjoyment immediately after death, though there may be many thousands of years between the one and the other; for he means only, that when that state shall commence, however distant, in reality, the time may be, the
person entering upon it will not be sensible of that distance, and, consequently, there will be to him an apparent coincidence with the moment of his death. But does the apostle any where give a hint that this is his meaning? or is it what any man would naturally discover from his words? That it is exceedingly remote from the common use of language, I believe hardly any of those, who favour this scheme, will be partial enough to deny. Did the sacred penmen then mean to put a cheat upon the world, and, by the help of an equivocal expression, to flatter men with the hope of entering, the instant they expire, on a state of felicity, when, in fact, they knew that it would be many ages before it would take place? But were the hypothesis about the extinction of the mind between death and the resurrection well founded, the apparent coincidence they speak of is not so clear as they seem to think it. For my part, I cannot regard it as an axiom, and I never heard of any who attempted to demonstrate it. To me it appears merely a corollary from Mr. Locke’s doctrine, which derives our conceptions of time from the succession of our ideas, which, whether true or false, is a doctrine to be found only among certain philosophers, and which, we may reasonably believe, never came into the heads of those to whom the Gospel, in the apostolic age, was announced.

“I remark that even the curious equivocations (or, perhaps, more properly, mental reservation) that has been devised for them, will not, in every case, save the credit of apostolical veracity. The words of Paul to the Corinthians are, *Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; again, we are willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.* Could such expressions have been used by him, if he had held it impossible to be with the Lord, or, indeed, any where, without the body; and that, whatever the change was which was made by death, he could not be in the presence of the Lord, till he returned to the body? Absence from the body, and presence with the Lord, were never, therefore, more unfortunately combined than in this illustration. Things are combined here as coincident, which, on the hypothesis of those gentlemen, are incompatible. If recourse be had to the original, the expressions in Greek are, if possible, still stronger. They are οἱ ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ ὅματι, *those who dwell in the body,* who are οἱ ἐκδημοῦντες ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, *at a distance from the Lord.* As, on the contrary, they are οἱ ἐκδημοῦντες ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, *those who have travelled out of*
the body, who are οἱ ἐνδημοῦντες πρὸς τὸν Κυρίον, those who reside, or are present with the Lord. In the passage to the Philippians, also, the commencement of his presence with the Lord is represented as coincident, not with his return to the body, but with his leaving it; with the dissolution, not with the restoration of the union.

“From the tenor of the New Testament, the sacred writers appear to proceed on the supposition that the soul and the body are naturally distinct and separable, and that the soul is susceptible of pain or pleasure in a state of separation. It were endless to enumerate all the places which evince this. The story of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:22, 23. The last words of our Lord upon the cross, Luke 23:46, and of Stephen, when dying. Paul’s doubts, whether he was in the body or out of the body, when he was translated to the third heaven and paradise, 2 Corinthians 12:2, 3, 4. Our Lord’s words to Thomas to satisfy him that he was not a spirit, Luke 24:39. And, to conclude, the express mention of the denial of spirits as one of the errors of the Sadducees. Acts 23:8, For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, μεδε αγγελον μεδε πνευμα. All these are irrefragable evidences of the general opinion on this subject of both Jews and Christians. By spirit, as distinguished from angel, is evidently meant the departed spirit of a human being; for, that man is here, before his natural death, possessed of a vital and intelligent principle, which is commonly called his soul or spirit, it was never pretended that they denied.” (Diss. vi, part 2.)

In this intermediate, but felicitous and glorious state, the disembodied spirits of the righteous will remain in joy and felicity with Christ, until the general judgment; when another display of the gracious effects of our redemption, by Christ, will appear in the glorious resurrection of their bodies to an immortal life: thus distinguishing them from the wicked, whose resurrection will be to “shame and everlasting contempt,” or, to what may be emphatically termed, an immortal death.

On this subject no point of discussion, of any importance, arises among those who admit the truth of Scripture, except as to the way in which the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. is to be understood; — whether a resurrection of the substance of the body be meant, or of some minute and
indestructible part of it. The latter theory has been adopted for the sake of avoiding certain supposed difficulties. It cannot, however, fail to strike every impartial reader of the New Testament, that the doctrine of the resurrection is there taught without any nice distinctions. It is always exhibited as a miraculous work; and represents the same body which is laid in the grave as the subject of this change from death to life, by the power of Christ. Thus, our Lord was raised in the same body in which he died, and his resurrection is constantly held forth as the model of ours; and the Apostle Paul expressly says, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” The only passage of Scripture which appears to favour the notion of the rising of the immortal body from some indestructible germ, is 1 Corinthians 15:35, &c, “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain,” &c. If, however, it had been the intention of the apostle, holding this view of the case, to meet objections to the doctrine of the resurrection, grounded upon the difficulties of conceiving how the same body, in the popular sense, could be raised up in substance, we might have expected him to correct this misapprehension, by declaring that this was not the Christian doctrine, but that some small parts of the body only, bearing as little proportion to the whole as the germ of a seed to the plant, would be preserved and be unfolded into the perfected body at the resurrection. Instead of this, he goes on immediately to remind the objector of the differences which exist between material bodies as they now exist; between the plant and the bare or naked grain; between one plant and another; between the flesh of men, of beasts, of fishes, and of birds; between celestial and terrestrial bodies; and between the lesser and greater celestial luminaries themselves. Still farther he proceeds to state the difference, not between the germ of the body to be raised, and the body given at the resurrection; but between the body itself, understood popularly, which dies, and the body which shall be raised. “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption,” which would not be true of the supposed incorrputible and imperishable germ of this hypothesis; and can only be affirmed of the body itself, considered in substance, and in its present state corruptible. Farther, the question put by the objector, “How are the dead raised up?” does not refer to the modus agendi of the resurrection, or the process or manner in which the thing is to be effected, as the advocates of the germ hypothesis appear to assume.
— This is manifest from the answer of the apostle, who goes on immediately to state, not in what manner the resurrection is to be effected, but what shall be the state or condition of the resurrection body, which is no answer at all to the question, if it be taken in that sense.

The first of the two questions in the passage referred to relates to the possibility of the resurrection, “How are the dead raised up?” The second to the kind of body which they are to take, supposing the fact to be allowed. Both questions, however, imply a denial of the fact, or, at least, express a strong doubt concerning it. It is thus that πώς, “how,” in the first question, is taken in many passages where it is connected with a verb; and the second question only expresses the general negation or doubt more particularly, by implying, that the objector could not conceive of any kind of body being restored to man, which would not be an evil and imperfection to him. For the very reason why some of the Christians of that age denied, or strongly doubted, the resurrection of the body; explaining it figuratively, and saying that it was past already; was, that they were influenced to this by the notice of their philosophical schools, that the body was the prison of the soul, and that the greatest deliverance men could experience was to be eternally freed from their connection with matter. Hence the early philosophizing sects in the Christian Church, the Gnostics, Marcionites, &c, denied the resurrection, on the same ground as the philosophers, and thought it opposed to that perfection which they hoped to enjoy in another world. Such persons appear to have been in the Church of Corinth as early as the time of St. Paul, for that in this chapter he answers the objections, not of pagans, but of professing Christians, appears from verse 12, “How say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?” The objection, therefore, in the minds of these persons to the doctrine of the resurrection, did not lie against the doctrine of the raising up of the substance of the same body, so that, provided this notion could be dispensed with, they were prepared to admit, that a new material body might spring from its germ, as a plant from seed. — They stumbled at the doctrine in every form, because it involved the circumstance of the reunion of the spirit with matter, which they thought an evil. When, therefore, the objector asks, “How are the dead raised up?” he is to be understood, not as inquiring as to the process, but as to the possibility. The doubt may, indeed, be taken as an implied negation of the possibility of the resurrection with reference to God; and then the apostle, by referring to the springing up of the grain of corn, when dissolved and putrefied, may be understood
to show that the event was not inconceivable, by referring to God’s omnipotence, as shown in his daily providence, which, à priori, would appear as marvellous and incredible. But it is much more probable, that the impossibility implied in this question refers, not to the power of God, which every Christian in the Church at Corinth must be supposed to have been taught to conceive of as almighty, and, therefore, adequate to the production of this effect; but as relating to the contrariety which was assumed to exist between the doctrine of the reunion of the soul with the body, and those hopes of a higher condition in a future life, which both reason and revelation taught them to form. The second question, “With what body do they come?” like the former, is a question not of inquiry, but of denial, or, at least, of strong doubt, importing, that no idea could be entertained by the objector of any material body being made the residence of a disenthralled spirit, which could comport with those notions of deliverance from the bondage of corruption by death, which the philosophy of the age had taught, and which Christianity itself did not discountenance. The questions, though different, come, therefore, nearly to the same import, and this explains why the apostle chiefly dwells upon the answer to the latter only, by which, in fact, he replies to both. The grain cast into the earth even dies and is corrupted, and that which is sown is not “the body which shall be,” in form and quality, but “naked grain;” yet into the plant, in its perfect form, is the same matter transformed. So the flesh of beasts, birds, fishes, and man, is the same matter, though exhibiting different qualities. So also bodies celestial are of the same matter as “bodies terrestrial;” and the note splendid luminaries of the heavens are, in substance, the same as those of inferior glory. It is thus that the apostle reaches his conclusion, and shows that the doctrine of our reunion with the body implies in it no imperfection — nothing contrary to the hopes of liberation “from the burden of this flesh;” because of the high and glorified qualities which God is able to give to matter; of which the superior purity, splendour, and energy of some material things in this world, in comparison of others, is a visible demonstration. For after he has given these instances, he adds, “So is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural (an animal) body, it is raised a spiritual body,” so called, “as being accommodated to a spirit, and far excelling all that is required for the transaction of earthly and terrene affairs;” (Rosenmuller;) and so intent is the apostle on dissipating all those gross representations of the resurrection of the body which the
objections had assumed as the ground of their opposition, and which they had, probably, in their disputations, placed under the strongest views, that he guards the true Christian doctrine, on this point, in the most explicit manner, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption;” and, therefore, let no man henceforward affirm, or assume it in his argument, that we teach any such doctrine. This, also, he strengthens, by showing, that as to the saints who are alive at the second coming of Christ, they also shall be in like manner “CHANGED,” and that “this corruptible,” as to them also, “shall put on incorruption.”

