

EXPOSITION\*

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OF

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS:

WITH

R E M A R K S

ON THE

COMMENTARIES OF DR MACKNIGHT, AND PROFESSOR  
MOSES STUART.

BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE mercies of God, as illustrated by the revelation of the righteousness which is received by faith, was the grand subject which had occupied Paul in the former part of this Epistle. He had announced at the beginning that he was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; because it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” This great truth he had undertaken to demonstrate, and he had done so with all the authority and force of inspiration, by exhibiting on the one hand, the state and character of man; and on the other, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

In the prosecution of this subject, the Apostle had shown that the wrath of God was revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and by arguments the most irresistible,

and evidence that could not be gainsaid, he had brought in both Jews and Gentiles as guilty and condemned sinners, justly obnoxious to the vengeance of heaven. Had the Almighty been pleased to abandon the apostate race of Adam to perish in their sins, none could have impeached his justice, or arraigned the severity of the Divine procedure. But in the unsearchable riches of the mercies of God, he was pleased to bring near a righteousness by which his broken law should be magnified, and a multitude whom no man can number rescued from destruction. This righteousness is revealed in the gospel—a righteousness worthy of the source from which it flows—a righteousness which shall for ever abase the pride of the creature, while it brings glory to God in the highest. The mercies of God are thus dispensed in such a way as to cut off all ground for boasting on the part of those who are justified. They are, on the contrary, calculated to exalt the Divine sovereignty, and to humble in the dust, those who are saved before Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and without giving any account of his matters, either justifies or condemns the guilty according to his sovereign pleasure.

At the end of the eleventh chapter, the apostle finishes his argument, and in a manner concludes his subject. He there vindicates God's dealings, both towards the Jews and the Gentiles—showing that since all were guilty and justly condemned, God was acting on a plan by which, both in the choice and partial rejection and restoration of the Jews, the divine glory would be manifested; while in the result, the sovereign mercies of Jehovah would shine forth conspicuous in regard to all his dealings toward the children of men. Lost in admiration of the majesty of God as discovered in the gospel, the apostle prostrates himself before his Maker, while, in language of adoring wonder, he summons all whom he addresses to unite in ascribing glory to him who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Almighty.

From this point Paul next turns to the contemplation of the practical results which naturally flow from the doctrine he had been illustrating. He was addressing those who were at Rome, "beloved of God, called to be saints," and by the remembrance of those mercies of which, whether Jews or Gentiles, they were the monuments, he beseeches them to present their

bodies a living sacrifice to God, whose glory is the first and the last end of creation. In thus demanding the entire surrender or sacrifice of their bodies, he enforces the duty by designating it their reasonable service. Nothing can be more agreeable to the dictates of right reason, than to spend and be spent in the service of that God, whose glory is transcendent, whose power is infinite, whose justice is inviolable, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. On this firm foundation, the apostle establishes the various duties to which men are called, as associated with each other in society, whether in the ordinary relations of life, or as subjects of civil government, or as members of the Church of Christ. The morality here inculcated is the purest and most exalted. It presents nothing of that incongruous mixture which is discernible in the schemes of philosophy. It exhibits no traces of confusion or disorder. It places every thing on its right basis, and every thing in its proper place. It enjoins our duty towards God and towards man; and in this it differs from all human systems, which uniformly exclude the former or keep it in the back ground. It shows how doctrine and practice are inseparably con-

nected—how the one is the motive, the source, or the principle—how the other is the effect ; and how both are so united that such as is the first, so will be the last. According to our views of the character of God, so will be our conduct. The corruption of morals, which degraded and destroyed the heathen world, was the natural result of what infidels have designated, “ their elegant mythology.” The abominable characters of the heathen gods and goddesses, were at once the transcript and the provocatives of the abominations of their worshippers ; but wherever the true God has been known—wherever the character of Jehovah has been proclaimed, there a new standard of morals has been erected ; and even those by whom his salvation is rejected are induced to counterfeit the virtues to which they do not attain. True Christianity and sound morals are indissolubly linked together ; and just in proportion as men are estranged from the knowledge and service of God, so shall we find their actions stained with the corruptions of sin.

Where, in all the boasted moral systems of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, or the rest of the Greek and Roman philosophers, shall be found any thing compar-

able to the purity and beauty of the virtues enjoined by Paul in the closing chapters of this Epistle? Even modern writers on ethics, when departing from the only pure standard of virtue, discover the grossest ignorance and inconsistency. But Paul, writing without any of the aids of human wisdom, draws his precepts from the fountain of heavenly truth, and inculcates on the disciples of Jesus a code of duties, which, if habitually practised by mankind, would change the world from what it is—a scene of strife, jealousy, and division—and make it what it was before the entrance of sin, a paradise fit for the Lord to visit and for man to dwell in.



## EXPOSITION, &c.

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### CHAPTER XI.

IN this chapter the Apostle first denies that the whole of the nation of Israel was indiscriminately rejected, for, as he had already intimated, there was to be a remnant saved, and of that remnant he holds himself forth as a noted example. He then brings again into view the sovereignty of God, in reserving this "remnant according to the election of grace." In the next place he affirms, that though blindness in part, as had been expressly foretold, had happened to Israel, yet, seeing that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, the period must arrive, when, according to the repeated promises of Scripture, all Israel shall be saved. They shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles, when the wisdom and the goodness of God, in his dealings towards both, will be finally unfolded, and the assembled universe shall with one voice acknowledge that God is all in all, and that of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom the glory shall be ascribed through the endless ages of eternity.

*V. 1.—I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

Dr Macknight imagines that a Jew, and Mr Stuart that an objector is here and in other places in this Epistle introduced as disputing with the Apostle. Such

a supposition is not only unnecessary but groundless. When Paul begins with the words, *I say then*, he states in a manner familiar to the best writers, a very obvious and probable objection which he was about to remove. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.*—Some might conclude, from the previous declarations of the Apostle, that the whole Jewish nation was now rejected of God, and for ever excluded from the blessings of the gospel. This inference he strongly disclaims, and shows that God designed even now to reserve for himself a people out of the Jews as well as out of the Gentiles, while, hereafter, it is the Divine purpose to recall the whole nation to himself. Paul therefore answers his own pointed interrogatory, by rejecting the thought with his usual energy, while to strengthen his denial, he further exhibits himself as a signal example of one not cast away. Had his doctrine involved the total rejection of the Jews, he would have pronounced his own condemnation.

*For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*—Besides being an Israelite, Paul here states that he was of the seed of Abraham. This was implied in his being an Israelite, but it is not needless tautology. A charge is often brought of tautology when the reiteration of an important truth is made for the purpose of giving it redoubled force. Although in declaring himself an Israelite, he virtually claimed a direct descent from Abraham, yet it was a fact of no ordinary moment, and one therefore on which he emphatically dwells. It is his object to impress on the minds of his readers a sense of its intrinsic importance, as well as to recall to their recollection the covenant of God with Abraham, which confirmed the

promises made to him respecting his descendants. This was much to the Apostle's purpose, in affirming that God had not cast away the children of him who was called the friend of God. Paul likewise adds that he was of the tribe of Benjamin. It was doubtless an honour to deduce his lineage through a tribe which adhered to the true worship of God, and had not revolted from the house of David. The fact, too, of his being enabled with certainty to trace his pedigree from Benjamin was sufficient to establish the purity of his origin, and to prove that he was not merely found mingled with the nation, but was, in the expressive language which he elsewhere adopts, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," an Israelite by birth, parentage, and unbroken hereditary descent. The design of the Apostle is evidently to magnify his privileges, that he may produce the conviction that he has no interest in teaching any thing derogatory to the just pretensions of his countrymen.

V. 2.—*God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,*

V. 3.—*Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.*

V. 4.—*But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

In the preceding verse Paul had asked if God had cast away his people. This he had strongly denied, and the reasons by which he supports this denial form the subject of nearly the whole of the remainder of the chapter. He first proves, from the beginning of the second verse to the end of the tenth, that a remnant was at present preserved, although the rest were blinded; and, from the eleventh to the thirty-third verse, that the whole nation shall at last be restored.

*God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.*

—The term people, in the preceding verse, refers to the whole of Israel as the typical people of God, but is here restricted to the elect among them who were his true people, and are distinguished as “his people which he foreknew.” God had cast off the nation, but even then he had a people among them whom from eternity he foreknew as his people. The word foreknow, as formerly observed, signifies to know before, or it denotes a knowledge accompanied by a decree, or it imports a preconceived love, favour, and regard. Divine foreknowledge, in the first of these senses, is God’s foresight of future existence and events, and his eternal prescience of whatever shall take place in all futurity. This foreknowledge is not only to be distinguished from God’s decree, by which every thing future comes to pass, but must be considered in the order of nature as consequent and dependent upon the determination and purpose of God. For the futurity of all things depends on the decrees of God by which every created existence and event, with all their circumstances, are ordered, fixed, and ascertained. Being thus decreed, they are the objects of foreknowledge; for they could not be known to be future unless their futurity was established, and that by the Divine decree. God foreknew all things that were to come to pass by knowing his own purposes and decrees. Had God determined or decreed nothing respecting future existences by creation and providence, there could have been no foreknowledge of any thing whatever. Because, therefore, this foreknowledge of God necessarily implies and involves his decrees, his foreknowledge is in the inspired writings, sometimes accompanied by the mention of his decrees, as for example, “Him, being delivered,

by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts, ii. 23 ; and it is sometimes put for the decree, as in the following passage, where the word here translated foreknew is rendered foreordained : " Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Peter, i. 20. In the third sense, as taken for a knowledge of love and approbation, it signifies, as in the verse before us, to choose and recognise as his own. God had not cast away his people whom he had before loved and chosen, for the Apostle alleges this foreknowledge as the reason why God did not cast away his people.

The people of God, whom he foreknew, were those whom he chose from all eternity, according to his sovereign pleasure ; and in this sense the expression is clearly explained, when they are declared, in the 5th verse, to be a " remnant according to the election of grace," and when it is said, in the 4th, that God had " reserved " to himself his true worshippers in the time of Elijah. This proves the correctness of Calvin's observation, " that foreknowledge does not mean a certain speculative view, by which the uncreated Cause of all effects foresaw the character of every individual of the human family, but points to the good pleasure of the decree of the Sovereign Disposer of all events, by which he hath chosen for his children those who were not yet born, and had no power to insinuate themselves into the favour of the Author of all happiness. Thus (Gal. iv. 9), Paul says, they are known of God, because he prevents by his grace and favour, and calls them to a knowledge of Christ."

*Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias?—The*

quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures, which the Apostle here brings to bear on the point in question, fully establishes the view that has been given of the preceding passage. There was an elected remnant in the days of Elijah, when things were at the worst, and so at the time when the Apostle wrote, there was also an elected remnant whom God had reserved. *How he maketh intercession to God against Israel.*—"First Kings, xix. 10., cited by Paul," says Calvin, "contains no implication, but a mere complaint. Since, however, his complaint implies a total despair of the religion of the whole Jewish nation, we may rest assured that he devoted it to destruction." But Paul's comment may assure us that Elijah at the time referred to not only complained but interceded against Israel. The Apostle spoke by the Spirit that indicted the words in which Elijah's complaint is recorded, and we should not look for a voucher for such testimony. Such a mode of strengthening the Scriptures is only to weaken them. It teaches us to undervalue the inspired commentary of the New Testament, unless we can produce some other confirmation. Elijah, when solemnly interrogated by the Lord why he was in the place where he was then found, away from the proper scene of his ministry, accounted for his flight to save his life, which seems to have been without any Divine admonition, by complaining of the apostacy of the nation. As this was an exposure of their wickedness, and, had it been true in all its extent, would have led to their destruction, it was in effect intercession against Israel. But the answer of God showed that he was mistaken. God had even then reserved to himself a goodly number, who had not apostatized from his worship.

From these words, in this answer of God, *I have reserved to myself*, we learn that if any are preserved from false worship, if any are brought to the knowledge of God, it is by his special influence and agency, and not owing to themselves. Such favoured individuals are said to be “reserved” by God. How different is this from the views of multitudes who profess Christianity! It is a comfort to think that in the worst times there may be many more of the people of God than we are apt to imagine.

*Bowed the knee.*—This shows that any overt act of idolatry, or any compliance with the requirements of false religion, renders men unworthy of being accounted the true servants of God. So Job, in declaring the integrity of his conduct towards God and man, says, “If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or *my mouth hath kissed my hand*, this also were an iniquity to be punished; for I should have denied the God that is above.”

*V. 5.*—*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

This is the object of the reference to the election in the times of Elijah, and renders the words at the beginning of the second verse quite definite. As there was a remnant then reserved by God, so there is a remnant now. Both were necessary for the preservation of the nation. The seven thousand were its salt in Elijah’s time, as were the remnant here spoken of during its present blindness.

*According to the election of grace.*—Than this nothing can be more explicit. God had formerly reserved for himself, by his gracious influence and special agency.

a small number in Israel, and in the same way, at the time when the Apostle wrote, he had reserved according to his sovereign choice, a remnant of that nation. And to set aside every idea that this election was the reward of an inherent good foreseen in those chosen, or of any thing meritorious performed by them, the Apostle adds that it was *of grace*. It was an unconditional choice, resulting from the sovereign free favour of God.

*V. 6.—And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*

The opponents of the doctrine of election, maintain, that men are chosen on account of their good works *foreseen*. But here it is expressly declared by the Apostle, that it is not on account of works at all, whether past, present, or future. What, then, is the source of election? *Grace*.—It is an election of grace, or free favour; that is, a gratuitous election, not by the merit of works of any kind, but purely from the favour of God. Grace and works are here stated as diametrically opposite and totally irreconcilable. If, then, election is by grace, it is not of works; for this would imply a contradiction. Grace would not then be grace. Here we have the warrant of Scripture for asserting that a contradiction is necessarily untrue, and that no authority is sufficient to establish two propositions which actually contradict each other.

*But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*—Many suppose these words are spurious, because they are wanting in some manuscripts, and because the idea is substantially included in what has been already stated. This reason,



however, is not conclusive, and those who build on such a foundation show little knowledge of Scripture. It is not useless to reverse the idea, and draw the same conclusion from the converse. It is far more likely that human wisdom has in some manuscripts omitted this passage, than that it should have been transcribed from the margin into the text.

In the foregoing verses, as well as in the eighth and ninth chapters, the doctrine of election is stated in the clearest manner. This doctrine, as implying the total inability of man to recover himself from guilt and ruin, and the necessity for this end of Divine interposition, has ever been highly offensive to human pride and human wisdom. These and the preceding strong statements of it, can never be silenced ; but they have often been subjected to the most violent perversions. Every artifice of human ingenuity has been employed to turn away the Apostle's words from bearing on the point ; but it has been employed in vain ; and nothing will ever be able to reconcile these statements to the mind of the natural man. But, after all, what does this doctrine assert that is not necessarily and obviously implied in every other doctrine of the gospel ? Are all men by nature *dead* in sin ? If so, he that is made spiritually alive, must be made so by Him who alone gives life ; and it is nothing short of divine sovereignty that constitutes the difference between him and those who remain in death and enmity to God. Are Christians represented as being *born again* ? Does not this refer men's spiritual existence to the sovereign choice, and mercy, and agency of their Heavenly Father ? Are Christians *saved by faith* ? If faith be the gift of God, salvation by faith implies election. Why, then, should the

Scriptures be wrested to avoid the admission of a doctrine which is not only essential to their consistency with themselves, but which the whole system of christianity implies ?

The salvation of every individual of the human race who partakes of it must be wholly gratuitous on the part of God, and effected by his sovereign grace. Sinners could have no claim upon God ; his justice demanded their punishment, and they could plead no *right* to mercy, which, if admitted, would make mercy justice. The sending of his Son, therefore, into the world to save sinners, was an act of free grace ; and Christ, accordingly, is spoken of as God's gift. " He gave his only begotten son," John, iii. 16. " Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable *gift*," 2 Cor. ix. 15. It is no impeachment of the mercy of God that all the fallen angels perished, and that upon the whole of them justice took its course. Could it then have been impeached, if in like manner God had left *all* men to perish ? and if not, can it be so because only a *part* of them are left under that condemnation into which they have fallen, while to another part, He, who " hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," has extended that mercy ? These truths, when unreservedly admitted, greatly contribute to promote in Christians, in contemplating the distinguishing goodness of God to them, joy in the Lord, and to their bringing forth all the fruits of the Spirit. It leads them to admire the mercies of God, who hath brought them from darkness to light, and hath saved and called them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9 ;

whereby they have the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, "promised," in like manner, "before the world began," Titus, i. 2.

The fact that the doctrines of election and of the divine sovereignty are so clearly taught in Scripture, is a most convincing proof that they are not the invention of man. Such a view could not have suggested itself to the human mind, and if suggested, could not have been pleasing to its author. As little would it be calculated to serve the purpose of an impostor, being universally unpalatable to those intended to be gained as converts. Nothing but the supposition of their truth and divine origin can account for their being found in the Bible. "It is a glorious argument," says President Edwards, in his Enquiry respecting the Freedom of the Will, "of the divinity of the holy scriptures, that they teach such doctrines which in one age and another, through the blindness of men's minds, and strong prejudices of their hearts, are rejected as most absurd and unreasonable by the wise and great men of the world; which yet, when they are most carefully and strictly examined, appear to be exactly agreeable to the most demonstrably certain and natural dictates of reason." If the scriptures, he observes, taught the opposite doctrines to those which are so much stumbled at, viz. the Arminian and Pelagian doctrine of free will, and other modifications of these errors, it would be the greatest of all difficulties in the way of the internal evidence of the truth of the Bible.

*V. 7.—What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded—*

*What then?*—What is the result of all that the Apostle had been saying? It is this: Israel as a nation

hath not obtained righteousness, of which it was in search, ch. ix. 31, but the election among them—the chosen remnant reserved by God, spoken of above—hath obtained it. Can any thing more expressly affirm the doctrine of election? *And the rest were blinded.*—How strong is this language? How can it be softened by the most subtile ingenuity, so as to make it agreeable to the taste of the natural man? The election had received the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, but the whole nation besides, not only did not attain to the righteousness of which they were in search, but were blinded. This is a hard saying, who can hear it? It is God's saying, and it is unsafe to reject it. It is the duty of his people, as little children, to receive it with meekness.