Thus, in the argument, the apostle confines himself wholly to the possibility of the resurrection of the body in a refined and glorified state; but omits all reference to the mode in which the thing will be effected, as being out of the line of the objector’s questions, and in itself above human thought, and wholly miraculous. It is, however, clear, that when he speaks of the body as the subject of this wondrous “change,” he speaks of it popularly, as the same body in substance, whatever changes in its qualities or figure may be impressed upon it. Great general changes it will experience, as from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality; great changes of a particular kind will also take place, as its being freed from deformities and defects, and the accidental varieties produced by climate, ailments, labour, and hereditary diseases. It is also laid down by our Lord, that, “in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be like to the angels of God;” and this also implies a certain change of structure; and we may gather from the declaration of the apostle, that though “the stomach” is now adapted “to meats, and meats to the stomach, God will destroy both it and them;” that the animal appetite for food will be removed, and the organ now adapted to that appetite have no place in the renewed frame. But great as these changes are, the human form will be retained in its perfection after the model of our Lord’s “glorious body,” and the substance of the matter of which it is composed will not thereby be affected. That the same body which was laid in the grave shall arise out of it, is the manifest doctrine of the Scriptures.

The notion of an incorruptible germ, or that of an original and unchangeable stamen, out of which a new and glorious body, at the resurrection, is to spring, appears to have been borrowed from the speculations of some of the Jewish rabbins, who speak of some such supposed part in the human frame, under the name LUZ, to which they
ascribe marvellous properties, and from which the body was to arise. No allusion is, however made to any such opinion by the early fathers, in their defences of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. On the contrary, they argue in such a way as to prove the possibility of the *reunion* of the *scattered parts* of the body; which sufficiently shows that the germ theory had not been resorted to, by Christian divines at least, in order to harmonize the doctrine of the resurrection with philosophy. So Justin Martyr, in a fragment of his concerning the resurrection, expressly answers the objection, that it is impossible for the flesh, after a corruption and perfect dissolution of all its parts, should be united together again, and contends, “that if the body be not raised complete, with all its integral parts, it would argue a want of power in God;” and although some of the Jews adopted the notion of the germinating or springing up of the body from some one indestructible part, yet the most orthodox of their rabbins contended for the resurrection of the same body. So Maimonides says, “Men, in the same manner as they before lived, with the same body, shall be restored to life by God, and sent into this life with the same identity:” and “that nothing can properly be called a resurrection of the dead, but the return of the very same soul, into the very same body from which it was separated.” *(Rambam apud Pocockium in Notis Miscellan. Port. Mos. p. 125.)*

This theory, under its various forms, and whether adopted by Jews or Christians, was designed, doubtless, to render the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead less difficult to conceive, and more acceptable to philosophic minds; but, like most other attempts of the same kind to bring down the supernatural doctrines of revelation to the level of our conceptions, it escapes none of the original difficulties, and involves itself in others far more perplexing.

For if by this hypothesis it was designed to remove the difficulty of conceiving how the scattered parts of one body could be preserved from becoming integral parts of other bodies, it supposes that the constant care of Providence is exerted to maintain the incorruptibility of those individual germs, or stamina, so as to prevent their assimilation with each other. Now, if they have this by original quality, then the same quality may just as easily be supposed to appertain to every particle which composes a human body; so that though it be used for food, it shall not be capable of assimilation, in any circumstances, with another human body. But if these germs or stamina, have not this quality by their original nature, they can
only be prevented from assimilating with each other by that operation of God which is present to all his works, and which must always be directed to secure the execution of his own ultimate designs. If this view be adopted, then, if the resort must at last be to the superintendence of a Being of infinite power and wisdom, there is no greater difficulty in supposing that his care to secure this object shall extend to a million than to a thousand particles of matter. This is, in fact, the true and rational answer to the objection that the same piece of matter may happen to be a part of two or more bodies, as in the instances of men feeding upon animals which have fed upon men, and of men feeding upon one another. The question here is one which simply respects the frustrating a final purpose of the Almighty by an operation of nature. To suppose that he cannot prevent this, is to deny his power; to suppose him inattentive to it, is to suppose him indifferent to his own designs; and to assume that he employs care to prevent it, is to assume nothing greater, nothing in fact so great, as many instances of control, which are always occurring; as, for instance, the regulation of the proportion of the sexes in human births, which cannot be attributed to chance, but must either be referred to superintendence, or to some original law.

Thus these theories afford no relief to the only real difficulty involved in the doctrine, but leave the whole case still to be resolved into the almighty power of God. But they involve themselves in the fatal objection, that they are plainly in opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures. For, —

1. There is no resurrection of the body on this hypothesis, because the germ or stamina, can in no good sense be called “the body.” If a finger, or even a limb, is not the body, much less can these minuter parts be entitled to this appellation.

2. There is, on these theories, no resurrection at all. For if the preserved part be a germ, and the analogy of germination be adopted; then we have no longer a resurrection from death, but a vegetation from a suspended principle of secret life. If the stamina of Leibnitz be contended for, then the body, into which the soul enters at the resurrection, with the exception of these minute stamina, is provided for it by the addition and aggregation of new matter, and we have a creation, not a resurrection.

3. If bodies in either of these modes, are to be framed for the soul, by the addition of a large mass of new matter, the resurrection is made substantially the same with the pagan notion of the metempsychosis; and if
St. Paul, at Athens, preached, not “Jesus and the resurrection,” but Jesus and a transmigration into a new body, it will be difficult to account for his hearers scoffing at a doctrine, which had received the sanction of several of their own philosophic authorities.

Another objection to the resurrection of the body has been drawn from the changes of its substance during life. The answer to this is, that allowing a frequent and total change of the substance of the body (which, however, is but an hypothesis) to take place, it effects not the doctrine of Scripture, which is, that the body which is laid in the grave shall be raised up. But then we are told, that if our bodies have in fact undergone successive changes during life, the bodies in which we have sinned or performed rewardable actions may not be, in many instances, the same bodies as those which will be actually rewarded or punished. We answer, that rewards and punishments have their relation to the body, not so much as it is the subject but the instrument of reward and punishment. It is the soul only which perceives pain or pleasure, which suffers or enjoys, and is, therefore, the only rewardable subject. Were we, therefore, to admit such corporeal mutations as are assumed in this objection, they affect not the case of our accountability. The personal identity or sameness of a rational being, as Mr. Locke has observed, consists in self consciousness: — “By this every one is to himself what he calls self, without considering whether that self be continued in the same or divers substances. It was by the same self which reflects on an action done many years ago, that the action was performed.” If there were indeed any weight in this objection, it would affect the proceedings of human criminal courts in all cases of offences committed at some distance of time; but it contradicts the common sense, because it contradicts the common consciousness and experience of mankind.
Few, if any, of the ancient pagan philosophers acknowledged God to be, in the most proper sense, the Creator of the world. By calling him Δημιουργός, 'the Maker of the world,' they did not mean, that he brought it out of nonexistence into being; but only that he built it out of pre-existent materials, and disposed it into a regular form and order.” See ample proofs and illustrations in c. 13, part i, of LELAND’S Necessity of Revelation.

“Tell men there is a God, and their mind embraces it as a necessary truth; unfold his attributes, and they will see the explanation of them in his works. When the foundation is laid sure and firm that there is a God, and his will the cause of all things, and nothing made but by his special appointment and command, then the order of beings will fill their minds with a due sense of the Divine Majesty, and they may be made a scale to raise juster conceptions of what is immortal and invisible” (ELLIS’S Knowledge of Divine Things.)

The language of every nation is formed on the connection between cause and effect. For in every language there are not only many words directly expressing ideas of this subject, such as cause, efficiency, effect, production, produce, effectuate, create, generate, &c, or words equivalent to these; but every verb in every language, except the intransitive impersonal verbs, and the verb substantive, involves, of course, causation or efficiency, and refers always to an agent, or cause, in such a manner, that without the operation of this cause or agent, the verb would have no meaning.—All mankind, except a few Atheistical and skeptical philosophers, have thus agreed in acknowledging this connection, and they have acknowledged it as fully as others in their customary language. They have spoken exactly as other men speak, and the connection between cause and effect is as often declared in their conversation and writings, and as much relied on, as in those of other men. (DWIGHT’S THEOLOGY, vol. 1. p. 5.)

The notion of an infinite series of caused and successive beings is absurd; for of this infinite series, either some one part has not been successive to any other, or else all the several parts of it have been successive. If some one part of it was not successive, then it had a first part, which
destroys the supposition of its infinity. If all the several parts of it have been successive, then have they all once been future: but if they have all been future, a time may be conceived when none of them had existence: and if so, then it follows, either that all the parts and consequently the whole of this infinite series must have arisen from nothing, which is absurd; or else, that there must be something in the whole, beside what is contained in all the parts, which is also absurd. See Clarke’s Demonstration, and Woolaston’s Religion of Nature. “A chain,” says Dr. Paley, “composed of an infinite number of links can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. If we increase the number of links from ten to a hundred, and from a hundred to a thousand, &c, we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency toward self-support.”

“We will acknowledge an impropriety in this word, and its conjugate, self-originate, sometimes hereafter used: which yet is recompensed by their conveniency; as they may perhaps find who shall make trial how to express the sense intended by them in other words. And they are used without suspicion, that it can be thought they are meant to signify as if God ever gave original to himself; but in the negative sense, that he never received it from any other; yea, and that he is, what is more than equivalent to his being self-caused; namely, a Being of himself so excellent as not to need or be capable to admit any cause.”