The election of a sinful creature is an act of the free and sovereign will of God; while his punishment is not a sovereign or arbitrary act of Divine authority. God does not punish without an existing cause in the guilty. Condemnation supposes positive criminality. Men are in themselves sinful, and commit sin voluntarily; and for their punishment, they are hardened, and finally perish in their sins, and their destruction is the execution of a just sentence of God against sin. Their sins, which are the cause of their destruction, are their own, while the salvation of those whom God chooses and calls to himself is his gift. God knows what men left to their own inclinations will do; and, as to those who are finally condemned, He determines to abandon them to their depraved inclinations, and hardens them in their rebellion against him. But as to his determination, by grace, to cause the sinner to believe, to will, and to obey, it requires a positive in-

terposition of Divine power—a power which creates anew, which no one merits or deserves, and which God vouchsafes or withholds according to the counsel of his own will. Conformably to this, we see through the whole of the Scriptures, that when men are saved, they are saved by the sovereign grace of God ; and when they perish, it is by the appointment of God, Jude, iv., through their own fault.

V. 8.—(*According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*) unto this day.

Mr Stuart asserts, that it is not necessary to understand this as a *prediction*, in the appropriate sense of the word. But it is most undoubtedly a prediction ; and, although it was adapted to describe the Jews at a preceding period, the Holy Spirit, as from Paul's application we are bound to believe, intended it to describe the people of Israel in the time of the Apostles. The same thing that in one sense is ascribed to God, in another is ascribed to man. Although, by the decree and providence of God, Israel was blinded, yet the blame was their own. The Jews, at that period, had the light of natural understanding, yet they did not see what was exhibited with the clearest evidence. This is still the case. Multitudes who are distinguished for their intellectual vigour and mental powers, are altogether blind in spiritual things. *Unto this day.*—Some join this with the words of the Prophet, and others make it the additional observation of Paul. In whatever way this is understood, they are equally the words of the Apostle, for he applies them to the case in hand.

V. 9.—*And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them :*

V. 10.—*Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.*

*And David saith.*—It is highly erroneous to suppose with Mr Stuart, that the Apostle quotes these passages merely to illustrate a general principle. In this sense they could be of no use. But they are eminently to the purpose as predictions. *Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them.*—Let them experience misery and disappointment in their daily occupations and concerns, and let them find those things of whatever description—whether sacred or common—which were calculated to be for their welfare and advantage, a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a punishment to them. For the hope of retaining their temporal kingdom, they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, and by this means they lost the kingdom also, with all temporal prosperity, John, xi. 48, 50. Mr Stuart observes, “ It is enough ‘ to say, at present, that the Apostle, in making this ‘ quotation, need not be supposed to design any thing ‘ more, than to produce an instance from the Psalms, ‘ where the same *principle* is developed as is contained ‘ in the assertions which he had made ; *i. e.* the ancient ‘ Scriptures speak of a part of Israel as blind and deaf, ‘ as in deep distress and under heavy punishment because ‘ of their unbelief and disobedience. What happened in ‘ ancient times may take place again ; it has in fact ‘ happened at the present time.” How trifling would be the conduct of the Apostle, according to this representation of Mr Stuart ? Are all these quotations made just for the purpose of showing that something in some

way similar happened long ago ? Is this likeness merely accidental ? Whatever application the words might have to David, and David's times, their import as a proper prediction is clear, and since they are so appropriated by the Apostle, ought never to be questioned. These words of the Old Testament Scriptures are too strong to represent any thing else, in their full extent, but the fearful blindness of the Jews in the time of the Messiah, when they saw his miracles, and nevertheless did not perceive their import; when they heard, yet did not listen to the calls of his gospel. Then, truly, their heart was made fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes were closed, John, xii. 40 ; and then, by the issue, it appeared that God would not convert them, because he would not any more at that time do them good. The predictions concerning their spiritual blindness, as well as the denunciations contained in these verses, have been literally accomplished. Many pretend to find a difficulty in regard to the threatenings denounced against the enemies of God in the Psalms, but the difficulty arises from their own erroneous views of the subject. Does it imply a malicious or revengeful temper to utter the dictates of the Spirit of God, whoever may be the object of the Divine denunciations ? This is not merely trifling, but blasphemous.

To represent this passage otherwise than as a prediction, gives a false view of the 69th Psalm, from which the quotation is taken, which contains so illustrious a prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ. God had announced by David, in that psalm, the maledictions it records in connexion with crimes committed by the Jews. Those here quoted, in the 9th and 10th verses, immediately follow the prophetic description in the

psalm of their treatment of the Messiah. It should also be observed, that during the whole period of the former dispensation, God employed the most powerful external means to bring them back to himself, so that they were entirely without excuse.

The 69th Psalm consists of three parts. The first respects the violent persecutions which the Lord Jesus Christ experienced from his enemies and the Jews. The second part is a prediction of the fearful judgments of the Lord, especially upon the traitor Judas. The third part regards the exaltation of Jesus Christ to glory, and the success of the gospel. First, the prophetic characters of the psalm are representative of the extraordinary sufferings of him of whom it speaks, and of the reproaches against him—sufferings and persecutions which would be both exaggerated were they limited to those persecutions which David endured at the hand of his enemies. Secondly, the cause of his sufferings is ascribed to his love of God. “For thy sake I have borne reproach ; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” Now, we do not read that David was ever persecuted on account of his religion, nor that he suffered because of his love to God. Thirdly, although the words, “They gave me also gall for my meat ; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,” may be understood figuratively of David, they cannot be literally applied to him, but they apply literally to Jesus Christ.

The first division of the psalm, which foretells the ruin of the persecutors, is too strong to be understood



of the persecutors of David, as appears from what is said from the 22d to the 28th verses inclusive, which conclude with these awful words : “ Add iniquity unto their iniquity : and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” It cannot be said that the enemies of David were absolutely cut off from the covenant of God ; but these words were fully accomplished on the body of the nation of the Jews, when they did not attain, as the Apostle says, to the law of righteousness, and refused to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. They were, therefore, blinded or hardened ; the awful maledictions contained in the verses before us descended on their devoted country, and thus they were blotted out of the book of the living, and were not written with the righteous.

In the third part of the psalm, the deliverance vouchsafed by God is declared : “ Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high,” which signifies the ascension of the Lord to heaven. It is afterwards said, “ I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns or hoofs,” which marks the abolition of the legal sacrifices.

Finally, the filling of the earth with the glory of God is declared. “ Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.” This is too great to be applied to the temporal deliverances which God vouchsafed to David, the fame of which did not extend so far. It must, then, be ascribed to the glory which God received after the exaltation of Jesus Christ, as he himself said, “ Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

The words in the beginning of the 9th verse of this psalm, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" are applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, John, ii. 17; and the concluding words, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me," by Paul, Rom. xv. 3. "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," is applied in the three gospels, by Matthew, and Mark, and John, to what took place at his crucifixion. The words contained in the 25th verse, "Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents," are applied to Judas, Acts, i. 20, who may be considered in this matter as the representative of the nation. "Let their table become a snare before them," verse 22, is quoted by the Apostle in the verse before us, predicting the condition of the Jewish nation when he wrote. And are all these passages to be considered as quoted by way of accommodation, and not as predictions? Such an interpretation is not only erroneous, but is degrading to the Holy Scriptures, and utterly at variance with their true meaning.

*V. 11.—I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.*

Having proved that God had not cast away his people, by referring to the fact, that even then a remnant, according to the election of grace, was preserved, Paul supports his denial of their rejection, by the consideration, that, in process of time, the whole nation shall be restored. This restoration, as has been already remarked, forms the subject of nearly the whole remainder of the chapter.

*I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall ?*—This is the Apostle's own question, and does not, as Dr Macknight and Mr Stuart allege, proceed from an imaginary objector. It naturally springs out of the declaration made in the four preceding verses, concerning the blindness of those called "the rest," in contradistinction to the remnant comprehended in the election. The question is, Has the great body of the Jewish nation stumbled, that they should fall for ever, and is this the purpose of their fall ? Paul replies by a strong negative. Nothing was further from the purpose of God with respect to his ancient people. They had stumbled, as was said, chap. ix. 32, "at that stumbling stone," according to the predictions of the prophets respecting Christ ; but still it was but a temporary stumbling, from which the nation will finally recover. God had a double purpose in this. His design in their stumbling was not that they should fall for ever, but rather that through their fall salvation should come to the Gentiles, and that, through this, the nation of Israel might ultimately receive the Messiah.

*To provoke them to jealousy.*—It is probable from this, that the Jews will be excited, by seeing God's favour to the Gentiles, to reflect on their own fallen condition, and to desire to possess the same advantages. When the Jews can no longer hide from themselves that the God of their fathers is with the nations whom they abhor, they will be led to consider their ways, and brought again into the fold of Israel. This is according to the prophecy already quoted by the Apostle in the 19th verse of the preceding chapter.

It was in this manner, then, that God purposed to bring the Jewish nation finally to submit to Him, in

order that they might receive his blessing, and thus in his sovereignty he overrules the fall and ruin of some, for the salvation of others. His awful judgments against the audacious transgressors of his laws, warn the beholders to flee from the wrath to come; and, on the other hand, the conversion of men who have been notoriously sinners, excites others to seek the salvation of Christ. Who can calculate what extensive, permanent, and glorious effects may result throughout the whole creation, and in eternal ages, from the fall of angels and men—from the redemption of God's people in Christ—from his dispensations towards the church and the world? Ephes. iii. 9-11. We ought to remember that the Lord may have infinitely wise and gracious motives for his most severe and terrible judgments. Thus did the fall of the Jews become the occasion of the Gentiles being enriched with the inexhaustible treasures that are in Christ, so that the justice, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of God were glorified in this awful visitation.

*V. 12.—Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?*

In the foregoing verse, the Apostle had said, that through the fall of the Jews salvation was come to the Gentiles; he had also intimated, that they should be recovered from their fall. This might lead the Gentiles to apprehend that, in the restoration of the Jews, they might in like manner be cast off. To this Paul now answers, that, on the contrary, if the fall of the Jews be the riches of the Gentiles, much more so will be their restoration.

The temporary fall of the Jews was fraught with the

richest blessings to the rest of the world. Their rejection of the Messiah was the occasion of the offering of the great sacrifice for sin, and of the gospel being preached to all nations. In consequence of their rejecting the testimony of the Apostles, the remnant who believed fled from the persecution of their countrymen, and being scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word. Besides, the Jewish nation, which had been constituted the witnesses of God, Isa. xliiii. 10, and to whom the oracles of God had been committed, have firmly preserved their sacred trust, even amidst all their unbelief and consequent sufferings. In this we discern an illustrious proof of the divine origin of the Old Testament Scriptures which testify of the Messiah; while the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people, amidst all the changes and revolutions of ages, stands forth a lasting miracle, not to be explained on natural principles, furnishing incontestible evidence of the truth of the gospel.

Thus the diminishing of the Jews was the aggrandisement of the Gentiles; for, in the inscrutable counsels of Jehovah, his gift of salvation to them was connected with the degradation and downfall of his ancient people. But here the Apostle gives the assurance that the *fulness* of the Jews—their restoration as a body, when they shall acknowledge Christ as the Messiah—will yet prove a far greater blessing to the Gentiles. It will be connected with a calling of the nations to an extent beyond anything yet witnessed, and also with a great enlargement of their knowledge of the gospel. This was consistent with what is said in the sequel of that prediction to which Paul had just referred. In the same way, Moses, after foretelling the many evils

that were to come upon his nation, and of the calamities that were to be heaped upon them, concludes the whole by predicting all that the Apostle here declares : " Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people ; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people," Deut. xxxii. 43.

*V. 13.—For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.*

The Apostle continues, to the beginning of the 16th verse, to amplify still further what he had just announced, in proof that the salvation of the Gentiles is closely connected with God's dealings towards the Jews. The Gentiles were largely blessed with the gospel when it was rejected by the Jews ; but they will be blessed with it to an unspeakably greater extent when the Jews shall be recalled. Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, and by uttering this prediction, with regard to the Gentiles, at the period of the restoration of the Jews, he says he magnifies his office. He here addresses himself particularly to those in the church at Rome, who were of the Gentiles. For as he had been appointed their Apostle, he was desirous to commend his ministry among them, to assert the honour of his commission, and to prove its great importance in imparting to them the knowledge of the gospel. He shows with regard to the Gentiles, that its value was enhanced in proportion as a greater number of Gentiles will be saved. In this view, it is greatly for the interest of the Gentiles that the Jews should be brought back, and this should increase their efforts for their conversion.

V. 14.—*If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

The Apostle also desired to excite the attention of his countrymen by this view of Divine favour to the Gentiles. He endeavoured to move them to emulation, that in this way they might be directed to Christ the Saviour of sinners, and that some of them might be saved. He says *some*, not all, for he was aware that the body of the nation was at that time rejected, but he knew not who among them were of the remnant according to the election of grace, who, although still rejecting the Messiah, might, by means of the gospel which he preached, be finally saved.

V. 15.—*For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

Here the Apostle further explains and illustrates the argument he had employed in the 12th verse. The gospel was preached to the world only after Israel rejected it. This was not the result of accident; it was according to the fixed purpose of God. The middle wall of partition was then broken down. The command was given to preach the gospel to every creature. After the great sacrifice had been offered, it was no longer to be limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The world was to hear the gospel; and thus the Gentiles received the grace of God only through the unbelief and rejection of the Jewish nation. But if the casting away of the Jews was such a blessing to the world, their recall will be a blessing unspeakably greater. It will occasion a revival among the Gentile churches, from a dead and almost lifeless state, which will resemble a resurrection. The numbers then converted will be as if all the dead had risen out of their

graves. The divine dispensations being at that period so far developed, and the prophecies respecting the rejection and restoration of the Jews so fully accomplished, no doubt will any longer be entertained regarding the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures. A great additional light, too, will be thrown on those parts of them which at present are most obscure, so that, in the providence of God, the result will be an unexampled blessing both to Jews and Gentiles.

*V. 16.—For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

The whole of the Apostle's argument goes to establish the restoration of Israel. He shows that they were not cast off, first by his own example; and, secondly, by referring to the remnant among them, according to the election of grace, which proved that they were not devoted to destruction like Sodom and Gomorrha, chap. ix. 29. It was true, that the predictions of which he had spoken, were fulfilled; but although, consistently with these, they had stumbled, it was not that they should irrevocably fall; but this was the way in which God had appointed salvation to come to the Gentiles. Even in this, however, God had their restoration in view; for the kindness shown to the Gentiles would be the means of provoking their jealousy, and great as were the benefits which accrued to the world from their fall, those of their restoration would be still greater. The verse before us contains a third argument to prove the future conversion of the Jewish nation.

The Apostle here employs two similitudes, one taken from the Law, respecting the first fruits, by which the whole of the harvest was sanctified; and the other from nature, by which, under the figure of a tree, he evi-



dences the truth he is exhibiting respecting the final restoration of the whole nation of Israel. By the first fruit some understand the first Jewish converts ; but it rather appears that both the first fruit and the root refer to Abraham, as the first fruit to God, and the root of the Jewish nation. As Abraham was separated to the service of God, so, in the sense of a relative holiness, all his descendants in the line of Isaac were holy, standing in an external relation to God, in which no other nation ever stood. But Abraham was also personally holy ; and so, in every age, had been many of his descendants through the heir of promise ; and so, also, shall be an innumerable multitude of them hereafter. For, according to the figure here employed, they shall as branches be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved.

It is, therefore, here shown, that the future conversion of Israel is guaranteed by the peculiar covenant relation in which they stand to Abraham. Although the whole nation had never been internally holy, they had all along been in a peculiar manner separated or consecrated to God, in the same way as, according to the law, the first fruits of the harvest were consecrated ; for when the corn was kneaded, a cake of the first of the dough was to be given to the Lord, Num. xv. 19, 21 ; and thus the whole of the harvest was set apart or sanctified, 1 Tim. iv. 5. On this ground, Moses, even when reminding the Israelites of their unhallowed rebellion against God in the wilderness, declared, " Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God : the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself," Deut. vii. 6. And a little after, when rehearsing to them their several rebellions, and informing

them that the Lord had pronounced them to be "a stiff-necked people; and when he claims the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, as the property of Jehovah, he says to Israel: "The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people," Deut. x. 15, and Deut. iv. 37; xiv. 2; xxvi. 19; and xxxii. 8, 9. "God," it is also said, "heard their groanings, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them," Exod. ii. 24. Moses assured the people, the Lord "will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them," Deut. iv. 31. And it is said by the prophet Isaiah, xliii. 21, "This people have I formed for myself." In like manner, when Samuel was in the strongest terms reproaching Israel for their rebellion, in forsaking the Lord and choosing a king, he still exhorts them to serve the Lord, notwithstanding their past wickedness. "For," he adds, "the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people," 1 Sam. xii. 22. Innumerable declarations to the same effect are interspersed throughout the Old Testament. The Apostle's argument then is, that as the lump is holy through the offering of the first fruit, and as the tree derives its character from the root, so the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom the Lord chose, were set apart by solemn covenant for his service and glory.