See Boyle on Final Causes, Ray’s Wisdom of God in the Creation, Derham’s Astro and Physico Theology, Sturm’s Reflections, Paley’s Natural Theology, &c.

“They are called attributes, because God attributes them to and affirms them of himself. Properties, because we conceive them proper to God, and such as can be predicated only of him, so that by them we distinguish him from all other beings. Perfections, because they are the several representations of that one perfection which is himself. Names and Terms, because they express and signify something of his essence. Notions, because they are so many apprehensions of his being as we conceive of him in our minds.” (LAWSON’S Theo-Politica.)

The celebrated Hunter, “in searching for the principle of life, on the supposition that it was something visible, fruitlessly enough looked for it in the blood, the chyle, the brain, the lungs, and other parts of the body; but not finding it in any of them exclusively, concluded that it must be a consequence of the union of the whole, and depend upon
organism. But to this conclusion he could not long adhere, after observing that the composition of matter does not give life; and that a dead body may have all the composition it ever had. Last of all, he drew the true, or at least the candid conclusion, *that he knew nothing about the matter.*” (Medico. Chirurgical Review, Sept. 1822.) This is the conclusion to which mere philosophy comes, and the only one at which it can arrive, till it stoops to believe that there is true philosophy in the Scriptures.

A curious instance of the transmission of this name, and one of the peculiarities of the Hebrew faith, even into China, is mentioned in the following extract of “A Memoir of Lao-tseu, a Chinese philosopher, who flourished in the sixth century before our era, and who professed the opinions ascribed to Plato and to Pythagoras.” (By M. Abel Remusat.)—”The metaphysics of Lao-tseu have many other remarkable features, which I have endeavoured to develope in my memoir, and which, for various reasons, I am obliged to pass over in silence. How, in fact, should I give an idea of those lofty abstractions, of those inextricable subtleties, in which the oriental imagination disports and goes astray? It will suffice to say here, that the opinions of the Chinese philosopher on the origin and constitution of the universe, have neither ridiculous fables nor offensive absurdities; that they bear the stamp of a noble and elevated mind; and that, in the sublime reveries which distinguish them, they exhibit a striking and incontestable conformity with the doctrine which was professed a little later by the schools of Pythagoras and Plato. Like the Pythagoreans and the Stoics, our author admits, as the First Cause, Reason, an ineffable, uncreated Being, that is the type of the universe, and has no type but itself. Like Pythagoras, he takes human souls to be emanations of the ethereal substance, which are re-united with it after death; and, like Plato, he refuses to the wicked the faculty of returning into the bosom of the Universal Soul. Like Pythagoras, he gives to the first principles of things the names of numbers, and his cosmogony is, in some degree, algebraical. He attaches the chain of beings to that which he calls *One,* then to *Two,* then to *Three,* which have made all things. The divine Plato, who had adopted this mysterious dogma, seems to be afraid of revealing it to the profane. He envelopes it in clouds in his famous letter to the three friends; he teaches it to Dionysius of Syracuse; but by enigmas, as he says himself, lest his tablets falling into the hands of some stranger they should be read and understood. Perhaps the recollection of the recent
death of Socrates imposed this reserve upon him. Lao-tseu does not make use of these indirect ways; and what is most clear in his book is, that a Triune Being formed the universe. To complete the singularity, he gives to his being a Hebrew name hardly changed, the very name which in our book designates him, WHO WAS, AND IS, AND SHALL BE. This last circumstance confirms all that the tradition indicated of a journey to the west, and leaves no doubt of the origin of his doctrine. Probably he received it either from the Jews of the ten tribes, whom the conquest of Sulmanazan had just dispersed throughout Asia, or from the apostles of some Phenician sect, to which those philosophers also belonged, who were the masters and precursors of Pythagoras and Plato.”

\[\text{ft10} \text{Jackson’s Existence and Unity, &c.—Vide also Watts’s Philosophical Essays, and Law’s Inquiry into the Ideas of Space, &c.}\]

\[\text{ft11} \text{Nihil Deo clausum, interest animia nostris, et mediia cogitationibus interenit. Sen. Epist,}\]

\[\text{ft12} \text{Quis enim non timeat Deum, omnia pervidentem, et cogitantem, &c. Cic. De Nat. Deor.}\]

\[\text{ft13} \text{Several parallels have been at different times drawn, even by Christian divines, between the character of Socrates and Christ, doubtless with the intention of exalting the latter, but yet so as to veil the true character of the former. How great is the disgust one feels at that want of all moral delicacy from which only such comparisons could emanate, when the true character of Socrates comes to be unveiled! On a sermon preached at Cambridge by Dr. Butler, which contains one of these parallels, “the Christian Observer” has the following just remarks:—}\]

“\text{We earnestly request that such of our readers as are sufficiently acquainted with classical literature to institute the examination, would turn to the eleventh chapter of the third book of the Memorabilia of Xenophon, and we are persuaded that they will not think our reprehension of Dr. Butler misplaced. The very title of the chapter, we should have thought, would have precluded any Christian scholar, much more any Christian divine, from the possibility of being guilty of a profanation so gross and revolting. The title of it is Cum Meretrice Theodata de arte hominum alliciendorum disserit, (Socrates, viz.) Doubtless many who heard Dr. Butler preach, and many more who have since read his sermon, have taken it for granted, that when he}
ventured to recommend the conduct of Socrates, in associating with courtesans, as being an adumbration with that of our Saviour, he must have alluded to instances in the life of that philosopher of his having laboured to reclaim the vicious, or to console the penitent with the hope of pardon. For ourselves, we know of no such instances. But what will be his surprise to find that the intercourse of Socrates with courtesans, as it is here recorded by Xenophon, was of the most licentious and profligate description?"

There is another theory which was formerly much debated, under the name of Scientia Media; but to which, in the present day, reference is seldom made. The knowledge of God was distributed into Necessary, which goes before every act of the will in the order of nature, and by which he knows himself, and all possible things:—Free, which follows the act of the will, and by which God knows all things which he has decreed to do and to permit, as things which he wills to be done or permitted:—Middle, so called because partaking of the two former kinds, by which he knows, sub conditione, what men and angels would voluntarily do under any given circumstances. "Terriam Mediam, qua sub conditione novit quid homines aut augeli facturi essent pro sua libertate, si cum his aut illis circumstantiis, in hoc vel in illo rerum ordine constituerentur.”—EPISCOPIUS De Scientia Dei. They illustrate this kind of knowledge by such passages as, "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” This distinction, which was taken from the Jesuits, who drew it from the schoolmen, was at least favoured by some of the remonstrant divines, as the extract from Episcopius shows; and they seem to have been led to it by the circumstance that almost all the high Calvinist theologians of that day entirely denied the possibility of contingent future actions being foreknown, in order to support on this ground their doctrine of absolute predestination. In this, however, those remonstrants, who adopted that notion, did not follow their great leader Arminius, who felt no need of this subterfuge, but stood on the plain declarations of Scripture, unembarrassed with metaphysical distinctions. Gomarus, on the other side, adopted this opinion, which was confined, among the Calvinists of that day, to himself and another. Gomarus betook himself to this notion of conditional prescience, in order to avoid being charged with making God the author of the sin of Adam, and found it a convenient mode of eluding so formidable an
objection, as Curcellæus remarks: “Sapienter ergo, meo judicio, Gomarus, cum suam de reprobationis objecto sententiam hoc absurdo videret urgeri, quod Deum peccati Adami auctorem constituierit, ad præscientiam conditionatam confugit, qua Deus ex infinito scientiæ suæ lumine, quædam futura non absolute, sed certa conditione posita prænovit. Hac enim ratione commodissime ictum ictum declinavit.—Eumque postea secutus est Wallæus in Locis suis Communibus; qui etiam feliciter scopulum illum prætervehitur.—Nullum præterea ex Calvini discipulis novi, qui hanc in Deo scientiam agnoscat.—De Jure Dei.

To what practical end this opinion went, it is not easy to see either as to such of the Calvinists or of the Arminians as adopted it. The point of the question, after all, was, whether the actual circumstances in which a free agent would be placed, and his conduct accordingly, could both be foreknown. Gomarus, who adopted the view of conditional foreknowledge, as to Adam at least, conceded the liberty of the will, so far as the first man was concerned, to his opponents, but Episcopius and others conceded by this notion something of more importance to the supralapsarians, who denied that the prescience of future contingencies was at all possible. However both agreed to destroy the prescience of God as to actual contingencies, though the advocates of the Media Scientia reserved the point as to possible, or rather hypothetic ones, and thus the whole was, after all resolved into the wider question, Is the knowledge of future contingencies possible? This point will be presently considered.

\[\text{ft15}\]
So little effect has this theory in removing any difficulty, that persons of the most opposite theological sentiments have claimed it in their favour.—Socinus and his followers,—all the supralapsarian Calvinists,—and a few Arminians.

\[\text{ft16}\]
Certainty is, properly speaking, no quality of an action at all, unless it be taken in the sense of a fixed and necessitated action; in this controversy it means the certainty which the mind that foresees has, that an action will be done, and the certainty is therefore in the mind, and not in the action.

\[\text{ft17}\]
“Though his grace rightly lays down analogy for the foundation of his discourse, yet, for want of having thoroughly weighed and digested it, and by wording himself incautiously, he seems entirely to destroy the nature of it; insomuch that while he rejects the strict propriety of our
conceptions and words, on the one hand, he appears to. his antagonists to run into an extreme even below metaphor, on the other.

“His greatest mistake is, that through his discourse he supposes the members and actions of a human body, which we attribute to God in a pure metaphor, to be equally upon the same foot of analogy with the passions of a human soul, which are attributed to him in a lower and more imperfect degree of analogy; and even with the operations and perfections of the pure mind or intellect which are attributed to him in a yet higher and more complete degree. In pursuance of this oversight, he expressly asserts love and anger, wisdom and goodness, knowledge and foreknowledge, and all the other Divine attributes to be spoken of God, as improperly as eyes or ears; that there is no more likeness between these things in the Divine nature and in ours, than there is between our hand and God’s power, and that they are not to be taken in the same sense.

“Agreeably to this incautious and indistinct manner of treating a subject curious and difficult, he hath unwarily dropped some such shocking expressions as these, the best representations we can make of God are infinitely short of truth. Which God forbid, in the sense his adversaries take it; for then all our reasonings concerning him would be groundless and false. But the saying is evidently true in a favourable and qualified sense and meaning; namely, that they are infinitely short of the real, true, internal nature of God as he is in himself.—Again, that they are emblems indeed and parabolical figures of the Divine attributes, which they are designed to signify; as if they were signs or figures of our own, altogether precarious and arbitrary, and without any real and true foundation of analogy between them in the nature of either God or man: and accordingly he unhappily describes the knowledge we have of God and his attributes, by the notion we form of a strange country by a map, which is only paper and ink, strokes and lines.” (Bishop Brown’s Procedure of Human Understanding.)

Melancthon says: ‘The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him; and I [Moses] prayed for Aaron also at the same time,

Deuteronomy 9:20. Let us not elude the exceedingly lamentable expressions which the Holy Ghost employs when he says, God was very angry; and let us not feign to ourselves a God of stone, or a Stoical Deity. For though God is angry in a different manner from men, yet let us conclude that God was really angry with Aaron, and that
Aaron was not then in [a state of] grace, but obnoxious to everlasting punishment. Dreadful was the fall of Aaron, who has through fear yielded to the madness of the people when they instituted the Egyptian worship. Being warned by this example, let us not confirm ourselves in security, but acknowledge that it is possible for elect and renewed persons horribly to fall,” &c. (Loci Præcipui Theologi, 1543.)

“...It would destroy the confidence of prayer, and the ardour of devotion, if we could regard the Deity as subsisting by himself, and as having no sympathies, but mere abstract relations to the whole family in heaven and earth; and I look upon it as one of the most rational and philosophical confutations of your system, that it is fitted neither for the theory nor the practice of our religion; and that, if we could adopt it, we must henceforth exchange the language of Scripture for the anthems of Epicurus:—

“Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est,
   Immortali cevo summâ cum pace fruatur,
   Semota ab hostris rebus, sejunctaque longe;
   Nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,
   Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,
   Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur irâ.

“It is in direct opposition to all such vain and skeptical speculations, that Christianity always represents and speaks of the Deity as participating, so far as infinity and perfection may participate, in those feelings and affections which belong to our rational natures.”

(GRINFIELD’S Vindicæ Analogicæ.)

How can we confess God to be just, if we understand it not? But how can we understand him so, but by the measures of justice? and how shall we know that, if there be two justices, one that we know, and one that we know not, one contrary to another? If they be contrary, they are not justice; for justice can be no more opposed to justice, than truth to truth: if they be not contrary, then that which we understand to be just in us, is just in God; and that which is just once, is just for ever in the same case and circumstances: and, indeed, how is it that we are in all things of excellency and virtue to be like God, and to be meek like Christ; to be humble as he is humble, and to be pure like God, to be just after his example, to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful? If there is but one mercy, and one justice, and one meekness, then the measure of these, and the reason, is eternally the same. If
there be two, either they are not essential to God, or else not ignitable by us: and then how can we glorify God, and speak honour of his name, and exalt his justice, and magnify his truth, and sincerity, and simplicity, if truth and simplicity, and justice, and mercy in him is not that thing which we understand, and which we are to imitate?” &c. (Bishop TAYLOR’S “Doctor Dubitantium.”)

Ray’s “Wisdom of God.”—Derham’s Astro and Physico-Theology.—Paley’s Nat. Theol.—Sturm’s Reflections.—Kirby and Spence’s Entomology; and, though not written with any such design, St. Pierre’s “Studies of Nature” open to the mind that can supply the pious sentiments which the author unfortunately wanted, many striking instances of the wisdom and benevolence of God.

“A few undecompounded bodies, which may perhaps ultimately be resolved into still fewer elements, or which may be different forms of the same material, constitute, the whole of our tangible universe of things.” (Davy’s Chymistry.)

It is not intended here to countenance the opinion that the difference between the highest instinct and the lowest reason, is not great. It is as great as the difference between an accountable and an unaccountable nature; between a being under a law of force, and a law of moral obligation and motive; between a nature limited in its capacity of improvement, and one whose capabilities are unlimited. “The rash hypothesis, that the negro is the connecting link between the white man and the ape, took its rise from the arbitrary classification of Linnaeus, which associates man and the ape in the same order. The more natural arrangement of later systems separate them into the bimanous and quadrumanus orders. If this classification had not been followed, it would not have occurred to the most fanciful mind to find in the negro an intermediate link. (PRITCHARD on Man.)

Scott’s Remarks on the Refutation of Calvinism.—Few have been so daring, except the grosser Antinomians of ancient and modern times. The elder Calvinists, though they often made fearful approaches in their writings to this blasphemy, yet did not, openly and directly, charge God with being the author of sin. This Arminius, with great candour, acknowledges; but gives them a friendly admonition, to renounce a doctrine from which this aspersion upon the Divine character may, by a good consequence, be deduced: a caution not uncalled for in the present day. “Inter omnes blasphemias quæ Deo impingi possunt,
omnium est gravissima qua author peccati statuitur Deus: quæ ipsa non parum exaggeratur, si addatur Deum idcirco authorem esse peccati à creatura commissi, ut creaturam in æternum exitium, quod illi jam antè citra respectum peccati destinaverat, damnaret et deduceret: sic enim fuit causa injustitiae homini, ut ipsi æternam miseriam adferre posset. Hanc blasphemiam nemo Deo, quem benum concipit, impietet: quare etiam Manichæi, pessimi hæreticorum, quem causam mali bono Deo adscribere vererentur, alium Deum et aliud principium satuerunt, cui mali causam deputarent. Qua de causa, nec allis Doctoribus reformaturum Ecclesiarum jure impietem potest, quod Deum authorem peccati statuant exprofesso; imo verissimum est illos expresse id negare, et illam calumniam contra alios egregie confutasse. Attamen fieri potest, ut quis ex ignorantia aliquod doceat, ex quo bona consequentia deducatur, Deum per illam doctrinam statui authorem peccati. Hoc si fiat, tum quidem istius doctrinæ professoribus, non est impietem quod Deum authorem peccati faciant, sed tantum monendi ut doctrinam istam, unque id bona consequentia deducitur, deserant et abjicant.”

The accomplished Quinctilian may be given as an instance of this, and also of what the apostle calls their sorrowing “without hope.” In pathetically lamenting the death of his wife and sons, he tells us, that he had lost all taste for study, and that every good parent would condemn him, if he employed his tongue for any other purpose than to accuse the gods, and testify against a Providence. “Quis enim bonus parens mihi ignoscat, ac non oderit hanc animi mei firmatatem, si quis in me est alius usus vocis, quam ut incusem deos, superstes omnium meorum, nullam terras despicere providentiam tester?” (Instit Lib. 6.)

“Potentia, Intellectus, et Voluntas,” or “Potentia, Sapientia, et Amor.”—(Campanella, Richardus, and others.)

It is defined by Oceam, “Suppositum intellectuale.”

“Nonnunquam ὑποστάσις pro eo quod nos ὄνσιαν dicimus et vise versâ vox ὄνσια pro eo quod nos ὑποστάσιν appellantamus, ab ipsis accepta fuit.”—Bishop Bull. ὑποστάσις, it ought, however, to be observed, was used in the sense of person before the council of Nice, by many Christian writers, and, in the ancient Greek Lexicons, it is explained by ὄροσωπον, and rendered by the Latins persona.
St. Paul says, that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*; but Dr. Priestley tells us, that this signifies *nothing more* than that the books were written by good men, with the best views and designs.

To this purpose, *Witsius*, who shows that there can be neither religion nor worship, unless the trinity be acknowledged. “Nulla etiam religio est, nisi quis rerum Deum colat; non colit verum Deum, *sed cerebri sui figmentum*, qui non adorat in æquali divinitatis majestate Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum. I nunc, et doctrinam eam ad *praxis* inutilem esse clama, sine qua nulla *Fides* aut, *Pietatis Christianæ praxis* esse potest.”

“Equidem rem attentius perpendenti liquebit, ex hypothesi sive Sociniana, sive Ariana, Deum in hoc negotio amorem et dilectionem suam potius in illum ipsum filium, quam erga nos homines ostendisse. Quid enim? Is qui Christus dicitur, ex mera Dei *εὐδοκία* et beneplacito in eam gratiam electus est, ut post bievem hic in terris Deo praestitam obedientiam, ex puro puto homine juxta Socinistas, sive ex mera et mutabili creature, ut *Ario-manitæ* dicunt, *Deus* ipse fieret, ac *divinos* honores, non modo a nobis hominis sed etiam ab ipsis angelis atque archangelis sibi tribuendos assequeretur, adeoque in alias creaturas omnes dominium atque imperium obtineret.” (*Bull. Jud. Eccl. Cathol.*)

*Maimonides* tells us, that it was not lawful to utter this name, except in the sanctuary, and by the priests. “Nomen, quod, ut nosti, non proferre
licet, nisi in sanctuario, et a sacerdotibus Dei sanctis, solum in benedictione sacerdotum, ut et a sacerdote magno in die jejunii.”