In consequence of God's love to the fathers, he delivered them from Egypt, and separated them by the Sinai covenant, from all other nations, as his peculiar

people. But, while that transaction announced the most important purposes, it was not faultless, Heb. viii. 7. It pointed out their duty, but did not communicate those dispositions which are essential to obedience. It was, therefore, only a figure for the time then present, imposed on them for a season, Heb. ix. 9, 10; and intended to be introductory to a better covenant, established upon better promises, by which the law was to be put in their inward parts, and God was to be a God to them, in a higher sense than he was by that first covenant. This was taught them in the land of Moab, where God promised to circumcise their heart and the heart of their seed; and is repeated by Isaiah, lix. 21; Jer. xxxi. 31, and referred to by the Apostle in the 26th and 27th verses of the chapter before us. Thus Israel has been set apart as a holy people, devoted to the service of God, since the call of Abraham. Their unbelief has not made the faithfulness of God of none effect. Their rebellions have all been subservient to his eternal purpose. The tree was of the Lord's right-hand planting, a noble vine; many of the branches have been broken off, but still the root remains, bound round, as it were, "with a band of iron and brass;" and the branches shall be grafted in again, by their partaking of the faith of Abraham. And as they were God's witnesses when enjoying his blessing in the land of Canaan, Isa. xliii. 10, 12; xliv. 8; and are his witnesses in their rejection, and in being "left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill," Isa. xxx. 17, so shall they be his witnesses in their restoration. In God's treatment of them we see his abhorrence of sin. In them we behold a memorial of the severity of God, Rom. xi. 22;

but in them shall also be witnessed a nobler monument of his goodness.

The Apostle's argument, then, amounts to this—that as the lump is holy, through the offering of the first fruits, so this is a pledge that the lump, or body of the nation, will yet be made holy. The restoration of Israel is not only plainly asserted by the Apostle here, but it is essential to the fulfilment of the parable exhibited in God's dealings with the nation of Israel. That nation was a type of the true Israel, and in God's dealings with them all the great doctrines of the gospel are exhibited. It was therefore necessary that Israel should be restored, otherwise the parable which shadows forth the final preservation of the people of God, declared in Rom. viii. 35, would have been incomplete. We see the sovereignty of God in choosing Israel in bestowing on them so many advantages, in punishing them so severely, and making the whole to redound to his own glory and the salvation of all who are ordained to eternal life. They have been the chosen instruments employed for the salvation of the world, and their last end, after all their wanderings, and all their rebellions, and all their unbelief, shall exhibit them as the true circumcision, who rejoice in Christ Jesus. When, therefore, the calling of the Gentiles, and the rebellion of Israel, are announced in the strongest terms, it is immediately added, "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there," Isa. lxxv. 8. "As

a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof," Isa. vi. 13. All this accords with those repeated declarations of Scripture already referred to, in which it is said that the Lord will never forsake his people, for his great name's sake. It likewise accords with the numerous and peculiar privileges conferred on Israel as a nation, as enumerated in the 9th chapter of this Epistle, and summed up in these words, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." And consistently with the whole, it is declared in the sequel of the chapter before us, that the time is coming when all Israel shall be saved, and the natural branches, or descendants of Abraham, shall be grafted in again into their own olive tree. On these grounds it is evident, that while those whom the Apostle calls the "rest" of Israel, had in the mean time fallen, and although successive generations should behold Jerusalem forsaken, and Israel wandering without a home through the world, yet the restoration of the nation shall hereafter testify the unchangeable faithfulness of that God, who, in dividing to the nations their inheritance, "set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel."

Such is the method by which the Apostle in this verse continues to substantiate his declaration that God had not cast away his people. He had shown that their destruction could not have been intended, since a remnant was preserved, and he is now proving that as a body, they shall finally be restored to God's favour. In declaring the peculiar privileges of Israel, derived from their first progenitors, the Apostle, by exhibiting their distinguished superiority over all other nations,

lays a foundation for the forcible warnings, which, down to the 23d verse, he proceeds to deliver to the Gentiles who had been received into the covenant of God. Mr Stuart remarks of this 16th verse, that it is *illustration* rather than argument; but it is an illustration which has been adopted by the Spirit of God as a pledge of the event. If it be not argument, it is evidence, and is recorded as a revelation of the Divine purpose, that the lump, or body of the nation of Israel, shall yet be holy.

*V. 17.—And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

Before alleging any thing further to prove the future conversion of the Jews, Paul, here, and onwards to the 25th verse, continues to employ the figure of a tree and its branches. In doing so, he takes occasion to administer a salutary caution to the Gentile believers. In this and the following verses, down to the 25th he warns them to beware of self-preference, or of being puffed up against the Jews, on account of the blessings with which they themselves were now favoured. The Jewish nation was God's olive tree. They were all the people of God in a typical sense, and the greater part of God's true people had been chosen out of them; but now, by their unbelief, some of the branches were broken off from the tree. By the term "some," as has been observed, verse 14, is meant not all, Heb. iii. 16; for it implies that others, as the Apostle had shown, verses 2-5, remained. And among, or rather instead of, those that were broken off, the Gentiles, who were a wild olive, having had no place in the good olive tree, are now made the children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26-29. They were grafted

into the good olive tree, whose root Abraham was, and were made partakers of his distinguished privileges. It has sometimes been remarked, that there is no grafting in the olive tree. But this makes no difference. The illustration from the process of grafting is the same, whether the operation be performed in the particular tree mentioned, or not. Mr Stuart says, that the wild olive "was often grafted into the fruitful one, when it began to decay, and thus not only brought fruit, but caused the decaying olive to revive and flourish." This, however, whether it be fact or not, is not to the purpose of the Apostle, for he is beating down the arrogance of the Gentile believers, and not pointing out the advantages they occasioned to Jews. Nor is the stock of the olive here supposed to be decayed, but to be full of sap and fatness, to partake of which, and not to benefit the fruitful olive, is the wild olive grafted into the tree.

*V. 18.—Boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.*

It is probable, from what is here said, that even in the Apostle's time, the Gentile believers were beginning to exhibit an overbearing disposition towards the Jews, and a complacent feeling of self-preference. At all events, the sin against which they are thus warned, well describes the spirit that has long prevailed among the Gentiles who profess Christianity. What marvellous ignorance, folly, and vanity, are often displayed even in God's people. Nothing but the constant lessons of the Spirit of God will teach them that all spiritual difference among men is by God's grace.

*But if thou boast.*—Whenever Gentile Christians feel a disposition to boast with respect to the Jews, let

them remember not only that the Jews were first the people of God, but that the first Christians were also Jews. The Jews received no advantage from the Gentiles; but, on the contrary, the Gentiles have received much from the Jews, from whom the gospel sounded out—its first preachers being Jews, and of whom even Christ himself, as concerning the flesh, came. The Gentile believers become the children of Abraham, and all the blessings they enjoy are in virtue of that relation. Hence the covenant, Jeremiah, xxxi. 31, includes all believers; yet, it is said only to be made with the house of Israel and Judah.

*V. 19.—Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.*

*V. 20.—Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.*

The Gentile believers might reply, that the branches were broken off to give place to them, and in a certain sense this is admitted by the Apostle. But unbelief was the cause of the fall of the Jews, while it is by faith only that the Gentiles stand. It was not then on account of their superior merits that they were grafted into the good olive tree, since faith is the gift of God, bestowed on whom he will, and therefore leaves no room for boasting or self-preference. Among the Gentiles who professed the faith, there was soon a great falling away, and “the man of sin,” though he boasts of being exclusively the good olive tree—the only true Church—is broken off altogether, and doomed to inevitable destruction. It becomes all Christians to be humble, and to fear lest they also fall by error of the same kind. It is very usual, when they perceive the errors of other Christians, to glory over them. This is highly unbecoming,



If a Christian understands any part of the will of God of which his brethren are still ignorant, it is God that has made the difference. A haughty spirit goeth before a fall; and if arrogance be indulged by any one, it is likely that God will give him up to some error, as pernicious as that into which others whom he despises have fallen.

*V. 21.—For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

This verse contains another argument by which the Apostle urges the Gentile believers to humility and watchfulness. If the natural branches were not spared, this was an additional reason why those whom he addressed should be on their guard, lest they also should fall through unbelief. It appears also to be a prophetic intimation of the apostacy of the great body of the professors of Christianity under the mystery of iniquity.

*V. 22.—Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

The Apostle lastly enforces his warning to the Gentile believers by four concluding arguments: First, he calls on them to behold the severity of God's strict justice in cutting off and casting out the unbelieving Jews. Second, to consider his goodness in conferring unmerited favour on the Gentiles, who had attained that righteousness after which they were not following. Third, to remark the necessity of continuing in that goodness, by abiding in the faith of the gospel; and, Fourth, to observe the assurance, that if they abide not in the faith, they should be themselves cut off.

Men generally form in their imagination the character of God according to their own inclination. It is the

duty of the Christian to take God's character as it is given by himself. His goodness is no evidence that he will not punish the guilty ; and the most dreadful punishment of the guilty is consistent with the existence of supreme goodness in the divine character. That God will yet lay righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, is now seen in his treatment of Israel, whom he had so long spared after they had sinned against him. Let none imagine, then, that he will spare them if guilty, because they have the name of being his people. Rather let them dread the more terrible vengeance on that account. The evidence, that we are the true objects of the goodness of God here mentioned is, that we continue in it, by continuing in the faith of the gospel. Continuing in goodness is not to be understood here to mean, our continuing in a state of integrity, according to Mr Stuart. There is no real difficulty in the expression, continuing in God's goodness. We continue in God's goodness, by continuing in the faith.

*V. 23.—And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in : for God is able to graff them in again.*

The Apostle having, from the beginning of the 17th verse, pressed upon the believing Gentiles the necessity of humility, now reverts to the subject of the future conversion of the Jews. In order to furnish a new proof of this great event, he introduces a fourth argument, (see exposition of verse 16) taken from the power of God. *God is able to graff them in again.*—According to the figure which the Apostle had been employing respecting the casting off and the restoration of that part of the Jewish nation that was blinded, comparing them to branches broken off, there might seem to be

no probability that they could be restored. When branches are severed from a tree, they wither, and cannot be replaced. Paul, therefore, here refers to the power of God. What is not done in nature, and cannot be effected by the power of man, will be done by God, with whom all things are possible. He is able to make the dry bones live, and to restore the severed branches of the Jewish nation. Some argue that, because the grafting of the Jews into the olive tree here spoken of is conditional, it is not promised. But the Apostle's design is evidently, even in this verse, to excite hopes by showing its possibility. There is no other ground of exclusion with respect to them but unbelief. If that sin were subdued they would be received. God is able to graff them in if they believe, and he is able also to give them faith.

*V. 24.—For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?*

The former argument, drawn from God's power, is here further insisted on. The Jews were so obstinately prejudiced against the gospel, that it seemed very improbable that they should ever embrace the truth. But the Apostle had declared the possibility of this being accomplished by the mighty power of God. He now shows its probability. If the Gentiles, he says, who were strangers to the covenants of promise, have been graffed into the good olive tree, how much more is it to be expected that the descendants of the Patriarchs, to whom the promises were made, and who are, therefore, the natural branches, shall be graffed into their own olive tree.

V. 25.—*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*

Having, in the two preceding verses, exhibited first, the *possibility*, and next the *probability* of the restoration of the Jews, according to the order of God's providence, the Apostle, in this and the following verses, down to the 28th, goes on to prove the *certainty* of the future conversion and restoration of Israel. He here addresses the Gentiles as his brethren, thus expressing his affection for them, and stimulates their attention, by declaring that he was about to reveal to them a mystery—a thing hitherto hidden or unknown. The restoration of the Jews is called a mystery, for though declared in the Scriptures, it was not understood. And in this mystery there were two parts, both of which are here unfolded; first, that blindness is happened to Israel in part only; and, secondly, that this blindness should continue till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. This mystery was opened to prevent the Gentiles from being *wise in their own conceits*, that is, from being puffed up on account of the preference they now enjoyed. Ignorance of the Scriptures is the cause of high-mindedness in Christians. They are often arrogant and contemptuous through want of knowledge. In the absence of real knowledge, they often suppose that they have a true understanding of things with which they are still unacquainted, and are thus vain and conceited.

*Blindness in part is happened to Israel.*—This does not mean that their blindness was only partial, and limited in degree, for it was total and complete; but that it did not extend to all Israel, but only to a part,

though indeed the far greater part. It is a consolation that the Jews are under no exclusion that forbids the preaching of the gospel to them, and using every effort for their conversion. Though the national rejection will continue till the appointed time, yet individuals from among them may at any period be brought to the knowledge of God. This fact is of great importance. They are excluded only through unbelief, and this unbelief is not affirmed of all, but only of a part.

*Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*—Here is the clearest attestation that the blindness of the Jews will yet cease, not only as to individuals, but as to the body. It is not stated at what time this will happen, but it is connected with the fulness of the Gentiles. The fulness of the Gentiles is the accession of the Gentiles to the body of Christ. Here we have another glorious truth presented for our consolation. The world has hitherto groaned under heathen and antichristian idolatry, but the time will come when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and this will be closely connected with the recovery of the Jews from their unbelief. This declaration of the Apostle coincides with that remarkable prediction of our blessed Lord; “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

*V. 26.—And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

Here the Apostle further unfolds the mystery of which he would not have his brethren to be ignorant. In the foregoing verse he had declared that blindness had come upon Israel—that blindness which he had

before shown was inflicted on part of the Jewish nation by the judgment of God, verses 8–10, which would continue till a certain period was accomplished. He now declares that at that period all Israel shall be saved. The rejection of Israel has been general, but at no period universal. This rejection is to continue till the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Then the people of Israel, as a body, shall be brought to the faith of the gospel. Such expressions as that “all Israel shall be saved,” are no doubt, in certain situations, capable of limitation ; but as no Scripture demands any limitation of this expression, and as the opposition here stated is between a *part* and *all*, there is no warrant to make any exception, and with God this, like all other things, is possible.

*As it is written.*—‘Whether Isaiah, in lix. 20,’ says Mr Stuart, ‘had respect to the salvation of gospel times, ‘has been called in question. But the context seems ‘to me very clearly to indicate this.’ But why are we to rest our conviction on this point on our view of the connexion ? The Apostle’s quotation of the words is ground sufficient to bear the conclusion. This method of treating the Apostle’s quotations of prophecy should be most strenuously opposed. That it is prophecy ought to be rested on the ground of its being quoted as prophecy. ‘And even if he had respect to ‘temporal deliverance,’ Mr Stuart continues, ‘there can ‘be no difficulty in the Apostle’s using his words as ‘the vehicle of conveying his own thoughts, with regard to spiritual deliverance.’ There is indeed no difficulty in supposing that the same prophecy may, in its primary sense, refer to a temporal deliverance, and in its secondary, to a spiritual deliverance. But there

is a very great difficulty in supposing that the Apostle would cite a prophecy respecting a temporal deliverance, which had no reference to the deliverance of which he was speaking. This would be very puerile. It would be worse than puerile—it would be a perversion of Scripture. It would be employing a false argument.

*There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*—Mount Zion was the special residence of the God of Israel; and out of Zion was to go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. ii. 3. And though Israel has for a long time departed from him, yet thither at length will the Redeemer return, and make his word and law powerful to restore them unto himself. “He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth,” Isa. xi. 12.

*The Deliverer, &c.*—These words are quoted from Isa. lix. 20, “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.” Here it is said that the Redeemer or Deliverer shall come to Zion; but if he come out of Zion he must have come to it previously; as it is said, Psal. xiv. 7, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion.” Besides, it is added, he shall come, namely out of Zion, to them who turn from transgression in Jacob; and such must have thus been turned by him. We may be assured that the Apostle, speaking by the same Spirit as the Prophet, and directed by the Spirit to quote him, has substantially given the meaning of his words. If Jacob be turned away from transgression, it is this Deliverer who will accomplish the object.

In this prophecy, in the 59th chapter of Isaiah, God is represented as doing two things. One is to reproach the Jews with the multitude and enormity of their transgressions, and the other to promise to them the redemption of the Messiah, and by him an everlasting covenant. When, therefore, all nations shall be given to the Messiah, and submit to his authority, the prophecies concerning him will be fulfilled in their utmost extent, and his reign over all the earth will be established. After having subdued to himself the whole of the Gentiles, he will not forget the family of Abraham, his friend, in whom, according to his promise, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Jews and Gentiles shall be all united in Christ, and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Then what is predicted by the Prophet Hosea, iii. 4, both concerning the present and future condition of the Jews, will all have been strikingly accomplished: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." "Oh that the salvation of the Lord were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad," Psal. xiv. 7.

The coming of the deliverer to Zion is not to be understood of any personal appearance. Jesus Christ has personally appeared once on earth, and he will appear the second time when he comes without sin unto salvation. The Scriptures, however, speak in



different ways of his coming, though not in person ; as of his coming to set up his kingdom, John, xxi. 22 ; his coming at death and for judgment, Matt. xxiv. 44, 50 ; his coming for chastisement, Rev. ii. 5 ; his coming in grace and love, John, xiv. 23 ; Rev. iii. 20. And at the appointed time he will come to Zion in his power by his Spirit.

*V. 27.—For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

This refers to the verse which follows the one above quoted, Isa. lix. 21. “ As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” These words are addressed to the Redeemer, the Restorer of Israel, when God shall take away their sins. This gracious covenant is fully developed, Jer. xxxi. 31, 34 ; and again, xxxii. 37, 39 ; where the declaration referred to in the foregoing verse, of turning away ungodliness from Jacob, is more fully expressed. The Apostle grounds his conclusion from the prophecy on the fact, that God in these words speaks of a time when he would take away the sins of Israel as a body, and so all Israel shall be saved.

The first characteristic of this covenant to Israel, as declared by Jeremiah, is, that it will be eternal, in opposition to the former covenant, which was temporary and was disannulled. “ 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 : which my covenant they brake, although I

was an husband unto them, saith the Lord." But why shall it be eternal? Why shall it not be broken as the first covenant was? The reason is, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Here is a manifest distinction between this and the former covenant, in which the law was written outwardly in tables of stone; and therefore violated, as not being put in the hearts of the people. Under this covenant, too, it is said that they shall all know the Lord. He will fill their minds with the knowledge of himself, by his Spirit communicated to them, which formerly he had not done. God, it is added, will also forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more. This is peculiar to the evangelical covenant, which provides a real atonement for sin, which could not be removed by the sacrifices under the law. In these respects the covenant here referred to is distinguished from the former covenant, and will prove effectual for the salvation of all Israel. Immediately after the annunciation of this prophecy, it is solemnly and repeatedly averred, that it shall be an unchangeable covenant; and that sooner than Israel shall again be cut off, the most inviolable laws of God's providence in the government of nature shall be revoked. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of Hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the

earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord."