The argument for the trinity drawn from the plural appellations given to God in the Hebrew Scriptures, was opposed by the younger Buxtorf; who yet admits that this argument should not altogether be rejected among Christians, “for upon the same principle on which not a few of the Jews refer this emphatical application of the plural number to a plurality of powers or of influences, or of operations, that is, ad extra; why may we not refer it, ad intra, to a plurality of persons and to personal works? Yea, who certainly knows what that was which the ancient Jews understood by this plurality of powers and faculties?”

The word τριάς, trinitas, came into use in the second century.

“No man, except myself, ever was in heaven” (Pearce.)

From this remarkable passage it appears to me very clear, that the Messenger or Angel of God, whom he here promises to be the leader of his people, is not a creature, much less Moses or Joshua, but an uncreated Angel. For (1) the clause, He will not pardon your sins, is not applicable to any created being, whether Angel or man: (2) The next words, My name is in him, cannot be explained to signify, he shall act in my name, that is, under my command or by authority received from me, for in that case another word, he will act or he will speak, or the like would have been added: (3) The same conclusion is established by a comparison of this passage with chapter 32:34, (and 32:2,) where God expresses his indignation against the Israelites for their idolatry, by declaring that not himself, but an angel, should be henceforth their guide: but this, the people and Moses most earnestly deprecate [as a calamity and a judgment, whereas the present instance is a promise of favour and mercy, and is so acknowledged in Isaiah 62:8.] “That angel, therefore, is perfectly different from him who is spoken of in this passage before us, who is the same that appeared to Moses, chapter 3:2, and there likewise both speaks and acts as God himself.” (Dathii Pentateuchus.)

“An earthly ambassador indeed represents the person of his prince, is supposed to be clothed with his authority, and speaks and acts in his name. But who ever heard of an ambassador assuming the very name of his sovereign, or being honoured with it by others? Would one in this character be permitted to say, I George, I Louis, I Frederic? As
the idea is ridiculous, the action would justly be accounted high treason.” (JAMIESON’S Vindication.)

—histrioniam exercuisse, in qua Dei nomen assumat, et omnia quæ Dei sunt, sibi attribuat. (Bishop Bull)

Imperscrutabilem Dei essentiam et majestatem. (Vatable.)

The same word is often applied to magistrates, and even fathers; but J. H. Michaelis says, that when it occurs as in this place with the prefix, it is appropriated only to God.

Holden’s Testimonies. See this text, so fatal to the Socinian scheme, triumphantly established against the liberty of their criticisms, in Dr. Magee’s Postscript to Appendix, p 211, &c.

Bishop Pearson, on the second article of the Creed, thus concludes a learned note on the etymology of Κυρίος Lord: “From all which it undeniably appeareth, that the ancient signification of Κυρίος is the same with εἰμί, or ἐπαρχώ sum, I am.”

It is very obvious to perceive where the impropriety of such expressions lies. The word substance, according to the common use of language, when used in the singular number, is supposed to be intrinsic to the thing spoken of, whose substance it is; and, indeed, to be the thing itself. My substance is myself; and the substance of Israel is Israel. And hence it evinces to be improper to join substance with the relative terms, understanding it of any thing intrinsic.

Exodus 7:1: “See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.” This seems to be explained by Exodus 4:16: “Thou shalt be to him instead of God.” Psalm 82:1: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: [Hebrews of God:] he judgeth among the gods.” This passage is rendered by Parkhurst, “The Aleim stand in the congregation of God; in the midst the Aleim will judge.” And on verse 6, “I have said ye are gods,” he supposes an ellipsis of Caph, “I have said ye are as gods.” As this is spoken of judges, who were professedly God’s vice-gerents, this is a very natural ellipsis, and there appears nothing against it in the argument of our Lord, John 10:34. The term, as used in all these passages, does not so much appear to be used in a lower sense, as by figurative application and ellipsis.

“Formula citandi qua Evangelista utitur cap. 1:22, τουτο δε ολον γεγονεν (ινα πληρωθη το ρηθεν) manifeste este argumentantis, non
comparantis, quæ magnopere diversa est ab alia ejusdem Evangelistæ, et aliorum,” &c. (Dathe, in Isaiah 7:4.)

So διά is used throughout St. John’s Gospel; and in Hebrews 2:10, it is said of the Father, διά τα πάντα, “by whom are all things.” So also Romans 11:36: “Of him, and through him (διά, αὐτοῦ,) and to him are all things.”

See Middleton on the Greek article; also, remarks at the close of the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to Titus, in Dr. A. Clarke’s Commentary; Wordworth’s Letters to Sharp: Dr. P. Smith’s Person of Christ.

“Omnes (Patres) uno consensu ο θευς hoc in loco vocative acceperunt, prout in Psalmis frequente a LXX usurpatur, et alioqui familiare est Graecia, Atticis præsertim, nominandi casum vocative sumere.” (Bishop Bull.)

This notion appears to have originated with Calvin.

These were the docetæ, who taught that our Lord was a man in appearance only, and suffered and died in appearance only. On the contrary, the Cerinthians, and others believed that the Son of God was united to the human nature at his baptism, departed from it before his passion, and was reunited to it after his resurrection. According to the former, Christ was man in appearance only; according to the latter, he was the Son of God at the time of his passion and death in appearance only. We see, then, the reason why St. John, who writes against these errors, so often calls Christ, “him that is true,” true God and true man, not either in appearance only.

“He came into his own country, and his countrymen received him not.” (Capp’s Version.)

Venit ad sua, et sui non receperunt eum, id est, venit ad possessionem suam, et qui possessionis ipsius erant, eum non receperunt: quod explicatur, Matthew 21, ubi filius dicitur missus ad ecclesiam Judaicam ως κηρυνομος εις την κηρυνομιαν αυτου. (Ludov. de Dieu, in loc.)

Holden’s Testimonies. “Non dicit Deus adoptavi, sed generavi te: quod communicationem ejusdem essentiae et naturae divinae significat, modo tamen prorsu ineffabile.” (Michaelis.)
Holden’s Translation of Proverbs. In the notes to chapter viii, the application of this description of wisdom to Christ is ably and learnedly defended.

So the LXX, and the Vulgate, and the critics generally. “Antiquissima erit origine, ab æternis temporibus.” (Dathe.) “Imo a diebus æternitatis, i.e. priusquam natus fuerit, jam ab æterno extitit.” (Rosenmuller.)

The word ἀνευμένῳ to come forth, is used in reference to birth frequently, as Genesis 17:6; 2 Kings 20:18; and so the Pharisees understood it, when referring to this passage, in answer to Herod’s inquiry, where Christ should be “born.”—The plural form, his “goings forth” from eternity, denotes eminency. To signify the perfection and excellency of that generation, the word for birth is expressed plurally; for it is a common Hebraism to denote the eminency or continuation of a thing or action by the plural number. God shall judge the world “in righteousness and equity;” or most righteously and equitably Psalm 98:9.—“The angers of the Lord,” Lamentations 4:16, &c.

Dr. A. Clarke, in his note on this text, evidently feels the difficulty of disposing of it on the theory that the term Son is not a Divine title, and enters a sort of caveat against resorting to doubtful texts, as proofs of our Lord’s Divinity. But for all purposes for which this text has ever been adduced, it is not a doubtful one; for it expresses, as clearly as possible, that God has a SON, and makes no reference to the incarnation at all; so that the words are not spoken in anticipation of that event. Those who deny the Divine Sonship can never, therefore, explain that text. What follows in the note referred to is more objectionable: it hints at the obscurity of the writer as weakening his authority. Who he was, or what he was, we indeed know not; but his words stand in the book of Proverbs; a book, the inspiration of which both our Lord and his apostles have verified, and that is enough: we need no other attestation.

Though the argument does not at all depend upon it, yet it may be proper to refer to Campbell’s translation of these verses, as placing some of the clauses in this passage in a clearer light. “Now the Father, who sent me, hath himself attested me. Did ye never hear his voice, or see his form? Or, have ye forgotten his declaration, that ‘ye believe not him whom he hath commissioned?’” On this translation, Dr. Campbell remarks, “The reader will observe, that the two clauses, which are
rendered in the English Bible as declarations, are, in this version, translated as questions. The difference in the original is only in the pointing. That they ought to be so read, we need not, in my opinion, stronger evidence than that they throw much light upon the whole passage. Our Lord here refers to the testimony given at his baptism; and when you read the two clauses as questions, all the chief circumstances attending that memorable testimony are exactly pointed out. ‘Have ye never heard his voice, φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν; nor seen his form?’ the σωματικον εἰδος, in which, St. Luke says, the Holy Ghost descended. ‘And have ye not his declaration abiding in you:’ τὸν λόγον, the words which were spoken at that time.”

f60 “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, that is, have always been well pleased, am at present well pleased, and will continue to be well pleased” (Macknight.)

f61 “The glory as of the only begotten,” &c. “The particle ὡς, as, is not here a note of similitude, but of confirmation, that this Son was the only begotten of the Father.” (Whitby.) “This particle sometimes answers to the Hebrew ach, and signifies certe, truly.” (Ibid.) So Schleusner, in voc. 15, revera, vere. The clause may, therefore, be properly rendered, “The glory indeed, or truly of the only begotten of the Father.”

f62 “This argument, which is from the less to the greater, proceeds thus: If those who having nothing Divine in them, namely, the judges of the great sanhedrim, to whom the psalmist there speaks, are called gods for this reason only, that they have in them a certain imperfect image of Divine power and authority, how much more may I be called God, the Son of God, who am the natural Son of God.” (Bishop Bull.)

f63 See this argument largely and ably stated in Wilson’s “Illustration of the Method of explaining the New Testament, by the early opinions of Jews and Christians concerning Christ.”

f64 “We have observed so often before, that the SPIRIT in Christ, especially when opposed to the flesh, denotes his Divine nature, that it is needless to repeat it. Nor ought it to seem strange, that Christ, as the Son of God, and God, is here called the Spirit of holiness, an appellation generally given to the third person of the Divinity, for the same Divine and spiritual nature is common to every person of the trinity. Hence we have observed, that Hermas, a cotemporary of St. Paul, has expressly
called the Divine person of the Son of God, a Holy Spirit.” (*Bull.*)

“When the term *Spirit* refers to Christ, and is put in opposition to the *flesh*, it denotes his Divine nature.” (*Schætten.*) The same view is taken of the passage by Beza, Erasmus, Cameron, Hammond, Poole, and Macknight. The note of Dr. Guyse contains a powerful reason for this interpretation. “If ‘the Spirit of holiness’ is here considered as expressive of the sense in which Christ is ‘the Son of God,’ it evidently signifies his Divine nature, in opposition to what he was according to the flesh; and so the antithesis is very beautiful between κατὰ πνεῦμα, *according to the Spirit,* and κατὰ σάρκα, *according to the flesh.* But if we consider it as *the principle* of the power by which Christ was raised from the dead, for demonstrating him to be the Son of God, it may signify either his own Divine nature or the Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable trinity; and yet, unless his own Divine nature concurred in raising him from the dead, his resurrection, abstractedly considered in itself, no more proved him to be *the Son of God,* than the resurrection of believers, by the power of God, and by ‘his Spirit who dwelleth in them,’ Romans 8:11, prove any of them to be so.” It is also in corroboration of this view that Christ represents himself as the agent of his own resurrection. “I lay down my life, and I *have power* to take it again.” “Destroy this temple, and in three days I *will raise it up.*”

It may be granted, that κληρονομεῖν is not always used to express the obtaining of a thing by strict hereditary right; but also to acquire it by other means, though still the idea of right is preserved. The argument of the apostle, however, compels us to take the word in its primary and proper sense, which is well expressed in our translation *to obtain by inheritance.* “The apostle’s argument, taken from the name Son of God, is this—he hath that name by inheritance, or on account of his descent from God; and Jesus, by calling himself *the only begotten of the Father,* hath excluded from that honourable relation angels and every other beings whatever.” (*Macknight.*)

Many interpreters understand by “the *POWER OF THE HIGHEST,*” which overshadowed the virgin, the second person of the trinity, who then took part of *our* nature. See Wolfii Cur. in loc. Most of them, however, refer both clauses to the Holy Spirit. But still, if the reason why the
“holy thing,” which was to be born of Mary, derived its special and peculiar sanctity from the personal union of the Divinity with the manhood, the reason of its being called the Son of God will be found rather in that to which the humanity was thus united than in itself. The remarks of Professor Kidd, in his “Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ,” are also worthy consideration. “Our Lord’s human nature had never subsistence by itself.” “That nature never had personality of itself.” “Hence our Lord is the Son of God, with respect to his Divine nature, which alone was capable of Sonship. The question to be decided is, what object was termed the Son of God? Was it the human nature considered by itself? This it could not be, seeing that the humanity never existed by itself, without inhering in the Divinity. Was it the humanity and Divinity, when united, which, in consequence of their union, obtained this as a mere appellation? We apprehend that it was not. We conceive, that the peculiarly appropriate name of our Lord’s Divine person is Son of God—that his person was not changed by the assumption of humanity, and that it is his eternal person, in the complex natures of Divinity and humanity, which is denominated Son of God.”

According to the opinion of the ancients, which is also the voice of common sense, if there were two unbegotten or independent principles in the Divinity, the consequence would be, that not only the Father would be deprived of his pre-eminence, being of and from himself alone; but also, that there would necessarily be two Gods. On the other hand, supposing the subordination, by which the Father is God of himself, and the Son God of God, the doctors have thought both the Father’s pre-eminence and the Divine monarchy safe.” (Bishop Bull.)

“As it is admitted, that there are three persons in the Godhead, these three must exist, either independently of each other, or in related states. If they exist independently of each other, they are, then, each an independent person, and may act independently and separately from the rest; consequently, there would be three independent and separate Deities existing in the Divine essence” (Kidd.)

The orthodox faith keeps us at the utmost distance from this error. “The Father,” says Bishop Bull, “is the principle of the Son and Holy Spirit, and both are propagated from him by an interior production, not an external one.—Hence it is, that they are not only of the Father, but in him, and the Father in them; and that one person cannot be separate
from another in the holy trinity, as three human persons, or three other subjects of the same species are separate. This kind of existing in, if I may so say, our divines call circumincession, because by it some things are very much distinguished from one another without separation; are in, and as it were, penetrate one another, without confusion.”

(Judgment of the Catholic Church.)

See Bull’s Defensio Fidei Nicaenae, and the notes of Bishop Pearson’s most excellent work on the Creed.

“Per τὸν λόγον intelligi Christum, caret dubio, Nam 5. 6, 7, Scriptor dicit, Joannem Baptistam dehoc λόγῳ testimonium dixisse; constat autem eum de Christo dixisse testimonium; et 5. 14, sequiter, λόγον hominem esse factum et Apostolos hujus λόγου, hominis facti, vidisse dignitatem; atqui Christi majestatem quotidie oculis videbant.”

(Rosenmuller.)

Et fuit Verbum Domini ad me, &c. Fieri quoque potest meo judicio ut Onkelos per vocem Elohim, Angelum intelleurerit, &c. (More Nevochim. par. i, c. 27, p. 33.)

“Quotiescunque fit principii mentio, significationem illius ad id de quo accommodare necesse est.” (Beza.)

“Valde errant, qui ev ἀρχὴ interpretantur de initio Evangelio; haic enim sententiæ consilium Joannis, et sequens oratio aperte repugnat. Si vero o λόγος fuit jam tum, quum mundus esse cæpit, sequiter eum fuisse ante mundum conditum; sequitur etiam eum non esse unam ex ceteris creatis rebus, quæ cum mundc esse cæperunt, sed alia natura conditione” (Rosenmuller.)

“Attributa Divina arctissimo copulari vinculo, sic, ut nullum seperatim concipi queat, adeoque qui uno pollet, omnibus ornetur.” (Doederlein.)

Raphelius in loc. See also Parkhurst’s Lex.

“Non deerat peculiaris ratio, cur Filium Dei sic vocaret, cum ad Hebræos scriberet, qui eum illo nomine indigitare soletant: ut constat ex Targum, cujus pars hoc tempore facta est, et ex Philone aliisque Hellenistis.” (Poli Synop.)

Καὶ προὶς ἑδικησ, tempore, quod ipse novit. Erat itaque tempus adventus Christi ignotum Apostolis.” (Rosenmuller.)

“The world was enlightened by him,” says the New Version; which perfectly gratuitous rendering has been before adverted to.
“Si non facio ea ipsa divina opera, quæ pater meus facit; si quæ facio, non habent divinæ virtutis specimen.” (Rosenmuller.) “Opera Patris mei, i.e. quæ Patti, sive Deo, sunt propria: quæ a nemine alio fieri queunt.” (Poli. Synop.)

“Psalmos omnes a XCIII ad CI in se continere mysterium Messiæ, dixit David Kimshi.” (Rosenmuller.)

“Ceterum recte argumentatur apostolus: si angeli Regem ilium maximum adorare debent; ergo sunt illo inferiores.” (Rosenmuller in loc.)

“1. Forma, externus, habitus, omne quod in oculos occurrit, imago, similitudo.” (Schleusner.)

“Non rapinam, aut spolium alicui, detractum, duxit.” (Rosenmuller.) So the ancient versions. “Non rapinam arbitratus est.” (Vulgate.) “Non rapinam hoc existimavit.” (Syriac.)

See Pearson on the Creed, Art. 2, note; Schleusner, Erasmus and Schmidt.

“Σωματικως h. e. vere, perfectissime, non typice, et umbraliter, sicut in V. T. Deus se manifestavit. Est autem inhabitatio illa et unio personalis, et singularissima.” (Glassius.)

See also Wilson’s Illustration of the Method of explaining the New Testament by the early Opinions of Jews and Christians concerning Christ; and Dr. Jamieson’s Vindication, &c.

Dr. Samuel Clarke’s hypothesis was, that there is one Supreme Being, who is the Father, and two subordinate, derived, and dependent beings. But he objected to call Christ a creature, thinking him something between a created and a self-existent nature. Dr. C. appealed to the fathers; and Petavius, a learned Jesuit, in his Dogmata Theologica, had previously endeavoured to prove that the ante-Nicene fathers leaned to Arianism. Bishop Bull, in his great work on this subject, and Dr. Waterland may be considered as having fully put that question to rest in opposition to both.

“The Father hath relation to the Son, as the Father of the Son; the Son to the Father, as the Son of the Father; and the Holy Ghost being the spirit, or breath of the Father and the Son, to both.” (Lawson’s Theo. Pol.) But though breath or wind is the radical signification of πνευμα,
as also of *spiritus*, yet, probably from its sacredness, it is but rarely used in that sense in the New Testament.

The baptism of Jewish proselytes is a disputed point. It was strenuously maintained by Dr. Lightfoot, and opposed by Dr. Benson. Wall has, however, made the practice highly probable, and it is spoken of in the Gospels as a rite with which the Jews were familiar. Certainly it was a practice among the Jews near the Christian era.

See Wall’s History of Infant Baptism and Bingham’s Antiquities.

The covenant of works, a term much in use among divines, is one which is not in so much use as formerly; but, rightly understood, it has a good sense. The word usually translated covenant in the New Testament, more properly signifies a *dispensation* or *appointment*, which is, indeed, suited to the majesty of *law*, and even the authoritative establishment of a sole method of pardon. But in both there are parties, not to their original institution, but to their beneficent accomplishment, and in this view each may be termed a covenant.

This phrase does not occur in the canonical Scriptures; but is, probably, taken from Wisdom 10:1, “She preserved the first formed father of the world that was created, and brought him out of his *fall*.”

Holden’s Dissertation on the Fall of Man, chap. 2. In this volume the literal sense of the Mosaic account of the fall is largely investigated and ably established.