Israel, then, shall be restored to their own land, which God gave to Abraham for an everlasting possession. God hath said that he will make a full end of all the nations whither he had driven them, but he will not make a full end of them, Jer. xlvi. 28. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: And David my servant shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children for ever," Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 25. "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God," Amos, ix. 15.

*V. 28.—As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

The Apostle next obviates an objection that might be brought against the future recall of the Jews. The great body of the nation—all whom the Apostle declared to be judicially blinded—were now the enemies of God, with respect to the gospel. They had rejected

God's message by his Son, and thus proved themselves his enemies while they called him their God. The Gentiles, then, might object, how can the Jewish nation ever be grafted in again, seeing they have thus refused to listen to God's message of reconciliation? This the Apostle answers; first, he grants that they were indeed enemies to God, and were dealt with as enemies for their contempt and disbelief of the gospel. In the next place, he says, that this was for the sake of the Gentiles, or on their account. The rejection of the Jews was, in the inscrutable counsels of Jehovah, connected with and overruled for the salvation of the Gentiles. Some understand the words, "for your sakes," as importing that the Jews were enemies to God because of his sending the gospel to the Gentiles. This, no doubt, gave the Jews great offence; but it was before this event that they rejected and crucified Christ.

*But as touching the election.*—The election here spoken of is not the election to eternal life, as that of the remnant, according to the election of grace, ver. 5. The Apostle is now speaking of the great body of the nation, called the "rest," ver. 7, namely, those that were blinded, and the branches broken off, who, in respect of the gospel, "were enemies" to God. This election is of the nation of Israel to be the people of God, in that sense in which no other nation ever was; according to which they are so often called his people, 2 Sam. vii. 23, 24, &c. The election of Israel "after the flesh" was typical of the election of the true Israel of God—even all believers, contrasted with those who, although of Israel, were not Israel, ch. ix. 6. God had chosen the Jews to be a special people unto himself,

Deut. vii. 6, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God : the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself." Yet they had not a heart to fear the Lord, Deut. v. 29 ; and they belonged only to that covenant which made nothing perfect, according to which the law was given to them externally, and not written in their hearts, which, consequently, they brake, Jer. xxxi. 32.

On the ground of this national election of Israel, the Apostle Peter, when he called them to repentance, addressed them in these words : "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children," Acts, ii. 38. And again—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts, iii. 19, 26.

*Beloved for the fathers' sakes.*—The election of the nation of Israel was made on account of their fathers, "Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them." And again, "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day," Deut. iv. 37 ; x. 15. It is immediately added, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked ;" which proves that they were not Jews inwardly, Romans, ii. 28,

Compared as they were, to a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, their election as a nation was only external, as is verified throughout their whole history.

*V. 29.—For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

The Apostle here announces a general truth applicable to the case before him. The purposes of God are unchangeable, and his gifts and callings irrevocable, so that the nation of Israel cannot be deprived of what he engaged to do for them. What he has given them he will not withdraw, and his choice of them as his special people never can be altered. Calling is in this verse equivalent to election in the preceding. This election or calling as a nation cannot be revoked, and that national election was connected with and subservient to the election to eternal life of multitudes of their descendants, at the period when all Israel shall be saved. For this purpose it was, that at the destruction of Jerusalem the whole Jewish nation was not exterminated: "Except," said our blessed Lord, "those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened," Matt. xxiv. 22. The term elect here cannot be applicable to those Jews who had then embraced the gospel, for the tribulations of those days, even had they not been shortened, would not have caused their destruction, scattered as they were through many countries. It must refer to the elect of God in that future age, when all Israel shall be saved. It was for their sakes, who were to descend from the Jewish people, that the destruction of that people was limited, and for which God was pleased to preserve a part of them, and

continues to preserve them to this day. The same reason, then, for this miraculous preservation, had likewise been given by the Prophet Isaiah, " Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not ; for a blessing is in it : so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains : and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there, Isaiah, lxxv. 8.

V. 30.—*For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief ;*

Here, and in the following verse, the Apostle produces the last confirmation of his assertion that God had not cast away his people, which is further referred to in the 32d verse, and is to this effect ; as the Gentiles have experienced mercy after a long period of alienation from God, in like manner the Jews will at last receive mercy. Whether the original be translated *have not obeyed* or *have not believed*, it comes to the same thing. The unbelief or disobedience of the Gentiles in former times, after they lost the knowledge of *the righteousness of God*, preached to the world by Noah, 2 Peter, ii. 5, respected not his word, but the knowledge of God as revealed in his works. This unbelief or disobedience, during their heathenish state, although not so aggravated, is as properly a ground of their condemnation as the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. It is on this account that the Apostle says, chapter i. 20, that they were *without excuse* ; and, in chapter ii. 14, that as many as have sinned without law (the written law) shall *perish* ; and in the 14th and 15th verses, he assumes as the reason, that they

had the work of the law—what it teaches—which they transgressed, written in their hearts.

*Yet have now obtained mercy.*—The calling of the Gentiles out of the darkness and pollution of Paganism, was the result of the pure mercy of God. How different is the language of many on this subject! They seem to think, that as the heathens have not enjoyed the benefit of the revelation of grace, it would be unjust to condemn them for their transgressions.

*Through their unbelief.*—Nothing can be plainer than that in God's plan it was necessary that the Jews should reject the gospel, in order that it should be given to the Gentiles ; yet, why this was necessary we cannot tell. As far as appears to us, God might, from the very first, have made both Jews and Gentiles, to any extent, equally partakers of his grace, as he has promised he will do at last. Let us be satisfied that God has told us, that a contrary mode of proceeding was necessary, without any vain attempts to develop the grounds of this necessity, which he himself has not revealed. The belief of many in the word of God appears not to go further than what they imagine they can account for. To any thing beyond this they refuse to hearken. This is not faith.

*V. 31.—Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

God abandoned the Jews to unbelief, in order that their restoration might prove as signal an exhibition of mercy as the grace now bestowed on the idolatrous heathens. Had the Jews all received the gospel at first, both they and the world at large would have been inclined to believe that they did not need the same conversion, or the same grace as the Gentiles.



This would have confirmed the view which they hold of themselves as by hereditary descent from Abraham entitled to heaven, and the privileges of Messiah's kingdom. But when they have crucified the Son of God, and continued in the most blasphemous rebellion against him for so many hundred years, their conversion will display mercy as distinguished as the mercy that called the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, and were not seeking God. If the unbelief of the Jews was the occasion of showing mercy to the Gentiles, so the mercy shown to the Gentiles shall be the occasion of showing mercy to the Jews. *Your mercy.*—The same mercy that saved the believing heathens, without any mixture of merit, shall save the Jews; and through the effect of that mercy shown to the Gentiles the Jews shall obtain mercy.

*V. 32.—For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*

As the conclusion of the foregoing discussion respecting the restoration of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, the Apostle here refers to the present state of the Jews, and the past state of the Gentiles. He declares the perversity and unbelief of all who have been saved, without exception, and shows that their salvation is solely the effect of the mercy of God. God has shut them up in unbelief under the guilt and power of sin, like condemned criminals in prison, without any possibility of escaping, except by means of that salvation which, in his good pleasure, is provided for their deliverance. The Gentiles who believed had been formerly in this condition, now it was the case with the great body of the nation of the Jews.

God having thus been pleased alternately to shut up Jews and Gentiles in unbelief, it will thus appear, that both the one and the other are called to the knowledge of himself, out of pure mercy. He had left men to walk in their own ways, having abandoned the nations of the earth to that state of blindness and misery in which they were plunged. During that period he only manifested himself to the family of Abraham, and to a small nation, by which he clearly testified that the communication which he chose still to hold with men proceeded solely from grace and his own good pleasure. For, if it had been in any manner due, why was it not granted to all? Or if not granted to all, at least to the greater number, and not limited to so small a portion? Israel, however, forgot this distinguishing favour of God, and regarded it as a privilege necessarily attached to their descent from Abraham, not remembering that Abraham himself had been chosen from the mass of idolaters, and that they had been slaves in Egypt, addicted to the superstitions of that country. God was now pleased to shut up them also in unbelief, and to turn to those nations which neither knew him, nor were inquiring after him. By doing so his gratuitous mercy was revealed anew, and exhibited to men and angels. Besides this reason for the restriction of his peculiar revelation of grace at the beginning to the Israelites alone, it would seem that God purposed to allow the empire of Satan to attain all the power and extent of which it was capable, that, on the one hand, the greatness of human depravity might appear in all its direful effects, so that in the example of the miserable state of men thus abandoned to themselves, those whom God hath chosen may see, as in a faithful mirror,

the hideousness of sin, as well as the necessity for the grace of God. On the other hand, by this means the work of the redemption of the Messiah is exalted, and its glory fully exhibited. At first, God showed "his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel." And it is added, "He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them," Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

The Jews were thus preserved from idolatry into which the other nations had fallen; and, although the covenant under which they had been placed was abolished, they still continued under its bondage, Gal. iv. 25. God himself hardened their hearts, and abandoned them to their deep-rooted prejudices, since they had rejected the Messiah. In this condition they have continued attached to that covenant, shut up in their adherence to it in unbelief, and thus separated from all other nations. But though this be a punishment, it is overruled in the wisdom of God, so that in the end he may show mercy to the whole nation. Their house has been left unto them desolate; they have rejected him who would have gathered them to himself, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. But even in the moment of this rejection, Jesus announced, that the day will arrive, when they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." God then shut up both Jews and Gentiles together in unbelief, that he might, in saving them, manifest to both the same mercy. Had not the Jews rejected the gospel at first, their ultimate salvation would not have so eminently appeared to be the glorious result of the exercise of God's sovereign mercy.

V. 33.—*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

V. 34.—*For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*

V. 35.—*Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

V. 36.—*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Before passing onward to the practical conclusions which flow from the grand and peculiar doctrines of the gospel, the Apostle pauses to contemplate the ground which he had traversed; and, looking back upon the whole, he exclaims with astonishment and admiration—*“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”* In thus concluding the discussion of those deep and awful subjects, which, in the former part of this Epistle, had successively engaged his attention, Paul most emphatically intimates the impossibility of comprehending the infinitude of the Divine attributes. But far from judging, like many, that we have nothing to do with such mysteries as the sovereignty of God in justifying “the ungodly,” and choosing or rejecting sinners according to his own good pleasure, he had delighted to expatiate on the glorious perfections of Jehovah as displayed in these doctrines. And, as they bear most directly upon the state and security of Christians, he designates them in the beginning of the next chapter, the “mercies of God”—involving all the blessings in store for Jews and Gentiles, and constituting the foundation and support of all

his exhortations to practical duty. He thus teaches, that these doctrines are conducive in the highest degree to the advancement of holiness, and that in no respect do they interfere with the responsibility of man.

Paul, however, by no means denies that these great truths are "hard to be understood" by men who, accounting themselves "wise and prudent," refuse to receive the kingdom of God as "little children." On the contrary, he intimates the absolute impossibility of giving utterance to the boundless and unfathomable incomprehensibility of the Divine attributes, as manifested in God's dealings with the children of men. How often does the profane ingenuity of man pretend to fathom, and sometimes even dares to arraign, the inscrutable ways of Jehovah! But what a contrast does the Apostle's language, in these concluding verses of this chapter, present to the vain and presumptuous speculations of some interpreters of Scripture! Multitudes receive the testimony of God, only so far as they can satisfactorily account for all the reasons and grounds of His conduct, when measured according to the petty scale of their limited capacity. How unbecoming in such a creature as man! Shall he who is but "of yesterday," and "knows nothing," who is "born like a wild ass's colt," pretend to penetrate the counsels of the Omniscient?

If this great Apostle, enjoying as he did such unexampled privileges, favoured as he was with such "abundance of revelations," and writing under the dictation of the Holy Ghost, was thus compelled to confess that the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God were unsearchable, how vain and idle are all the speculations

and conjectures on the subject, of this world's wisdom ! It is not difficult for one man to judge of the plans and designs of another. But the judgments of the Lord must, like their Author, be infinite, and consequently can neither be measured by a finite capacity, nor ascertained further than they are revealed from the fountain of light. The Lord knows the hearts of his creatures ; but the combined intellect of men and angels would be alike insufficient to penetrate the secrets of Deity. The wisest of men need counsel from others. The angels, we are told, "desire to look into" the works of their Creator, in order to make new acquisitions of knowledge. But the majesty of God stands alone in the universe. He needs no counsellor ; and neither in the work of creation, nor in the still more astonishing scheme of redemption, does he take counsel. From the various ways in which men explain the revelation of God's salvation of sinners, we see what advice they would have given had they been permitted to assist in devising a plan for the operation of Divine mercy. God's plan of redemption is so deep and peculiar to himself, that man does not comprehend it, even when it is presented to his view, unless the eyes of his understanding are enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God. Well, then, may the Apostle exclaim, in the contemplation of the majesty of God, and the unsearchable riches of his wisdom and knowledge, *who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ?*

The same question substantially was put to Job, when the Lord answered him out of the whirlwind, and all the proud imaginations which he had conceived, in the agitation of his spirit, were in a moment humbled

in the dust. "I know, that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." To the same effect, also, the Psalmist David, in the 131st Psalm, appeals to the Lord, that he received the kingdom of God as a little child, and was not proudly attempting to scan the secret counsels of Jehovah." "Lord," he exclaims, "my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." The Apostle, in addition to what he had declared of the unsearchableness of the Lord's judgments, adds, as another reason why man should cease proudly to challenge the proceedings of his Maker, *Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?* He thus at once declares the spring of all our knowledge, and consequently our inability to pursue our inquiries beyond the bounds of revelation; while, at the same time, he again reminds us, how utterly impossible it is for a creature to bring his Creator under obligations. How absurd, how impious must it then be, to speak of the merit of our good works.

The conclusion to which the Apostle is conducted by all these considerations, is expressed in the last verse of the chapter. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.*—Here we have the grand truth which lies at the foundation of all religion. All things are *of God*, for he is

the author of all ; His will is the origin of all existence. All things are *through Him*, for all things are created by Him as the grand agent. All things are likewise *to Him*, for all things tend to his glory as their final end.

Philosophers represent the communication of happiness as the chief end of man and of creation. But the Scriptures uniformly declare the glory of the Creator as the paramount object of all that takes place throughout the vast limits of the universe. To this the entrance of sin among angels and men is no exception. In itself sin is an affront to the majesty of God. But there can be no doubt that the results of sin, as well as of all the evil we behold in the world, shall signally enhance the glory of the Divine character. It was necessary, in order to show God to be what he is. Had sin never existed, there would have been no opportunity of manifesting the righteous displeasure of God against it, and his justice in punishing it ; nor of displaying his wonderful power, in turning to his glory that which, in itself, is a dishonour to him. This is the very reason given by the Apostle for God's suffering the vessels of wrath. " What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

That God not only permitted, but willed the entrance of sin among men, is clear from the very creation of the world, and its adaptation to illustrate the work of redemption. From the 19th Psalm, there can be no doubt that the Sun in the firmament was, from his first dawn, a glorious type of the Sun of Righteousness ; and in his manner of enlightening the earth, a figure of



Him who is the light of the world, as well as of the course and progress of the gospel. The resting from the work of creation, and the first Sabbath, were calculated to shadow the rest of the Lord Jesus from the more important work of redemption, and the glorious and everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God. The formation of Adam and Eve, and the relation of marriage, most evidently were regulated with reference to the future relation of Christ and his church, Eph. v. 32. Redemption, then, was in the view of God in the creation of man. From all eternity it was purposed by Him "who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by (means of) the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. iii. 9. Grace was given to his people in Christ Jesus, and eternal life was promised by God that cannot lie, before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9; Titus, i. 2.

It is not possible that God would have purposed the entrance of sin, had he not been able to turn it to his glory. No man would act in the way in which many consider God in this matter to have acted. Could any man foresee that what he was about to do would turn to his dishonour and injury, and would he not avoid it? And shall God will and foresee that sin should enter, and shall he permit its entrance, if it is ultimately to prove dishonourable to his character? To suppose that there were innumerable plans of creation present to the mind of the Creator, that each of them had advantages and disadvantages, and that God chose that which upon

the whole was best, is nothing but disguised atheism. This supposes that the Creator is neither all-wise nor all powerful.

The universal apostasy of the nations of the earth from the worship of God, and the present apostasy of the Jews, are things apparently dishonourable to God, and which man with God's power would not have permitted. But both are according to the counsel of God, and will redound to his glory. We cannot understand how this can be so. It is to us a depth unfathomable; but it is a truth which no Christian should find difficult to believe, because it is plainly testified in the word of God. The Apostle wonders at it, but does not pretend to explain it. His language in closing this subject is a recognition that the ways of Jehovah are beyond the grasp of the human intellect. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Though Satan, then, is the god of this world, yet God is glorified in all the evil that Satan has introduced. In every part of Scripture Jehovah is seen to be glorified; in his judgments as well as in his grace, in his wrath as well as in his mercy, in those who are lost as well as in those who are saved. However disagreeable this may be to the mind of the natural man, it is truly reasonable. Can there be a higher end than the glory of the Divine character? And can man, who is a fallen and lost creature, share with his offended sovereign in the glory of his recovery? Such a thought is as incongruous as it is unscriptural. If there be hope for the guilty, if there be recovery to any from the ruin of the

fall, it is the voice of reason, properly exercised, as well as of the divine word, that it must come from God himself.