We have no reason at all to suppose, as it is strangely done almost uniformly by commentators, that this animal had the serpentine form in any mode or degree at all before his transformation. That he was then degraded to a reptile, to go “upon his belly,” imports, on the contrary, an entire alteration and loss of the original form—a form of which it is clear no idea can now be conceived.

“‘And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,’ &c. Now Eve could plainly know, by her senses, that the fruit was desirable to the eye, but it was impossible she could know that it was good for food, but from the example and experiment of the serpent. It was also impossible she could know that it was desirable to make use of it, but by the example of the serpent, whom she saw from a brute become a rational and vocal creature, as she thought by eating that fruit. The text says she saw it was good for food, and that it was desirable to make wise, and seeing does not imply conjecture or belief, but certain
knowledge; knowledge founded upon evidence and proof; such proof
as she had then before her eyes. And when once we are sure that she
had this proof, as it is evident she had, the whole conference between
her and the serpent is as rational and intelligible as any thing in the
whole Scriptures.” (DELANY’S Dissertations.)

“Impulsus etsi vehemens valde atque potens esset, voluntatis tamen
imperio atque arbitrio semper egressus ejus in actum subjiciebatur.
Poterat enim voluntas, divines voluntatis consideratione armata,
resistere illi, eumque in ordinem ista vi redigere; alioquin enim
frustanea fuisset legislatio, qua affectus circumscribebatur et
refrænabatur.” (Episcopius, Disputatio 9.)

“Accessit in Adamo specialis quidam conjugis propriæ amor, quo
adductus in gratiani illius, affectui suo proclivius indulsit, et tentationi
sathanæ facilius cossit auremque præbuit.” (Episcopius, Disputatio 9.)

“Diabolus causa talis statui non potest; gina ille suasione sola usus
legitur: suasio autem necessitatem nullam affert, sed moraliter tantum
voluntatem ad se allicere atque attractiere conatur.” (Episcopius.)

“Legem tamen hanc idcirco homini latam fuisse arbitramur, ut ei
obsequendo et obtemperando, palam publiceque veluti testaretur, se,
cui dominium rerum omnium createrum à Deo delatum erat, Deo tamen
ipsi subjectum obnixiumque esse; utque obsequio eodem suo tanquam
vasallus et cliens, publico aliquo recognitionis symbolo, profiteretur, se
in omnibus Deo suo, tanquam supremo Domino, obtemperare et parere
velle; id quod æquissimum erat.” (Episcopius.)

The former word signifies a traducer and false accuser, the latter an
adversary.

See tenets of the remonstrants, in Nichol’s “Calvinism and Arminianism
compared.”

“Omnia in omnibus vitri sunt sed non omnia in singulis extant.”
(Seneca.)

“Hác conditione nati sumus, animalia obnoxia non paucioribus animi
quam corporis morbis.” (Seneca.)

“Videamus quanta sint quæ a philosophiâ remedia morbis animorum
adhibeantur; est enim quedam medicina certè,” &c. (Cicero.)

The term “original sin” appears to have been first introduced by St.
Augustine, in his controversy with the Pelagians.
“Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam, Multa tulit fecitque puer; sudavit et alsit; Abstinuit venere, et vino.” (Horace.)

“Non resipiscentibus veniam non concedere, id domum naturæ divinæ, et decretis ejus, et propterea rectitudini, et equitati debitum et ac consentaneum.” (Socin. de Servat.)

The writers of the New Testament, say some, derive this mode of expression from the force of the Hebrew word הַד transferred to the Greek word; but Palairet, Grotius, and Schleusner, give instances of the use of the term, in the same signification, in writers purely Greek.

“Nam Mosis cum Christo instituta collatio, responsione vix indiget, cum omnis similitudo certos habeat terminos, quos extra protendi nequeat. Comparantur illi, qua liberatores, non ob liberandi modum. Neque magis ex eo sequitur, Christum satisfaciendo nos non liberasse, quia Moses id non fecerit, quam Christum nos liberasse per hominum mortem, quia id fecetit Moses. Quod si ad modum quoque liberandi comparatio pertineret, ea ut rectius procederet, dicendum esset, Christum nos liberasse miraculis, (ut Moses,) non autem sua morte suoque sanguine, quod Mosi nec adscribitur, nec adseribi potest. Sed præcipium est, quod vox λυτρον, de cujus vi hic agimus, liberationi per Mosen partæ nusquam additur. Quid quod ne est Socini quidem sententia modus liberandi idem est? Nam Moses, Josue, et alii liberarunt, non aliquid faciendo circa liberandos, (quod Christo Socinus tribuit) sed amovendo eos qui libertati obstabant, hostes scilicet.” (Grotius, De Satisfactione. cap. 8.)

See Nare’s Remarks on the New Version, Magee on the Atonement, Whitby and Doddridge in loc. Righteousness is indeed sometimes used for veracity; but only when some principle of equity, or some obligation arising from engagement, promise, or threat, is implied.

“Quod autem Socinus argumentatur, quia divinitas ipsa non patiatur, ideo hanc in pœnæ considerationem non venire; perinde est ac si dicas, nihilcreferre privatum an Regem, item ignotum, an patrem verberes, quia verbera in corpus dirigantur, non in dignitatum, aut cognitionem.” (De Satisfactione.)

On this subject, see Outram De Sacrificiis.

Vide Outram De Sac.; Hallet’s Notes and Discourses; Hammond and Rosenmuller in Hebrews ix; Richie’s Pec. Doctrine.
Nearly all that can be said on this interpretation will be found in Magee’s Discourses on the Atonement, and Davison’s Reply to his criticism, in his Inquiry into the Origin of Primitive Sacrifice.

Mr. Davison, in pursuance of his theory, that the patriarchal sacrifices were not expiatory, has strangely averred, that this transaction is “a proof of the efficacy of Job’s prayer, not of the expiatory power of the sacrifice of his friends.” Why, then, was not the prayer efficacious, without the sacrifice? And how could the “burnt offering” of his friends give efficacy to his prayer, unless by way of expiation? What is the office of expiatory sacrifice, but to avert the anger of God from the offerer? This was precisely the effect of the burnt offering of Eliphaz and his friends: that it was connected with the prayer of Job, no more alters the expiatory character of that offering, than the prayers which accompanied such offerings under the law.

“Illius esse duritiem humani cordis emollire, cum aut per salutiferam prædicationem Evangelii, aut alia quacunque ratione in pectora hominum recipitur; illam eos illuminare, et in agnitionem Dei atque in omnem viam veritatis et in otius vitae novitatem, et perpetuam salutis spem perducere.” (Bishop Jewel.)

See note in Nichol’s translation of the works of Arminius, vol. i, p. 634.

“To be released from the dammatory sentence is one thing, to be treated a righteous person, is evidently another.” (Hervey’s Theron and Aspasio.)

The reader will also recollect Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The following passages expressly make the atonement of Christ the ground of our title to eternal life “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” “He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that, by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance,” Hebrews 9:12-15. “Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him,” 1 Thessalonians 5:10.

To these might be added all those passages which ascribe the abolition of bodily death to Christ, who, in this respect, repairs the effect of the transgression of Adam, which he could only do in consequence of having redeemed that body from the power of the grave. This argument
may be thus stated. It is taught in Scripture, that all shall rise from the dead. It is equally clear from the same authority, that all shall rise in consequence of the interposition of Christ, the second Adam, the representative and Redeemer of man—“as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” It follows, therefore, that if the wicked are raised from the dead, it is in consequence of the power which Christ, as Redeemer, acquired over them, and of his right in them. That this resurrection is to them a curse, was not in the purpose of God, but arises from their wilful rejection of the Gospel. To be restored to life is in itself a good; that it is turned to an evil is their own fault; and if they are not raised from the dead in consequence of Christ’s right in them, acquired by purchase, it behooves those of a different opinion to show under what other constitution than that of the Gospel a resurrection of the body is provided for. The original law contains no intimation of this, nor of a general judgment, which latter supposes a suspension of the sentence inconsistent with the strictly legal penalty, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The scholastic terms are voluntas signi, and voluntas bene placiti, a signified or revealed will, and a will of pleasure or purpose.

“Having conquered the Edomites, or Idumeans,” says Prideaux, “he reduced them to this necessity, either to embrace the Jewish religion, or else to leave the country, and seek new dwellings elsewhere; whereon, choosing rather to leave their idolatry than their country, they all became proselytes to the Jewish religion,” &c. (Connex. vol. iii, pp. 335, 366.)


“The true reason why they did not believe was, the want of that simple, teachable, and inoffensive temper, which characterized his sheep, for not being of that CHOSEN remnant, they were left to the pride and enmity of their carnal hearts.” (SCOTT’S Com.)

Holden translates the verse, “Jehovah hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked he daily sustains;” and observes, “should the received translation be deemed correct, ‘the day of evil’ would be considered by a Jew of the age of Solomon, to mean, the day of trouble and affliction.”
See Whitby’s Paraphrase and Annot. and his Discourse on the Five Points, chap. 1.

Calvin puts the matter in much the same way. Inst. lib. iii, c. 24.

This Calvin scruples not to say, “The supreme Lord, therefore, by depriving of the communication of his light, and leaving in darkness those whom he has reprobated, makes way for the accomplishment of his own predestination.” (Inst. lib. iii, c. 24.)

Quoted in Bishop Womack’s Calvinist Cabinet Unlocked p. 34.

Amyraldus tamen, ut eum infra lapsum substitisse probet, in constituendo reprobationis objecto, profert quaedam loca in quibus ille corruptae massae meminit, et hujus decreti aequitatem ab originali peccato arcessit. Sed facilis est responsio Nam Calvinus ipse, qua ratione ista cum iis quæ attuli sint concilianda nos docet nimirum adhibita distinctione inter propinquam reprobationis causam, quam residentem in nobis corruptionem esse vult, et remotam, quæ sit unicum Dei bene placitum. Et quanquam variis in locis causam propinquam, veluti ad sententiae suæ duritiem emolliendam aptiorem, magis videatur urgere; ita tamen id facit ut non raro consilii arcæi, voluntatis occultæ, judicii inscrutabilis, et similium, quibus primam rejectionis causam solet designare, ibidem simul meminerit. (De Jure Dei, &c, cap. 10.)

“The Reformed Church, in the largest import of the word, comprises all the religious communities which have separated themselves from the Church of Rome. In this sense the words are often used by English writers; but having been adopted by the French Calvinists to describe their Church, this term is most commonly used on the continent as a general appellation of all the Churches who profess the doctrines of Calvin. About the year 1541, the Church of Geneva was placed by the magistrates of that city under the direction of Calvin, where his learning, eloquence, and talents for business, soon attracted general notice. By degrees his fame reached to every part of Europe. Having prevailed upon the senate of Geneva to found an academy, and place it under his superintendence; and having filled it with men, eminent throughout Europe for their learning and talent, it became the favourite resort of all persons who leaned to the new principles, and sought religious and literary instruction. From Germany, France, Italy, England, and Scotland, numbers crowded to the new academy, and
returned from it to their native countries, saturated with the doctrine of Geneva; and burning with zeal to propagate its creed.” (*Butler’s Life of Grotius.*)

This was the view of Melancthon, who, in writing to Peucer, says, “Lœlius writes to me, and says, that the controversy respecting the *STOICAL FATE* is agitated with such uncommon fervour at Geneva, that one individual is cast into prison because he happened to differ from Zeno.”

“It is pleasing,” says Dr. Copleston, “and satisfactory, to trace the progress of Melanthon’s opinions upon the subject. In the first dawning of the reformation he, as well as Luther, had been led into those metaphysical discussions which Calvin afterward moulded into a system, and incorporated with his exposition of the Christian doctrine. But so early as the year 1529 he renounced this error, and expunged the passages that contained it from the later editions of his *Loci Theologici*. Luther, who had in his early life maintained the same opinions, after the controversy with Erasmus about free will, never taught them; and although he did not, with the candour of Melancthon, openly retract what he had once written, yet he bestowed the highest commendations on the last editions of Melanthon’s Work, containing this correction. (*Preface to the first volume of Luther’s Works*, A D. 1546.) He also scrupled not to assert publicly, that at the beginning of the reformation, his creed was not completely settled: (*Laur. Bampt. Lect.* note 21 to Sermon ii:) and in his last work of any importance, he is anxious to point out the qualifications with which all he had ever said, on the doctrine of absolute necessity, ought to be received.” “Vos ergo, qui nunc me audistis, memineritis me hoc docuisse, non esse inquirendum de Prædestinatione Dei absconditi, sed in illis acquiescendum, quæ revelantur per vocationem et per ministerium verbi… Hæc eadem alibi quoque in meis libris protestatus sum, et nunc etiam viva voce trado: *Ideo sum excusatus.* (*Op* vol. vi, p. 325.)

This statement of the supralapsarian and sublapsarian theories, as given by Arminius, might be illustrated and verified by quotations from the elder Calvinistic divines: the reader will, however, find what is amply sufficient in those given in Bishop Womack’s Calvinistic Cabinet Unlocked.

The question as to the *object* of the decrees has gone out, as Goodwin says, among our Calvinistic brethren into “endless digladiations and
irreconcilable divisions:—some of them hold, that men simply and indefinitely considered, are the object of these decrees. Others contend, that men considered as yet to be created, are this object. A third sort stands up against both the former with this notion, that men considered as already created, and made, are this object. A fourth disparageth the conjectures of the three former with this conceit, that men considered as fallen, are this object. Another findeth a defect in the singleness or simplicity of all the former opinions, and compoundeth this in opposition to them, that men considered both as to be created, and as being created and as fallen, together, are the proper object of these troublesome decrees. A sixth sort formeth us yet another object, and this is, man considered as salvable, or capable of being saved. A seventh not liking the faint complexion of any of the former opinions, delivereth this to us as strong and healthful, that men considered as damnable, are this object. Others yet again, superfancying all the former, conceit men, considered as creable, or possible to be created, to be the object so highly contested about. A ninth party disciple the world with this doctrine, that men considered as labiles, or capable of falling, are the object; and whether all the scattered and conflicting opinions about the objects of our brethren’s decrees of election and reprobation, are bound up in this bundle or not, we cannot say.”

(Agreement of Brethren &c.)

In modern times these subtile distinctions have rather fallen into desuetude among Calvinists, and are reducible to a much smaller number.

ft136 “Non solent enim supralapsarii dicere Deum quosdam ad æternam damnationem creasse et prædestinasse; eo quod damnatio actum judicialem designet, ac proinde peccati meritum præsupponat; sed malunt uti voce exitii, ad quod Deus, tanquam absolutus Dominus, jus habeat creandi et destinandi quoscunque voluerit.” (Curcellæus De Jure Dei, &c, cap. 10. See also Bishop WOMACK’S Calvinistic Cabinet. &c, p. 394.)

ft137 The title of it is, “The Confession of Faith agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with the assistance of Commissioners from the Church of Scotland.” The date of the ordinance for convening this assembly is 1643. The Confession was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647.
The Augsburg Confession says, “Non est hic opus disputationibus de praedestinatione et similibus. Nam promissio est universalis et nihil detrahit operibus, sed excusscit ad fidem et vere bona opera.”—Act 20. And the Saxon Confession is equally indifferent to the subject. “Non addimus hic questiones de praedestinatione seu de electione; sed dediturus omnes lectores ad verbum Dei, et jubemus ut voluntatem Dei verbo ipsius discant sicut Aeternus Pater expressa voce præcipit, hunc audite.” (Art. de Remiss. Pecc.)

Of Camero, or Cameron, Amyraldus, Curcellæus, and the controversy in which they were engaged, see an interesting account in Nichol’s Arminianism and Calvinism Compared, vol i, appendix c; a work of elaborate research, and rebounding with the most curious information as to the opinions and history of those times.

“Ordo autem hic ut recte intelligi possit, observandum est triplicem Deo scientiam tribui solere: unam necessariam, quæ omnem voluntatis liberæ actum naturæ ordine antecedit, quæ etiam practica et simplicis intelligentiæ dici potest, qua seipsum et alia omnia possibilia intelligit. Alteram liberam, quæ consequitur actum voluntatis liberæ, quæ etiam visionis dici potest; quæ Deus omnia, quæ facere et permettere decrevit ita distincte novit, uti ea fieri et permettere voluit. Tertiam medium, quæ sub conditione novit quid homines aut angelis facturi essent pro sua libertate, si cum his aut illis circumstantiis, in hoc vel in illo rerum ordine, constituerentur.” (Disputat. Episcopii. part i, disp. 5.)

A few divines, and but few, have also been found, who, still admitting the essential distinction between body and spirit, have thought that their separation by death incapacitated the soul for the exercise of its powers. This suspension they call “the sleep of the soul.” With the Materialist death causes the entire annihilation, for the time, of the thinking property of matter. Both opinions are, however, refuted by the same Scriptural arguments.

Genesis 39:9, Πως ποιησω, How shall I,—how is it possible that I should do this great wickedness? “How, then, can I,” say our translators. Exodus 6:12, “Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how, then shall Pharaoh hear me?”—πος εισακουσαει μου Φαραω;—how is it likely, or possible, that Pharaoh should hear me? See also verse 30. Judges 16:15, “And she said unto him, Πως λεγεις, How canst thou say I love thee?” 2 Samuel 11:11, may also be considered in the LXX. 2 Kings 10:4,
“But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: καὶ πῶς, how then shall we stand?” — how is it possible that we should stand. Job 9:2, Πῶς γὰρ εστὶν δικαίως βροτὸς; — For how shall mortal man be just with, or in the presence of God? — how is it possible? See what follows. Psalm 72, (73,) 11; Πῶς εγνώ ο Θεός; “How doth God know?” — how is it possible that he should know? See the connection. Jeremiah 8:8; Πῶς εἰρεῖτε, “How do ye say,” — how is that ye say, — how can ye say, We are wise? Jeremiah 29:7, (47:7,) Πῶς ησυχασει: “How can it,” — the sword of the Lord, — “be quiet?” Ezekiel 33:10, “If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, πῶς ζησομεθα how should we then live?” Matthew 7:4, “Or how, πῶς, wilt thou say to thy brother?” where Rosenm. observes that πῶς has the force of negation. Ibid. 12:26, “If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; πῶς ουν σταθησεται how shall then,” — how can then, — ”his kingdom stand?” See also Luke 11:18. Luke 23:33, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, πῶς φυγήτε, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” “qui fieri potest?” Rosenm. Mark 4:40, Πῶς οὐκ εξῆτε πιστίν; “How is it that ye have no faith?” Luke 1:34, may also be adduced. John 5:47, “If ye believe not his writings, πῶς πιστεύσετε; how shall ye,” — how can ye —”believe my words?” Romans 3:6, “GOD forbid: for then πῶς κρίνει how shall GOD judge the world?” — how is it possible? See the preceding verse. Romans 8:32, Πῶς χαριστήσεται; “How shall he not,” — how is it possible but that he should,—”with him also freely give us all things,” Romans 10:14, Πῶς ἐπικαλέσονται, “How then shall they,” — how is it possible that they should,—”call on him in whom they have not believed?” &c. 1 Timothy 3:5, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, πῶς, how shall he take care of the Church of GOD?” Hebrews 2:3, “How shall we escape,” — how is it possible that we should escape,—”if we neglect so great salvation?” 1 John 3:17, Πῶς “How dwelleth the love of GOD in him?” — how can it dwell? Comp. 1 John 4:20, where δινατι is added.

The present indicative verb is here used, as it is generally throughout this chapter, for the future.