The practical influence of the truth contained in these concluding verses is illustrated by the following extract from the author's "letter addressed in 1824 to Mr Cheneviere, the well known Socinian, and yet Pastor and Professor of Divinity at Geneva." "There was nothing brought under the consideration of the students of divinity who attended me at Geneva, which appeared to contribute so effectually to overthrow their false system of religion, founded on philosophy and vain deceit, as the sublime view of the majesty of God presented in the four concluding verses of this part of the Epistle. Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. Here God is described as his own last end in every thing that he does. Judging of God as such an one as themselves, they were at first startled at the idea that he must love himself supremely, infinitely more than the whole universe, and consequently must prefer his own glory to every thing besides. But when they were reminded that God in reality is infinitely more amiable and more valuable than the whole creation, and that consequently, if he views things as they really are, he must regard himself as infinitely worthy of being more valued and loved, they saw that this truth was incontrovertible. Their attention was at the same time directed to numerous passages of Scripture which assert that the manifestation of the glory of God is the great end of creation, that he has himself chiefly in view in all his works and dispensations, and that it is a purpose in which he requires that all his intelligent creatures should acquiesce, and seek and promote it as their

first and paramount duty. Passages to this effect, both in the Old and New Testament, far exceed in number what any one who has not examined the subject is at all aware of.”\*

\* Some mistatements having been published in reference to my visit to Geneva in 1816, I have judged it proper to subjoin in the Appendix, a Letter on the subject, addressed to the Rev. Mr Bickersteth.

## CHAPTER XII.

HERE we enter on the second division of this Epistle, where Paul, according to his accustomed method, enforces the duties of believers, by arguments dependant on his previous exhibition of the grand and influential doctrines of the gospel. These doctrines, as well as all the commandments of God, may be summed up in one word, namely, in LOVE. By the view which they present of the goodness, the forbearance, and the long-suffering of God, believers are daily led to repentance, while the contemplation of the divine compassion and philanthropy is calculated to beget reciprocal confidence and childlike affection. "We have known and believed," says the Apostle John, "the love that God hath to us." "We love him because he first loved us." This love of God does not exclude reverential fear and filial devotion; of which, on the contrary, it is the principle and the foundation—while both together unite in the spirit of adoption to inspire the cry, "Abba, Father."

*V. 1.—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

*Brethren.*—The Apostle addresses the believers at Rome as his brethren, as standing on the same level with himself regarding acceptance with God. *I beseech you.*—We may here remark the difference between the

endearing manner of address often used by inspired Apostles, and the haughty overbearing tone of Popish antichristian tyranny. Those whose authority was avouched by mighty signs and wonders, whose very word was command, strive frequently to express commands as entreaties. *Therefore.*—This may have reference to what had been said in the foregoing chapter, respecting the Gentiles, and the Jewish nation in general, to whom, as being part of the elect remnants some of those addressed belonged ; or rather, as he now enters on the second division of the Epistle, Paul here refers to those grand doctrines of the gospel, which, in the preceding part of it, he had been unfolding, denominating the whole of them, as forming together the great plan of salvation, the *mercies* of God.

*By the mercies of God.*—The word mercies or compassions, is here used in the plural number, because it refers to the different instances before enumerated of Divine compassion. In the foregoing chapter, the Apostle had been declaring the mercies of God in the calling and restoration both of the Gentiles and the Jews, verse 31. But the whole of his preceding discourse contained a most striking and encouraging display of the mercies of God to all believers, in their election and predestination to eternal life, their calling, their deliverance from condemnation, their justification, their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and communion with God, with the enjoyment of all the unspeakable blessings of the new covenant. Christians are here urged to devote themselves to the service of God by the consideration of these mercies, because they present the strongest motives to obedience. How different is the mind of the Apostle from the mind of the world

on this subject ! The wisdom of this world rejects the grace of the gospel, because it is thought to lead to licentiousness. The interests of morality are supposed to be better secured when salvation is suspended on men's good works, than when it is represented as flowing from the Divine compassion. But Paul presents the mercies of God to the mind of believers, as the most powerful incitement to devote themselves to his service. In the remainder of the Epistle, we find him as strenuous in pressing the duty of holiness and personal obedience, as in the previous part of it, in insisting on those truths on which obedience is founded. This ought to convince of their error, those who, misunderstanding the doctrine which the Apostle teaches, imagine that it is inconsistent with attention to the peculiar duties of Christianity. It will, however, be seen, that the persons who seem to fear that his doctrine tends to licentiousness, are equally opposed to the strictness of his precepts ; the observance of which they speak of as impracticable.

*That ye present your bodies.*—There is no necessity, with Mr Stuart, and the majority of commentators, to understand the term “bodies” as denoting both soul and body. It is of the body that the Apostle here speaks, and it is not proper to extract out of his language more than it contains. The expression evidently makes a distinction between themselves and their bodies. Those addressed are entreated to present their bodies, and the body is here considered as the sacrifice. This, indeed, cannot be done without the soul, yet this is not the thing expressed. This shows the importance of serving God with the body, as well as with the soul. Every member of the body is to be employed in the

service of God. Many, when they use their members sinfully, attempt to excuse themselves, and found a plea for pardon, by alleging that they have a good heart. But we see from this passage, that God requires the service of the body as well as that of the mind. Besides, an exclusive reference to the body comports better with the figure of offering a sacrifice. The Apostle seems to summon attention peculiarly to our actions, or outward deportment, which are of so great importance to the christian life. But, in addition to this, if we extend the expression further, and include in it the whole man, we lose the beauty of the connexion in the second verse, which relates particularly, and likewise exclusively, to the state and frame of the mind.

*Sacrifice.*—This term is used figuratively. It intimates that there are now no proper sacrifices. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross has put an end to sacrifices. The sacrifice of the mass, then, is an invention of man, and an abomination to God. It is also observable, that even figuratively, it is not the Lord's Supper, but the service of the body that is here called a sacrifice. The phraseology that afterward prevailed, by which the table whereon the bread and wine were placed was called the altar, has no countenance in the word of God, even as a figure of speech. *Living sacrifice.*—This is called a living sacrifice, in distinction from the sacrifices of the law, in which the animal offered was put to death. The phraseology is quite similar to the phrases, *living bread*, and, *living way*. Dr Macknight, then, entirely errs, when he explains the phrase as signifying "an excellent sacrifice," from the circumstance that animals were brought alive to the altar. Formerly, those believers thus called on to



offer their bodies a living sacrifice, were dead in trespasses and sins, and had yielded their members as servants to iniquity; but now they were quickened, and risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life; and as the sacrifices were wholly devoted to God, so believers ought to be wholly consecrated to his service, preserving their bodies pure as temples of the Holy Ghost, and remembering that they themselves are living stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. *Holy*.—It was necessary that the sacrifices of the law should be holy, or free from every thing that would render them ceremonially unclean. In like manner, the bodies of the saints must be holy as well as their souls. They must not be employed in the service of sin, else they cannot be fit to be presented to the Lord. *Acceptable unto God*.—The Jewish sacrifices, even if offered according to the law, now ceased to be acceptable to God, since they were abolished by the coming of their antitype, the Lamb of God. But the presentation of the bodies of believers, is a service that is always well-pleasing to God. This, and other such things as are obviously appointed, are the only sacrifices acceptable to God. The sacrifice of the mass, not being appointed by God, and actually subversive of the sacrifice of the cross, instead of being agreeable to God, must be odious in his sight.

*Your reasonable service*.—This evidently refers to the distinction between the service of the Jews by sacrifices and ceremonial worship, and the service of Christians. Sacrificial worship, and in general the whole ceremonial ritual of the Jews, were not worship according to reason. It is, indeed, reasonable to wor-

ship God in whatever way he prescribes ; but had not man fallen, he would not have been required to worship by such ceremonies as the Jewish law enjoined. Sacrificial worship is not in itself rational, and was appointed by God, not for its own excellence, but from its adaptation to prefigure the good things to come. Many commentators appear to have mistaken the true meaning of this phrase, from an ill-grounded fear that it is disrespectful to the divine appointments to suppose that they are not in themselves rational. This, however, is an important and obvious truth. Sacrificial service was appointed only as a shadow, and when abolished is classed by the Apostle among "the weak and beggarly elements." But to worship God with our bodies is as rational as to worship him with our souls. Such worship, then, is called reasonable worship or service, as distinguished from the Jewish ritual. Mr Locke imagines that it is opposed to the irrational worship of the Heathen. But to this the contrast is not exclusively confined ; for it is evident that the sacrifices of the Pagans were of the same kind as those of the Jews. If the nature of the one kind of sacrifices was irrational, so also must be the other. The difference between the Heathen sacrifices and those of the Jews did not consist in the things offered, but in the object of the offerings. The one was appointed of God, and was accepted of God : the other was not only not appointed by God, but was an act of homage to devils. Agreeably to this view, it may be asserted with the utmost confidence, that sacrifices are of divine appointment, and not an invention of man. They are not in themselves rational, and no abuse of reason would have led to such a practice.

V. 2.—*And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*

*And be not conformed to this world.*—“World” here denotes the people or inhabitants of the world. But there is no allusion, as Dr Macknight supposes, to the heathen world. The same exhortation is as applicable to men in every age, even since so large a portion of the world has assumed the name of Christian, as it was to the Pagan Roman empire. The wicked are called *the world*, not, as Dr Macknight imagines, as the whole is put for a part; but on the principle that the righteous are comparatively so few. As the nation of Israel was so small in number as not to be counted among the nations, so are the people of God among the inhabitants of the earth. They are not counted in the world. “We know,” says the Apostle John, “that we are of God, and *the whole world* lieth in wickedness.” By conformity to the world is meant assimilation to the people of the world; or the sentiments, conduct, and customs by which they are distinguished. It is the character of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they walk “according to the course of this world,” acting conformably to those maxims which regard only the present life; and they “who mind earthly things” are described as the enemies of the cross of Christ; but the conversation of believers, as being pilgrims and strangers, is in heaven. This prohibition, however, respects those things only that are sinful; and does not require singularity in the Christian in any thing that is not contrary to the law of Christ. Pride may be indulged in the singularities of austerity, as well as in the imitation of fashionable folly. A sound

christian mind will have no difficulty in making the necessary discrimination on this subject.

*Transformed.*—This word signifies the change of the appearance of one thing into that of another. It is used by the fabulous writers to signify the change or metempsychosis of animals into trees, or of men into the appearance of other animals. This term denotes the entire change that passes on a man when he becomes a Christian. He is as different from what he was before, as one species of animal is from another. Let not men be so far the dupes of self-deception as to reckon themselves Christians, while they are unchanged in heart and life. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or creation); old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” If there be not a radical difference between their present state and that in which they were by nature, they have no title to the character of Christians. This shows that, in general, it is not difficult to discriminate Christians from the world. If the change be as great as the word of God here teaches, what difficulty can there be, in most cases, in judging of the character of those who profess Christianity? It is not the heart we are called to judge. If the person be metamorphosed, as the word originally implies, from a state of nature to a conformity with Christ, it will certainly appear, and the state of the heart will be evident from the life. As there are degrees in this transformation, although all Christians are transformed when they are born again, yet they ought to be urged, as here, to a further degree of this transformation.

*Renewing of your mind.*—It is not the conduct merely, but the heart itself of the Christian that is

changed ; and it is from the renewal of the mind that the conduct is also renewed. The transformation or change that passes on the man who becomes a believer of the gospel, is not one produced by enthusiastical imaginations, monkish austerity, or a spirit of legalism, endeavouring to attain salvation by good works : It is produced by the renewing of the mind, and by that only. Many persons become for a time changed in conduct from various motives who are not changed in heart by the Spirit of God, and the truth believed respecting the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But such changes are generally temporary, and, though they should continue for life, they are of no value in the sight of God. That change of life which the Lord will approve is a change produced by the renovation of the mind, in the understanding, the affections, and the will.

*That ye may prove.*—The word in the original signifies both to *prove* and to *approve*, but we cannot so properly say approve what is the will of God. The passage seems to assert that to find out, and discriminate, the will of God with respect to those things that he requires and forbids, it is necessary to be renewed in the mind. Calvin well remarks, “If the renewal of our mind is necessary for the purpose of proving what the will of the Most High is, we may hence see how much this mind is opposed to God.” Indeed, nothing can be more true than that the renewal of the mind is necessary for a successful inquiry into every part of the will of God. The natural man is in every thing opposed to the mind of God.

*Good.*—The will of God is here distinguished as good ; because, however much the mind may be opposed to it, and how much soever we may think that

it curtails our pleasures, and mars our enjoyments, obedience to God conduces to our happiness. To follow his law is even in this world calculated to promote happiness. *Acceptable.*—That which the Lord enjoins is acceptable to him, and surely this is the strongest motive to practise it. Nothing else is acceptable to him, however specious it may appear to human wisdom. All injunctions that proceed merely from men in Divine things are unacceptable to God. He approves of nothing but obedience to his own commands. All the injunctions, then, that men submit to, in obedience to the mandates of the Church of Rome, are unacceptable to God. They are abomination in his sight. *Perfect will of God.*—The will of God as exhibited in his word is perfect. Nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it, yet that monstrous system of antichristianity which has so long, in the name of Christ, lorded it over the world, has added innumerable commands to those of Christ, and even taken away many of his laws.

*V. 3.—For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

*For*, appears to indicate the reason why those who were addressed should in all things ascertain the will of God. By introducing a particular instance of the importance of this duty, Paul enjoins the necessity of giving heed to his exhortation. It is the will of God that his people should make a just estimate of their own gifts, and not from ignorance overvalue themselves and despise others. *I say by the grace given unto me.*—Although Paul sometimes addresses believers, as in the beginning of this chapter, in the humblest and most affec-

tionate style ; yet, at other times, as in these words, he employs that tone of authority which was the prerogative of an Apostle. He calls on them to attend to his words, as remembering that he did not speak of himself ; but, as he elsewhere expresses it, “ as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.” *The grace given unto me.*—This grace or favour bestowed upon Paul, is the office of an Apostle. But it is not correct to say that grace in this place signifies apostleship. The apostleship was a grace or favour, but favour or grace is not apostleship. Grace or favour includes, but by no means signifies, that office, although it is one of the innumerable gifts conferred by grace. To explain grace as signifying office, as is often done, is an instance of that unsound criticism that makes a word specifically designate whatever its general meaning includes, which, though in this instance it may be harmless, is productive of much false interpretation. *To every man that is among you.*—The Epistle was addressed to all in the Church at Rome, and consequently they were all included in the exhortation that follows. When, therefore, the Apostle addresses them here individually, it shows that the dissuasive refers to a thing to which all of them were naturally much inclined. With this, fact corresponds. All men are prone to overvalue themselves, and therefore to each of them, Paul thus pointedly brings home the exhortation.

*Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.*—In the two foregoing verses the Apostle had been enjoining the duty of entire devotedness to God, both in body and soul. Nothing could tend more powerfully to render his exhortation ineffectual, or stand more in the way of the performance of those duties on

which, in the following part of the Epistle, he was about to expatiate, than high-mindedness in those whom he addressed. According, therefore, to the example of our Lord, both in his sermon on the Mount and when inviting sinners to come to him, Paul begins here by inculcating humility. He warns each of them not to form a higher opinion of himself than his faith in God warranted. To this all are naturally prone ; but there is an opposite error, assuming the semblance of obedience to this exhortation, which ought equally to be avoided. This is an affectation of humility by speaking of one's self contemptuously. This species of hypocrisy ought to be avoided. When an author speaks of his poor abilities, and tells us he is the most unfit man for the work he has undertaken, he is generally insincere ; but, if not insincere, he must be unwise ; for God never requires us to exercise a talent which he has not bestowed on us. *Think soberly.*—Christians are here directed to make a sound and moderate estimate of their own gifts, which will preserve them from both extremes, on the one hand from overrating, and on the other from unduly depreciating, their attainments or talents.

*According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*—God hath given us here, by the Apostle ; a standard by which we may measure ourselves. Of the term “ faith,” in this place, various explanations are given ; but that it simply means faith in its usual acceptance throughout the Scriptures, as this is the most obvious, so it appears to be its true import. By faith we are united to the Saviour, and by faith is received out of his fulness all that is imparted to us by God. The measure, then, of faith, with which each believer is



blest, whether strong faith or weak, great faith or little, indicates with certainty both his real character before God, and his relative standing among other believers. According, therefore, to his faith, as evidenced by his works, every Christian ought to estimate himself. The man who has the greatest faith is the highest in the school of Christ. We here also learn, that not only faith, but every degree of it, is the gift of God ; for men believe according as God hath dealt to each of them the measure of faith ; and “ unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” By the consideration of the manner in which the Apostle thus enforces his admonition, the believer will both be moderated in his own esteem, and also in his desire for the esteem of others. He will, consequently, be much less exposed to encounter what may inflame his pride, or tend to his discouragement.

*V. 4.—For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ;*

The Apostle here illustrates the union and connexion of believers, by the figure of the wonderful structure of the human body. Every member has its proper place in the body, and its proper function to perform, and every member is valuable according as it is useful in the body. But no member is useless. For the smallest and least honourable is useful. But this does not imply, as Mr Stuart understands it, that there is no superiority of value among the members. This is contrary to obvious fact, and contrary to the nature of the figure here employed. One member of the human body is more useful, and, as Paul says to the Corinthians, more honourable than another ; but the least honourable is useful, and to be treated with respect. “ To show,” says

Mr Stuart, "that no one has any reason to set up himself as superior to others, the Apostle now introduces 'the admirable comparison of the *body of Christ, i. e.* 'the Church, with the human body.'" Surely it is not to teach us that all the members of the body of Christ are equally valuable, that the Apostle introduces the comparison. Such a comparison would be very ill chosen, for among the members of the body, there is a great variety in their relative scale of importance. Who would not rather lose a joint of his finger than his eye. But, while one member is more important than another in the human body, as well as in the body of Christ, every member is important; every member has its peculiar function, which contributes to the good of the whole, and which the most honourable members are not adapted to perform. The eye is a more important member than the foot, but the eye could not perform for the good of the body that function which the foot performs. The eye, therefore, as well as every other member of the body, ought to honour the foot, according to the value of the services it is adapted to perform. *Office.*—This does not mean office in a restricted sense, because every member of the body has such an office. It means office in its general sense of function.

*V. 5.*—*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

*So we, being many, are one body.*—This is not to be restricted to one church, as to the Church at Rome, to which it was written, but refers to the Church of Christ, which embraces his people of all ages, and of all countries. The feeblest disciple, even he who of the whole number is least instructed in his Master's will, has still his place in the body, and his use in that

place. Whatever church, then, refuses to receive any Christian for want of knowledge of any part of the will of Christ, acts against the spirit of this passage. It is wrong either to refuse admission to Christ's known people, or to admit his known enemies. *In Christ*.—Not as Dr Macknight understands it, “under Christ.” It is not by our being under Christ, that our union is effected with one another ; but by being *in* Christ.

*Members one of another*.—By being united in Christ, believers become members of one another, that is, they are united to each other, as all the members of the body are united. The most remote members are united by their union with the body. The hand and the feet have fellowship through the intervening members. Hence, Christians ought to love one another as parts of themselves. As the Apostle says, no man ever hated his own body ; and he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For a like reason, a Christian, when loving his fellow Christians, is loving himself. It is thus that Christians, in the Church of Christ, taken individually, are many, and are together one body in Christ, having the Spirit of Christ, and all of them are members one of another. This consideration ought to operate powerfully to unite them. There is a sectarian partiality, distinct from this, too often found among the professors of Christianity. But as the union of Christians, here represented by that of the members of the human body, respects none but real Christians, and as it respects all such, whether they be externally united in Christian fellowship with us or not, we ought to cultivate love to them as to the disciples of Christ, of whatever name, and cherish this love to them, on the ground of their union with Christ. We ought to unite with the Apostle

in praying, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

V. 6.—*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.*—Upon this Dr Macknight observes:—'As the *grace of apostleship* signifies the 'office of an apostle graciously conferred, so the *grace* 'here said to be given to the Romans, may mean the 'particular *station and office in the Church*, assigned to 'individuals by Christ.' But the word *grace* has neither the one signification nor the other. It is that favour by which Christ confers his gifts on the members of his body. Office in the Church belongs to few of them, but they all possess gifts or talents by which they may be useful to the body. Many of the gifts possessed when the Apostle wrote, were gifts miraculously bestowed; but even at that time they were not all such. And the word *gifts* includes those gifts that are given in Providence, or conferred by constitution, talent, birth, education, and other circumstances, as well as the extraordinary gifts immediately conferred by the Holy Spirit. Riches and natural eloquence are gifts, as well as the miraculous ability to speak in languages not previously learned. Christians, then, should consider every thing they possess as a gift bestowed by God, which they should cultivate and use to his glory, and for which they are accountable. If a Christian mispend his money, his time, his abilities, his influence, or any talent which God has conferred on him, he is not mispending his own, but is mispending what is entrusted to him by God. He is unfaithful in his trust.

*Whether prophecy.*—Prophecy strictly signifies the foretelling of future events. But it seems, also, to be extended to denote any message from God, whether relating to things present or to come, and in the New Testament, to refer to the exposition of Scripture. Calvin, after remarking that “Some mean by *prophecy* the power of prediction which flourished in the Church at its commencement ;” afterwards observes, “I prefer the opinion of those commentators, who take the word in a more extended sense, and apply it to the peculiar gift of explaining revelation, according as any one executes with skill and dexterity the office of an interpreter in declaring the will of God. Prophecy, therefore, at this period, is nothing else in the Christian Church than the proper understanding of Scripture, and a peculiar faculty of explaining the same, since all the ancient prophecies, and all the oracles of God, were contained in Christ and his gospel. For Paul understood it in this sense, 1 Cor. xiv. 5, when he said, “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that you prophesy.” “We know in part, and we prophesy in part,” 1 Cor. xiii. 9. For it does not appear that Paul was only desirous in this passage to recount those admirable graces, by which Christ ennobled his gospel at the beginning ; but rather gives a statement of ordinary gifts, which certainly remain in the Church.”

*Proportion of faith.*—They were to speak according to the extent of their information or measure of faith. This passage does not appear to relate to that principle of interpretation which is called *the analogy of faith*. This is a canon of Scripture interpretation which has, no doubt, been abused ; but when rightly applied, as the word of God must be consistent with itself, it seems

both reasonable and useful. Since the time of Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, who keenly opposed this principle, it has been generally renounced by expositors of Scripture; yet, when viewed in a proper light, it is by no means liable to the exceptions made to it. The objections which Dr Carson brings against it are fully obviated in Dr Carson's late work, entitled, "Examination of the Principles of Biblical Interpretation of Ernesti, Ammon, Stuart, and other Philologists," pp. 103-108.\*

V. 7.—*Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

*Or ministry.*—The word in the original is that which appropriately designates the office of the deacon. If it refers to office, it must refer to this officer. For though ministry equally applies to Apostles, and all who serve in the gospel, yet appropriately it refers to one office, and when it is applied to others, it is with circumstances that make the reference obvious. Indeed, what is here said applies to all offices as well as to that of the deacon, but this should not influence us so as to prevent our ascertaining its immediate reference. There is no necessity here to restrict the word to an official meaning, for it will apply to every one who devotes himself to the interests of the body of Christ. As Howard, the philanthropist, was to humanity, so may many Christians be to the Church of Christ; at least to that part of it with which they are more immediately connected. *He that teacheth on*

\* That work should be carefully perused by those who have been accustomed to admire Mr Moses Stuart as a sound Biblical critic, or who are in danger of being misled by the works of German Neologians.

*teaching.*—Fitness to teach is a gift of the Head of the Church, which all who teach ought to possess, and without which no appointment of any one can make him a minister of Christ. They who possess the gift of teaching ought to employ it diligently.

*V. 8.*—*Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity ; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

*He that exhorteth.*—This means to excite to duty and dissuade from sin, and requires a peculiar talent. Mr Stuart supposes that the teacher and exhorter were different officers ; but it is quite obvious that the Apostle is not distinguishing offices, but gifts. Every gift does not require a different office. Many of the gifts required no office at all. No opinion can be more groundless, than that the gifts imply each a separate office in the Church.

*He that giveth.*—This is usually supposed to refer to the deacon : but as the Apostle is not speaking of the distinction or number of offices, and as the word used is not so restricted, there is no just ground thus to limit the passage. It includes the deacon, but is not confined to him. Mr Stuart, however, is not justified in saying, that the word “properly means to *impart* ‘among others what belongs to one’s self, to give of one’s own to others.’” It is not essential to the word, whether the gift proceeds from the giver, as the owner or merely as the steward. The gifts conferred by the Apostles were not *their own* ; yet Paul applies the word (Rom. i. 11) to the communication of a spiritual gift through his hands to the Church. But to prove that the word here extends to those who gave of their own substance, it is not required that the word cannot apply to official or vicarious alms. It is enough that

the word is one of a general meaning, and applies to the giving of one's own. Why should it be confined to official giving, when there is nothing restrictive in the word, or in the circumstances? Why should it be confined to the deacon, when the Apostle is not at all treating of office, but of gifts possessed by unofficial as well as official persons. *With simplicity*.—This means singleness of view. It guards against ostentation or love of praise, on account of which the Pharisees gave their alms. The word is sometimes used to signify liberality, and is so understood here by Mr Stuart. This meaning is not unsuitable, but still the other is more appropriate. In all cases, Christians need the caution to give with simplicity, but it would not be possible for some to give with what is generally understood by liberality.

*He that ruleth*.—Mr Stuart labours hard, but unsuccessfully, to make it appear, that this word does not here apply to presiding or ruling in the Church, but to assisting the poor by hospitality, like Phebe. The word is usually applied to presiding in the Church, and when it is used without a regimen, the most obvious meaning must be supplied to fill up the ellipsis. That this will confine it to ruling in the Church admits of no question. Presiding or ruling in the Church is here considered, not with a view to its distinction from other offices, but with respect to the gift that fits for it. "Some are of opinion," says Dr Macknight, "that the '*president* was one appointed to superintend those who were employed in distributing the Church's alms." There can be no doubt, that the word would apply to a president of any kind. But to believe that it signifies here such presidents, when it is appropriated to other presidents in the church, and when there is no evidence



that there were any presidents of the kind supposed, is building without a foundation. *With diligence.*—The ruler is to attend to his office with earnestness and diligence. It is the duty of all to spend and to be spent in the service of their Lord.

*Showeth mercy.*—This signifies the giving of money, or any thing, for the support of poor brethren ; or applies to every instance in which mercy was to be shown to the afflicted, whether the affliction arose from poverty, sickness, or any other calamity. *With cheerfulness.*—Mercy must be shown, not only so as to indicate that it is voluntary, but also with cheerfulness which shows that it is a pleasure. This spares the feelings and soothes the sorrows of the afflicted.

V. 9.—*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.*

*Let love be without dissimulation.*—There seems to be here an indirect allusion to those hollow pretensions of love so generally manifested in society. Men pretend to have the greatest love to each other, when they not only have no love at all, but when they may really be under the influence of a contrary disposition. Calvin well observes, on this passage, “ It is difficult to give a view of the ingenuity with which a large portion of mankind assume the appearance of that love which they really do not possess. For they not only deceive others, but impose upon themselves, while they endeavour to believe that they entertain a very considerable share of love, even for those whom they not only treat with neglect, but, in reality, renounce and despise. Paul, therefore, declares that only to be genuine love, which is free from all dissimulation and guile ; and every person can best judge for himself, whether he en-

tertains any feeling in the innermost recesses of his heart, opposed to this noble and lasting affection." Christians ought to be careful that, while they use to each other the endearing language of brethren, they feel the sentiments and perform the actions, which this language imports. "Above all things," says the Apostle Peter, "have fervent charity (love) among yourselves : for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Believers ought to throw the mantle of love over the numerous faults into which their brethren may fall, in their conduct towards them ; and thus to hide them from their eyes, forgiving their faults, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them, Eph. iv. 32.

*Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good.*  
—With respect to this, Calvin observes, "The words following in the context, *good* and *evil*, have not a general meaning ; but by *evil* is intended that malicious iniquity which injures any person ; and by *good*, that kindness by which are afforded to others aid and assistance." But it rather appears, that the words in this place are to be viewed as to what is *bad* and *good* in general. We ought not only to avoid doing what is evil, but to accustom ourselves to abhor it, as the vilest and most offensive of things are abhorred. To that which is good we ought to cling with all our hearts. Christians are not to be satisfied with abstaining from what is evil, and practising what is good. The affections of their minds should be in unison with their duty ; they should hate as well as avoid what is sinful, and love as well as practise what is good. We thus learn that we are accountable to God for the state of our minds, as well as for our external conduct. We should not only not practise, but not love evil.

V. 10.—*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another ;*

*Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love.*—This appears to indicate, that in brotherly love believers ought to have that affection for one another, which nature displays among those who are brothers in the flesh. Brotherhood in Christians ought not to be a mere name, but a reality evinced by the affections of a relationship of kindred. All Christians are brethren ; they are born of one Father, who hath taught them to say, “ Our Father who art in heaven.” He who loves the Father, loves the brethren. “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” *In honour preferring one another.*—Among those who derive the same meaning from these words, there is a great variety in their method of expressing it. Calvin, with many others, understood it as our translators, that each in honour prefer his brother to himself, agreeably to other texts of Scripture. But the word signifies, in general, to lead before, and has a great variety of applications. The meaning here seems to be, that in showing mutual respect, they ought each to strive to take the lead. This is a thing in which they may lawfully strive with one another. While the men of the world are striving to outstrip each other in every thing that respects ambition, Christians are to refrain from following their example ; but they are permitted and enjoined to strive with one another in the indication of mutual respect. Dr Macknight understands the passage to mean—“ *In every honourable action go before, and lead on one another.*” But it seems forced to understand “ honour,” as signifying

every honourable action. The word appears to have a limited reference to the honour to be shown to one another, by the brethren. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than himself, Phil. ii. 3.

V. 11.—*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*

*Not slothful in business.*—It does not appear that the word, in the original, can bear to be translated *business*. It denotes eagerness, earnestness, zeal, urgency, &c. The meaning appears to be, that in doing every thing with respect to things both temporal and spiritual, believers are not to be slothful or indulge in indolence; but in every duty to use exertion and manifest earnestness. *Fervent in spirit.*—A fervent spirit is the reverse of sloth, and always prompts to diligence and vigour of action. Christians ought to possess such a spirit in doing all their business, especially in the things of the Lord. Earnestness in doing good, says Calvin, requires a zeal and ardour, lighted up in our breasts by the Spirit of God, Acts, xviii. 25. *Serving the Lord.*—Christians are here exhorted to consider themselves as the servants or slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are so, in the fullest sense of the word, as concerns Christ's right to them, and authority over them, and the duty of their being solely devoted to him. They have none of the disagreeable feelings of slavery, because Christ's service is their delight, their honour, and their interest. Though the precept applies generally, yet it appears to have a particular reference, from the connexion, to the duty of fervency of spirit which precedes it.

Christians should consider themselves as wholly and at all times the servants of the Lord, and, remembering

that his eye is ever upon them, do all things as in his presence. It is not merely in acts of worship, or on particular occasions, that they are to be considered as serving Him, but in all their lives and all their actions. They are in their worldly employments and engagements to do all with a view to the authority of their Master. Even in eating and drinking, they are exhorted by the Apostle to act for the glory of God. If Christians would keep this at all times before their minds, how much would their happiness be increased. For we may be assured that an increase in our obedience to our heavenly Master will always be accompanied with an increase of true happiness.

V. 12.—*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*

Again and again it is enjoined on believers to *rejoice* in the Lord—in the contemplation of his person, his offices, his power, his love, and in their union with Him. Here, in the midst of exhortations to attend to various duties, they are commanded to *rejoice in hope*. Hope is founded on faith, and faith on the Divine testimony. Hope, then, respects what God has declared in His Word. We are here exhorted to exercise hope with respect to future glory, and to rejoice in the contemplation of the objects of hope. What can be better calculated to promote joy than the hope of obtaining blessings so glorious in a future world? Were this hope kept in lively exercise, it would raise believers above the fear of man, and a concern for the honours of this world. It would also enable them to despise the shame of the cross.

The objects, then, of the believer's hope, are the spiritual and celestial blessings which are yet future, to

which his eyes should constantly be directed, and which are calculated to fill him with the greatest joy. It is not the prospect of terrestrial possessions in which he is to rejoice ; but of a house eternal in the heavens. "In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is that glorious communion with Jesus Christ of which the Apostle speaks, when he says, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better." "It is that state in which believers shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is." "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." It is the hope of righteousness for which, through the Spirit, believers wait, Gal. v. 5. This hope is founded on the unchangeable promise of God—on his promise accompanied by his oath—on the blood of Christ with which he has sealed his promise—on him who was not only dead, but is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for his people. This hope, then, is both sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner, even Jesus, is for us entered.

This description of hope, as an anchor both sure and stedfast, confutes the erroneous doctrine of Roman Catholics, who maintain, as has been formerly observed, that the hope of the gospel is a doubtful conjecture, instead of a firm expectation of future blessedness. They insist that the believer ought to be always in doubt as to his salvation ; that he cannot know whether God loves or hates him ; and that all the assurance he can have of his salvation, can never go beyond conjecture. Is this, then, the anchor both sure and stedfast which enables the believer to remain firm amidst the

storms and agitations of this unsettled world? Can he rejoice in a hope so uncertain and unstable? That Roman Catholics should thus reduce to doubt and uncertainty that hope which the believer is commanded to maintain perfectly (1 Peter, i. 13), is not to be wondered at, since it is partly on their own merits, and on the satisfaction and sufferings of their saints, that their hope is founded, and not exclusively on the blood of Christ. The believer is here commanded to rejoice in hope, and if he consider that he is bound to apply to himself the other injunctions contained in this portion of the word of God, and to act upon them, he ought equally to regard it as his duty to obey this injunction, and to remember, that if he is not obeying it, it is an indication that all is not right with him. The same conclusion may also be drawn, if he is not walking according to that other express command in chapter 6th, to reckon himself to be *dead indeed unto sin*, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The hope of the glory of God, in which the Apostle here affirms that Christians ought to rejoice, is provided as an important part of the believer's armour,—an helmet to cover his head, to defend him against the attacks of his spiritual enemies, 1 Thess. v. 8. It supports him when ready to be cast down. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." It soothes the bitterness of affliction when the believer is resting on the promises of God. In prosperity it elevates his affections, and, fixing his expectation on the glory that shall be revealed, disengages him from the love of this world. "My soul

thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?” It comforts him in the prospect of death ; and he says, with his Saviour, “ My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope.” His spirit at death ascends to mingle with the spirits of just men made perfect, while his body enters the grave as a place of rest, waiting for its glorious resurrection, and the day when he shall sing that song of triumph, “ O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ?” It is the prayer of the Apostle, chap. xv. 13, that the God of hope would fill his people with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

*Patient in tribulation.*—Since Christians have such a good hope through grace, they ought to be patient under their afflictions. Nothing is better calculated to enable us to bear calamities than the hope of a happy result. And what can equal the prospects of the Christian when he has passed through the furnace and been tried as gold ? His afflictions are not only necessary for his trial, and honourable to God, but they are for his own eternal advantage,—the light afflictions of the righteous, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The trial of their faith is much more precious than that of gold though it be tried with fire, and shall be found unto praise and honour and glory in the day of Christ. Afflictions are sent by God to his people to increase their patience. On account of remaining sin they are their portion while in the body. “ In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”



*Continuing instant in prayer.*—The Christian is to “pray without ceasing.” No duty can be well performed without this. It is especially necessary in the time of affliction. “Paul also,” says Calvin, “not only excites us to prayer, but expressly requires performance; because our warfare is unceasing, and we are daily attacked by various assaults, which champions, even of the greatest bravery, are unable to support, without an occasional supply of new vigour. Unceasing continuance in prayer is the best remedy against fatigue.” It is impossible that believers can discharge the various duties which are here enforced, without having their eyes constantly directed to their heavenly Father; and without receiving from him the will and the capacity necessary for their discharge. Our Lord’s parable of the unjust judge, Luke, xviii. 1, contains the strongest encouragement to perseverance and importunity in prayer. The Lord commands his disciples to pray always, on account of the power of their spiritual enemies, who are constantly seeking their destruction. The Apostle, also, exhorts believers to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance; to continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; in every thing giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus; and to be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let their requests be made known unto God. If a Christian undertakes any thing whatever without prayer, he is neglecting his duty, and not acting up to his privileges. In that matter he is not walking with God, whose ears are open to the prayers of the righteous. On occasions, even, when there is not a moment

to deliberate, and when an immediate decision is indispensable, there is still time for prayer and for receiving an answer, Neh. ii. 4, 8.

The believer, too, should ever address his heavenly Father with full confidence that his prayers will be heard, not perhaps according to his wishes, but in a way that in the issue will be more advantageous. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." If the believer asks and does not receive, it is because he asks amiss: He does not ask in faith, he asks for things that are not proper, he asks while he is indulging in sin. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," Psalm lxvi. 18. Here, however, it is proper to remark, that there is a great difference between iniquity *prevailing* in the heart, and iniquity *regarded* in the heart. In the last case we cannot draw near with acceptance. God will not accept our prayers, because in that case we cannot draw near with "a true heart." But in the former case of iniquity prevailing in the heart, we may draw near in the full assurance of faith, of which we see an example in the case of David. "Iniquities," he says, "prevail against me;" but he

immediately adds, "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away," Psalm lxxv. 3.

V. 13.—*Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality.*

*Distributing to the necessity of saints.*—Rather "communicating to the necessities of the saints." The poor brethren are thus made joint partakers of the substance of their richer brethren ; the rich make their poor brethren participators with them in their substance, by giving them what is necessary to supply their wants. "Observe," says Calvin, "the propriety of the expression. The Apostle thus intimates that we ought to supply the wants of our brethren with as much care as if we were assisting ourselves." It may here be observed, that this precept proves most clearly that there was no general custom among the first Christians of a community of goods. Had this been the case, the rich would not have been commanded to communicate to the necessities of the saints. It ought also to be noted that it is to the *necessities* of the saints that communication is to be made, not to their indolence. "This we commanded you, that if any would not work neither should he eat." So far from its being the duty of Christians to support the idle, it would be a breach of one of the laws of Christ's kingdom.

*Saints.*—It may also be observed, that while we are to do good unto all men, the poor saints are the peculiar care of a Church of Christ. These are to be fed as children of the family who are unable to support themselves. Here, also, we may see the character of the members of the first churches. They were such only as appeared to be saints and godly in Christ Jesus. The term *saints* signifies those who are separated for the service of God,—sanctified in Christ Jesus. This ap-

pellation belongs to all the people of God without distinction, and not to a particular class or part of them exclusively, such as to the Apostles. The Apostles were indeed saints, and so were Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all the prophets. If this title were indiscriminately applied to all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, that is to every Christian, as in the Apostolical Epistles, it could not be misunderstood ; but its exclusive application to Apostles and some others besides, leads to the supposition that all Christians are not saints. This application is one of the engines of the Man of Sin, by which he deceives. If any plead for it as a proper distinction, it is sufficient to advert to the saying of Paul, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God," 1 Cor. xi. 16. Here the reference is to the approved customs of the churches acting under the immediate guidance of the Apostles, which consequently are equivalent to direct precept. We find no such custom in the Scriptures, in which prophets and apostles name themselves, and each other, without this distinction.

*Given to hospitality.*—This does not mean, as it is generally now applied, social intercourse and conviviality among neighbours, but it means the receiving and entertaining of strangers at a distance from their own habitations. This was a duty of peculiar necessity in the primitive times, when inns and places of entertainment were unusual. But it is a duty still ; and the change of times and customs cannot set aside any of the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians ought hospitably to receive their brethren coming from a distance, and to assist them in their business. We are here directed not only to practise hospitality, but according to the

import of the original, to follow or pursue it. Christians are to seek opportunities of thus manifesting love to their brethren. In another place the Apostle enforces the same duty: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

*V. 14.—Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

*Bless them which persecute you.*—Calvin justly cautions us against endeavouring to find a certain order in these precepts. It is their import, and not their connexion with each other, that we ought to ascertain. Sometimes there may be a relation; at other times there is entire independence. The precept here given cannot be obeyed in its genuine sense by any who are not born again of the incorruptible seed of the word; and even to such it is a difficult duty. In proportion to their progress in the divine life, will there be in them a difference with respect to their attainments in that heavenly spirit which enables them to comply with this injunction. But none can justly be looked on as Christians, who do not in some measure possess this spirit, and practise this precept. If this be so, how few are the genuine disciples of Christ! "None," says Calvin, "can boast himself to be a son of God, or glory in the name of a Christian, who has not in part put on this mind, which was in the Lord Jesus, and does not daily wrestle against and oppose the feeling of enmity and hatred." The law of God is in all respect a law of love, and the precept here enjoined contains a peculiar characteristic of Christianity, in the exhibition of which Christians are imitators of their heavenly Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a signal example of obedience to this rule, when on the cross he prayed to his

Father for the pardon of those by whom he was crucified. And Stephen, the first martyr, in imitation of his Divine master, died in calling on His name, and praying for his murderers. This precept teaches Christians in what manner, when reviled or persecuted, they ought to act to their persecutors. "Being defamed," says the Apostle, "we entreat." The repetition of the precept in the following clause adds to the energy of the expression.

*Bless, and curse not.*—Paul repeats the precept to bless, on account of its importance, and its applicability to men in general, in connexion with a command to curse no man. How does this condemn the Church of Rome, which so frequently manifests its antichristian character, by cursing its enemies, and allowing its priests to curse from the altar those who give them offence. How many are there, who, calling themselves Christians, openly and without shame utter maledictions on those who irritate them! How few abstain from imprecations of every kind and degree.\*

V. 15.—*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

This precept has no doubt a peculiar importance with respect to the brethren, but it is applicable in general. We ought to sympathise with our fellow creatures in their happiness and afflictions. The meaning

\* Little attention is paid, by many Christians, entirely to abstain from improper expletives. Some are in the habit of pledging their word or honour, as "upon my word," in common discourse, expressly contrary to these solemn injunctions, in Matt. v. 33-37, and James, v. 12; and of even irreverently pronouncing the name of God, as "Gracious God!" "God knows!" "My God!" as in France, where there is almost in every sentence, "*Mon Dieu?*"

of the precept is quite obvious. The prosperity of others ought to inspire us with joy. Their affliction ought to affect us with sorrow. Even the very semblance of this duty among the people of the world has a beneficial influence on society, heightening the joy of prosperity, and lessening the pain of adversity.

*V. 16.—Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

*Be of the same mind one toward another.*—This precept refers rather to unanimity, cordiality, and harmony in transacting all the business of the Church, than to oneness of mind as to the truth. With respect to faith, it is the word of God, with which believers are to be in accordance, and not with the opinions of each other. Besides, this often-repeated precept is always introduced with others of a practical nature. Oneness of belief in every thing, even the least part of the revelation of God, is of importance. This, however, cannot be effected but by a full knowledge of the Divine Word. The injunction is most important, and cautions against a captious spirit respecting the affairs of the church with which we are connected, or our intercourse one with another. Dr Macknight has entirely mistaken the import of this passage, making it refer to what precedes. ‘*Be of the same hospitable, forgiving, sympathizing, disposition, towards one another, as towards strangers and persecutors.*’

*Mind not high things.*—Men, in general, are aspiring to things above them. The great efforts of life are to obtain high rank or commanding station in the world. Christians are here cautioned against setting their minds on high things. Nothing can be more opposed

to progress in the divine life, than the evil against which we are here warned. In proportion as Christians indulge it, they make their bed among thorns, turning away their eyes from the glory of their future inheritance. *Condescend to men of low estate.*—The word here translated *condescend*, signifies to be led away with; and that which is rendered *men of low estate* may, with equal propriety, be rendered *low* or *humble things*; and in this way, the clause is an antithesis to the one preceding. “*Not thinking of high things*,” says Calvin, “by which he means, that a Christian ought not to aspire, in an ambitious manner, after those things by which he may surpass others; nor indulge in haughty feelings, but meditate rather upon modesty and meekness; for our excellence, in the presence of God, consists in these virtues, not in pride or the contempt of our brethren. This precept is properly added to the former; for nothing breaks the unity mentioned by the Apostle more completely, than the exalting of ourselves, and our aspiring to something still more elevated, with a view to attain a higher situation. I take the word *humble* in the neuter gender, that the antithesis may be more complete.’ *Be not wise in your own conceits.*—“This sentence,” says Calvin, “connects with the preceding part of the context; for nothing inflates the mind more, than a high opinion of our own wisdom and prudence.” Self-conceit is an evidence of weakness of mind and of ignorance. So far as it manifests itself among Christians, it evidences low attainments in the knowledge of the things of God, and is most destructive to the harmony of a Church, and the improvement of the individual under its influence.



V. 17.—*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

*Recompense to no man evil for evil.*—It is natural to every man to return evil for evil. Those of the most indolent and passive dispositions are not without feelings of revenge. Nothing but the faith of Christ will enable any man to overcome this disposition ; but faith will overcome it ; and every man who believes in Christ, must labour to overcome it in his heart, as well as his practice. If Christians are tried by this test, the pretensions of the great bulk of those who usurp the name, will be found groundless. *Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*—We are not to do our work to be seen of men, but we are to be careful that all our works are done so as to avoid any thing that would bring a reproach upon the gospel. We ought not only to abstain from what we know to be wrong, but we ought sedulously to avoid just suspicion, 1 Thess. v. 22. Sometimes Christians say, that if they have a good conscience, they care not what any one thinks of them. But this is contrary to this precept. If we are falsely charged, we may commit ourselves to him who judgeth righteously. But, so far as in our power, we are not only to avoid what is improper, but to avoid the blame or suspicion of what is improper. In Paul himself, we see an example of solicitude in this respect. “ Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men,” 2 Cor. viii. 21.

V. 18.—*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Such is the state of human nature, that offences must needs come, and here, the Apostle, in his exhortation, proceeds on the fact of the difficulty of living at

peace with all. The believer is, notwithstanding, constantly to aim at this, and to pursue it even when it seems to fly from him. He ought particularly to guard against giving occasion to any just subject of complaint against him. To live at peace with all men, as far as is attainable, without sacrificing duty, is not only duty, but for his happiness. To pursue peace, then, is to fly from misery. It is impossible to be happy in disturbance, and broils, and enmities ; but it may sometimes be impossible for Christians to obtain peace. When this is the case, they must submit to it as one of the greatest afflictions ; but we ought to recollect that it is God who giveth us peace with men, and to seek it from him with ardent prayer, as well as from men, by unremitting endeavours after it. When deprived of it we ought, also, to inquire whether there be not a cause of this in ourselves ; for when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Calvin justly cautions us, “ not so to affect the security of the favour and esteem of men, as to refuse to incur, for the sake of Christ, the hatred of any human being, when necessary.” As some Christians may be naturally of a contentious disposition, so others may, from a selfish desire of having the favour and good opinion, and praise of men, be inclined to keep out of view whatever is most offensive in the religion of Christ. Such persons may congratulate themselves on the possession of a spirit of peace, but it is only a spirit of cowardice and selfishness, a spirit of worldly indifference to the glory of God, and the salvation of men. We are never to seek to maintain peace, either with the world or with Christians, by the sacrifice of any part of divine truth. A Christian must be willing to be

unpopular, that he may be useful and faithful. To whatever obloquy or opposition it may expose him, he ought earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

*V. 19.—Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.*—As by the law in the members we are most strongly urged to take revenge on those who injure us, the Apostle introduces this dissuasive against indulging this corrupt principle, with the most endearing address. Christians will constantly have opportunities of exercising themselves in obedience to this exhortation. There are innumerable occurrences calculated to provoke and excite them to retaliation. But they will find, that to abstain from avenging their own cause, will essentially promote their happiness. It is a painful thing to think of injuries, and it is most for our peace and happiness to forget them, and commit ourselves to the Lord. How opposite is this from the principles of the men of the world, and what are called the laws of honour ; in obedience to which a man will, in cold blood, hazard his own life and that of his neighbour, on account of some contemptuous expression or trivial injury. What gross ignorance does it manifest to consider any man a Christian, who is always prepared to act in this manner, and who would regard it as an affront if the contrary were supposed.

*Give place unto wrath.*—Calvin, Dr Macknight, and Mr Stuart, understand this of the wrath of God ; but notwithstanding what the latter has alleged in confirmation of this, the common view of the passage is

unquestionably the just one. No principle of language will justify the ellipsis that makes wrath in this connexion designate *the wrath of God* or *the divine wrath*. Among the various applications of the phrase, "Give place," one of them is, to retire from the place, that it may be occupied by another, Luke, xiv. 9. The person here referred to gives the place that he occupied to another ; and retires to another place. This meaning, then, is quite in accordance with that of the common explanation of this passage. Give place to wrath, that is, leave the place, and let wrath occupy it ; or give place, as a man would do, if attacked by a wild beast, stepping aside to let it rush by. Mr Stuart, indeed, alleges, that the other interpretation 'is rendered nearly certain by the quotation which immediately follows,' which he supposes would be wholly inapposite, if wrath be understood as referring to the wrath of the enemy. This argument, however, is without force. The meaning objected to is quite consistent with the quotation. Take not revenge yourselves, my brethren, but retire from the contest, for it is not you but God who has a right to take vengeance. It is a good reason why we should not take vengeance that it is God's prerogative to take vengeance. *For it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.*—It belongs to God, and he will repay it. Those threatenings of the vengeance of God which we find in the writings of the prophets, and especially in the book of Psalms, are not to be viewed as proceeding from the angry spirit of the writers, but from the Holy Ghost who dictated them, who hates and will come out of his place to punish all workers of iniquity. If any man dare to take into his own hands the ven-

geance which belongeth to God, it will recoil upon himself.

From this it is evident that God will avenge the injuries done to his people. What, then, shall be the punishment of those who employ themselves in persecuting, injuring, reproaching, and slandering the disciples of Christ ! We are not, however, to understand this precept as prohibiting Christians from appealing to the magistrate in case of injuries. Calvin, indeed, justly observes, that it prohibits us from applying to the magistrate from a principle of revenge. It is quite true, that to appeal to the magistrate out of a principle of revenge is indulging revenge as much as if we took revenge with our own hands. But it is often right to appeal to the laws of our country in order to secure the peace of society, and defend ourselves and others from similar injuries. To act on the principle avowed by some, that it is wrong to apply to the power of the civil magistrate, is not only mistaking this precept, but is contrary to the fundamental principle on which society rests. In many cases it would be highly sinful not to punish evil doers. If the magistrate ought not to bear the sword in vain, the subject ought to assist him in executing vengeance.

*V. 20.—Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

*If thine enemy hunger, feed him.*—A Christian must be an enemy to no man, but he cannot prevent others from being enemies to him ; but instead of revenging their injuries, he is bound to do good to them. Conduct so opposite to nature can never be genuinely effected by the natural man. It is only to

be effected by the power of God through faith. It is the fruit of the new birth only. We are not to understand this precept as always to be fulfilled by the giving of meat and drink, but meat and drink are taken as an indication that in every possible instance goodwill is to be manifested.

*Shalt heap coals of fire.*—Dr Macknight, with many others, makes this refer to the custom of fusing metals, and supposes that it recommends this line of conduct as the most effectual way to soften or melt the enemy into repentance. This, however, is a meaning made for the words, instead of being extracted from them. Mr Stuart makes it imply pain, but thinks that it is not the pain of punishment, but of shame or contrition. This is equally remote from the obvious meaning of the expression. Besides, it is equally unwarrantable to do any thing with a view to occasion the pain of contrition, as to occasion the pain of punishment. We should desire the contrition of our enemy for his good, and not that he may endure suffering. It is vain to force the words of the Holy Spirit. They evidently assert that the conduct recommended will have the effect of increasing the punishment of the enemies of God's people; and though they should not rejoice in this effect as causing misery, yet they should hereby be led to adore the manifestation of Divine justice. Besides, this ought to be a warning to their enemies to abandon their wicked conduct, and finally to escape the fearful consequences which they cannot avoid if they persevere in their enmity. They ought to be informed of this part of the Divine pleasure. There can be no doubt that such conduct from the Lord's people, if it does not overcome their enemies, will eventually add to

their guilt and punishment. We should beware not to explain away the words of Scripture.

V. 21.—*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

*Be not overcome of evil.*—Christians are here exhorted not to suffer themselves to indulge a spirit of wrath or resentment from the provocations of their enemies. In the world they will experience evil on the part of others, but they ought never to allow themselves to be drawn into the commission of evil and to be overcome by it. To yield to anger is to be conquered by an enemy. Men in general suppose that to resent an injury is only to show a proper spirit. But in the estimation of God it is the opposite, and manifests defeat. He acts as the Christian, who yields not to anger, but remains without wrath under insult and ill treatment. When the Lord commanded the disciples to forgive their offending brethren ; perceiving the difficulty of acting in this manner, they immediately prayed, “Lord increase our faith.” No prayer could be more suitable, and nothing more necessary, for the performance of this duty.

*Overcome evil with good.*—This implies that the injurious person may, by repeated acts of kindness, be won over from his enmity. This, indeed, frequently happens, and there is hardly a case in which it will not have some effect. But whatever may be the success, we ought always to make the trial. If our efforts shall be lost on our enemy, they will not be lost with respect to ourselves. Our christian character will be more perfected, our happiness will be increased, our ways will be pleasing to the Lord, and our reward will be sure. Persons who cannot be overcome with good must be in the most awful state of hardened wickedness, and their punishment will be dreadful.

In the above remarkable portion of Scripture, we learn the true tendency of the doctrine of salvation wholly by grace, established in a manner so powerful in the preceding part of this Epistle, by which men are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. How beautiful is it, and how sublime when displayed in all its practical effects in the duties which flow from it as here described. We may search all the works of the most admired writers, and so far as they have not borrowed from the fountain of inspired truth, we shall find in them nothing comparable to the elevated maxims contained in this chapter. Especially, we shall not discover the faintest shadow of resemblance to the motives by which these duties are here inculcated. If the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handiworks; if the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that the heathen are *without excuse*, how much more clearly do the Scriptures proclaim their Divine origin, and the majesty of their author! God hath magnified his word above all his name, Psalm cxxxviii. 2.



## CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTIANS having become the subjects of a kingdom which is not of this world, might be led to suppose that they were released from the ties of obedience to human authorities, especially such as were not Christians. Far different is the doctrine here taught by the Apostle. He commands "every soul," both Jew and Gentile, to be subject to the existing powers. He makes no exception as to the nature or constitution of any government. He speaks neither of monarchies, nor of republics, nor of mixed constitutions. But he applies all his precepts to every form that government may assume. As there is nothing from which political partisans in the present day more widely differ than from the apostolic doctrine laid down in this chapter, Christians ought to give to it the more earnest heed, lest they be led away on this subject by the opinions of the world, or of those who "despise government." They ought to examine carefully what is here taught by the Apostle, without attempting to accommodate it to their preconceived views of civil liberty. This is the more necessary, as many have lately embarked in politics with a keenness that will be of no service to their spiritual life, and will rather tend to make them cleave more closely to the dust.

In considering the duties enjoined in the apostolic

Epistles, it is constantly to be kept in view, that while written on particular occasions, and addressed to particular churches, they are equally adapted, in the wisdom of God, to all times and circumstances. They are intended for the instruction and guidance of Christians in every country, and every age, just as the Decalogue, though delivered to only one nation, and that only once, is binding on every nation under heaven, in every period, till the end of time. Christians learn at present from this passage the will of God respecting their duty to civil government, just as those to whom this Epistle was addressed. It is true that there is an innumerable variety of differences in circumstances; but this is nothing to the purpose. The things taught in these Epistles are in all circumstances duty. The Roman Christians were under a despotism, and those who read this Epistle may live under a free government. But the duty of obedience is in both cases the same. The powers are under both equally to be obeyed.

It is of the utmost moment that Christians, under all forms of government, should have a rule concerning their duty to civil government clear and precise. Such a rule we have here laid down. No practical subject is more fully or more explicitly treated in the word of God. The weakest Christian cannot be at a loss to discover the will of his Lord with respect to obedience to civil government. It is presented to us in the Scriptures in two different aspects—the one as the ordinance of God, the other as the ordinance of man; and in both these characters, obedience is enjoined by the same authority.

Connected with a warning to believers to act in such a manner as not to be spoken against, the Holy Ghost,

by the instrumentality of the Apostle Peter, utters this command—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the King, as supreme ; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King," 1 Peter, ii. 17. Paul writes to Titus, iii. 1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." By the same authority, and with more extension, the Apostle enforces this duty in the passage before us.

In the most solemn manner, subjection to the existing powers, is here enjoined. This is contrary to the wisdom of the world, which takes offence at such subjection, and contrary to the proud heart of man, that would make religion a pretence to cover its secret reluctance to submit to disagreeable restraints. How natural the opposite doctrine is to the carnal heart may be seen from the general sentiments entertained on the subject by rulers and ruled—by infidels and professed Christians—by statesmen and people of all ranks. With one consent the generality of men, even in this country, which is comparatively so much enlightened by the Scriptures, proclaim that subjection to rulers is, even in things civil, limited and conditional—that in case of the breach of the supposed compact between the rulers and the ruled, rebellion is lawful, and resistance a duty. Even in the houses of Parliament is this doctrine boldly maintained. It is much to be desired,

that among those who thus trample on the commandments of God, and set aside the Scripture doctrine on this subject, there were no real Christians. It is lamentable to reflect, that to justify resistance to the civil powers, many of the people of God have resorted to the same false rules of interpretation which Neologians, and other perverters of the divine word, have invented to banish the doctrines of grace from the Bible. No expedients to explain away the meaning of any part of Scripture were ever more forced, than those adopted to make this chapter accord with the right of resisting the powers that be.

*V. 1.—Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God.*

In this verse the Apostle first states the duty he enjoins on Christians towards civil rulers. Next he states the ground on which the command rests as the reason why he gives the injunction ; every government is to be obeyed, because there is no government but of God. Lastly, he brings it home to the existing government under which the servants of God are placed.

*Let every soul.*—This most comprehensive expression shows that to every Christian, in every country, in all variety of situations, and on all occasions, the doctrine which the Apostle is about to teach is applicable. *Be subject unto the higher powers.*—By this expression is meant the persons who possess the supreme authority, who are in the third verse denominated *rulers*. Government in our language is a term of similar import. No phrase could more clearly and definitely express the duty of subjection to the civil rulers whom God has placed over us, than that which the Apostle here employs. This passage *expressly* enjoins obedience to all

governments equally. The word rendered "powers," wants the article, and has not an exclusive reference to the Roman government. It comprehends governments universally. Had any of the Roman Christians gone beyond the bounds of the empire, their duty of obedience to the government of the country is here as expressly enjoined as it is to the powers of the empire itself. And the foreigners who may have belonged to countries beyond the limits of the empire, are here taught obedience to the powers of Rome while in the country, and obedience to the powers of their own country when they should have returned home. The Apostle speaks of "powers" without peculiar reference. Every one, without exception, is, by the command of God, to be subject to the *existing* powers, whatever were the means by which they became possessed of the situation in which they stand. Cæsar subverted the laws of his country, Jeroboam established idolatry, and Nebuchadnezzar carried Judah captive. Yet the successors of Cæsar were recognised by Jesus, and were the rulers of the Roman Empire when the Apostle wrote; Jeroboam was expressly appointed by God as king over the ten tribes; and the oppressed Jews were commanded to pray for the peace of Babylon.

*For there is no power but of God.*—The meaning of the first clause, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," is clear as noonday; this second gives the reason why subjection is demanded,—for there is no power but of God; not "by Divine permission," according to Mr Stuart, but by Divine appointment. The expression *of*, or *from God*, cannot mean Divine permission. What we permit, is not in any sense *of us*. There is no power but of God; because it is God

in his providence who confers power on every man who holds it. No tyrant ever seized power till God gave it him. The words "no power," refer neither to kinds of powers nor order in government, but necessarily apply to every civil ruler under heaven. Were there any doubt with respect to the sense in which the power is *of God*, it would be entirely removed by the next clause of the verse, in which the existing powers are said to be ordained of God. The power, then, is "of God" in the sense, as is there declared, of being "ordained of God." The 4th verse also decides this to be the meaning of the phrase, where the ruler is twice said to *be the minister of God*. Civil rulers, then, are the ministers of God; if so, they must be of God's own appointment. The worst government in any country is of God, and is calculated to effect his purposes and promote his glory. Wicked rulers are necessary in God's plans to punish wicked nations. It is not merely the form of civil government that is from God, but the governors. Dr Macknight says, that God "has left it 'to the people to choose what form is most agreeable 'to themselves, and to commit the exercise of the supreme power to what persons they think fit. And, 'therefore, whatever form of government hath been 'chosen, or is established in any country, hath the Divine sanction.'" This is neither consonant to fact nor to Scripture. In most countries the people have had nothing to do with the choice of their governors. The powers are of God not on this account, but they are of God because they are of his setting up. Whatever may have been the means of their exaltation, it is God who has exalted them either for a blessing or a curse to the people. They who enjoin obedience to civil govern-

ment on the supposition of implied compacts, or conventions, overturn the ground on which it is rested by the word of God.

*The powers that be are ordained of God.*—Here every evasion is taken away from the ingenuity of sophistry. It will not be of any avail to attempt to limit allegiance according to the conduct of rulers, or the means by which they have acquired their authority. The existing powers in every country, and in every age, are *ordained\** of God. Nero was as truly a ruler ordained of God as Titus or Antoninus. The Divine appointment of the government that is over us, is the ground on which the duty of our submission rests; and the powers that be—that exist in any country—are appointed by God. “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men,” Dan. iv. 17. “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me,” Jer. xxvii. 5. Here we see how God disposes of kingdoms, and appoints their rulers according to His sovereign pleasure. It was God who set up Pharaoh, the cruel and tyrannical oppressor

\* That *ordained*, or *appointed*, is here the proper rendering of the original word, that a more faithful translation could not possibly be given, and that all the attempts which have been made to impose on it a different sense are unfounded, is fully established by Dr Carson, in his “Review of Dr John Brown on the law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience, especially on the duty of paying Tribute,” 1838. That Review contains also a full and critical discussion on the whole of Romans, xiii. 1-7. Whoever wishes thoroughly to investigate the subject of which it treats, would do well to read this very able review, printed at Edinburgh, by Wm. Whyte and Co.

of Israel. "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth," Exodus, ix. 16. "He putteth down one and setteth up another," Psalm lxxv. 7.

*V. 2.—Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*—Literally: "So that he that setteth himself in opposition to the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Resistance to the government, then, is resistance to God; because government is God's ordinance or appointment. If God has appointed every government that exists in the world, His people are bound to submit to every government under which their lot has been cast. There is but one exception, and that is when any thing is required contrary to the law of God. Then duty is plain. We are to obey God rather than men. The people of God, then, ought to consider resistance to the government under which they live as a very awful crime—even as resistance to God himself. They are bound to obey not good rulers only, as Dr Macknight unwarrantably limits the words, but oppressive rulers also, if they do not command what God forbids.

*And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*—Here is declared the fearful consequence of resisting the ordinance of God. It is of no importance whether we understand the original word translated *damnation*, to mean condemnation, or punishment, because the former implies the latter as its consequence. If, however, we understand it of punishment, we must keep in mind that it is punishment proceeding from



condemnation. And the condemnation here is not, as Mr Stuart seems to understand it, of punishment exclusively from the hand of man. The punishment meant, whoever may be the executioner, is a judgment from God, as in 1 Cor. xi. 29, where the same word refers to those punishments with which God visited his people for the abuse of his ordinance. "We ought, therefore," says Calvin, "to act with great caution, that we may not rush upon this Divine threatening. Nor do I confine this meaning of the word *damnation* to that punishment only which is inflicted by magistrates, as if the design of the Apostle was to show that rebels against authority will be punished according to law, but every kind of divine vengeance, in whatever manner it may be exacted ; for he, in general, teaches us what end awaits those who enter into a contest with God." When the ignorance of God's people is punished for any offence against the government of their country, their chastisement should be looked on as a chastisement from God.

It ought to be observed, that God's people may be in ignorance on this subject, as well as on any other, and that we are not to suppose that all who have resisted the governments under which they were placed, are enemies to God. Like Peter, when he drew his sword to defend his Master, they may sometimes be ignorant of their duty. But their ignorance is sinful. If they mistake their duty on this subject, they are more inexcusable than when they are ignorant on almost any other subject, for it is taught with a plainness, that nothing but strong prejudice can resist.

*V. 3.—For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*

*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.*—This is not a mere illustration of the last clause of the second verse. It extends to more than the punishment of resistance or disobedience. The negative assertion, that rulers are not a terror to good works, is different from the positive one, that they are a terror to evil works, and an assertion equally important; and the assertion that they who do good shall have praise is still different from both the others. This verse is often supposed to limit the obedience inculcated in the preceding verses, to rulers who are of a proper character, and actuated by right motives. Nothing can be more unfounded. It is not introduced as the ground of obedience to civil government. The ground of obedience is stated in the first verse, immediately subjoined to the command. The higher powers are to be obeyed, because there is not one amongst them, not even the worst on earth, which is not of God. When the government is wicked, cruel, and oppressive, in the inscrutable ways of his sovereign providence, it is overruled by God so as to forward the object he has in view. Without exception, it is true in every age, and in every country, that the existing civil powers are ordained of God. It follows, then, that whosoever resisteth the powers, resisteth the ordinance of God. This verse, as has just been remarked, does not state the reason of submission according to the first ground, but it assigns the reason why God has appointed civil government, and is another reason for the subjection before inculcated. Here there is no limitation of any

thing previously spoken. It is a characteristic of civil government, which is universally applicable. It is true of the worst government, that it is not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Good works and bad works are not here spoken of with reference to Christianity. The reference is to the works generally accounted good or bad in society, and the worst government will not punish such good works. No man was ever punished because he would not injure his neighbours. It is a general declaration with respect to all governments. The very worst of them is a blessing. The conduct of Christians with respect to obedience to Christ, as it is offensive to civil rulers, and has often been punished by them, is not here in the Apostle's view. The persecutions they have endured on account of their religion, have arisen from the enmity of the carnal mind against God, which is not more characteristic of every government, than of every individual. *Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*—This is a truth which experience will prove to every Christian. If he obeys the laws of the country, and does the things that are good, he will have no reason to be afraid of the government. If called to suffer for Christ's sake, he has no need to fear.

*V. 4.—For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

*For he is the minister of God to thee for good.*—In this verse the civil ruler is twice denominated “the minister of God,” first for good to his people, and next for the punishment of evil doers. Civil rulers, then, as

the ministers of God, ought not only to be obeyed without resistance, but with alacrity. They are not only ministers of God, but ministers for good. This is the characteristic of magistracy in all countries. In spite of all the evils that derogate from its proper character, it promotes the good of society. But none are so much indebted to it as Christians, to each of whom it may indeed be emphatically said, it is the minister to *thee* for good. Were the restraints of government removed, Christians would be attacked, persecuted, or destroyed in any country. Even the persecution of the worst government would not be so bad as the persecution of the world, if freed from the restraint of law. Notwithstanding the numerous persecutions endured by Christians under the Roman emperors, they were still to them the ministers of God for good, without whose government they would probably have been exterminated. "The Christians to the lions," was the common cry of the multitude among the Pagans. The Roman government afforded protection to Paul for a long period, and saved him on different occasions from suffering death by his countrymen. Let Christians, then, in every country, instead of joining with the enemies of its established order, be thankful for the divine ordinance of civil government, and exert themselves to maintain obedience and peace. It is of the utmost importance for them in every country to understand their duty to civil government. In this way they will most effectually commend the gospel to the world, and remove some of the most powerful obstacles to its progress. While they show that they fear not man, where he ordains what is contrary to the commandments of God, they ought likewise to

show that obedience to God and gratitude to him who appoints civil government for their protection, obliges them to submit to the rulers in all things temporal.

The institution of civil government is a dispensation of mercy, and its existence is so indispensable, that the moment it ceases under one form it re-establishes itself in another. The world, ever since the Fall, when the dominion of one part of the human race over another was immediately introduced, Gen. iii. 16, has been in such a state of corruption and depravity, that without the powerful obstacle presented by civil government to the selfish and malignant passions of men, it would be better to live among the beasts of the forest, than in human society. As soon as its restraints are removed, man shows himself in his real character. When there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes, we see in the last three chapters of the book of Judges what were the dreadful consequences.

Some have inferred from this passage, that the Apostle's injunctions refer solely to such governors as are truly good, and altogether what they ought to be. Nothing can be farther from the truth. From this it would follow, that the Apostle, while professing to furnish an explicit rule of conduct in this matter for those whom he addressed, in reality gave them none, and that he has here laid down no clear and precise direction which could apply to Christians from that time to the present. Human governments, like every thing administered by men, must always be imperfect ; and as it is easy to form exaggerated ideas on this subject, no administration of any form that has ever existed would appear to come up to the imaginary standard. It

would, besides, be impossible for the great body of Christians to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to their duty in this respect. This is one of those traditions, by which the Scriptures are as completely made void as by the Pharisees of old, or by modern Neologians. The rule which is here given is clear to all. It was dictated to Paul by God, under one of the worst governments that ever existed, and under which the blood of the Apostle himself was shed, as if he had been a malefactor.

When the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, God by his prophet commanded them to seek and to pray for the peace of the city. "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace," Jer. xxix. 7. The most awful maledictions were pronounced against Babylon, by the same prophet, on account of her manner of treating the Jews; but it was God himself who, in the course of his wise and holy providence, was to execute them, by means of those instruments which he should choose. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." In the mean time, God made the tyrannical rulers of Babylon, whom he purposed to punish for their wickedness, his ministers for the good of his people.

*But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid.*—If men will transgress the laws under which they are placed, they have reason to be afraid; and God here warns his own people, that, in such a case, they must not count upon his protection or interference to deliver them from the punishment due to those who rise up against his institution. This ought to caution Chris-

tians against identifying themselves with political associations to oppose or subvert the government of their country. When they do so, they are likely to suffer for it,—even more likely to suffer than the wicked themselves. God may in the mean time pass over the sin of the latter, while he visits that of his people with chastisement.

*For he beareth not the sword in vain.*—This implies that civil government is not a mere pageant arrayed with all the ensigns of power and vengeance against the opposer, but it also shows that the providence of God so orders it, that rulers will in general be successful against the disturbers of the peace, so that evil doers will be discovered and their plots defeated. The most secret and solemnly sanctioned conspiracies are generally defeated and frustrated. Indeed, were not civil government an ordinance of God, it would be impossible for it to answer the end of its appointment.

This passage sanctions the use of the sword, or punishment by death, with respect to the transgressors of the fundamental laws of society. The sword is put for punishment by death of any kind. This refutes the opinion of those who think that it is sinful, nay, that it is murder to put criminals to death. God here sanctions the practice. And if it is right in the civil magistrate to punish with death the violators of the fundamental laws of society, it is right in Christians to countenance and co-operate with the magistrate in effecting such punishments. The same truth is taught by our Lord when he says, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.” This intimates that worldly power may be

maintained by arms, and that it is lawful to use them for this purpose. "If I have been an offender," said Paul, "or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die," Acts, xxv. 11. Would the Apostle have in this way sanctioned this punishment, allowing its justice, if it had been contrary to the law of God?

*Far he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*—Vengeance belongeth to God. He hath, however, delegated this right so far as concerns the affairs of this world, to the civil magistrate, who ought to punish evil doers. For this purpose God has put the sword into his hand, and has armed him with legal authority. To suffer crime, therefore, to pass unpunished, is a dereliction of duty in the magistrate. Instead of being a duty, it is a sin to neglect avenging the laws when they are transgressed. The magistrate is here called a revenger, and is said to execute wrath. This refutes the notion that the infliction of punishment by the civil power is only for example; yet this false maxim is now very generally adopted. The Apostle here considers the sufferings inflicted as punishments, and brings not example into the account. Example is, no doubt, one object of punishment, but instead of being the sole, it is not its primary object.

Dr Carson, in his Review of Dr John Brown, gives the following division of the above four verses. "The first clause of the 1st verse contains the law of Christ, enjoining obedience to civil rulers. The rest of the verse in two clauses, gives the ground of this injunction, or shows why God enjoins obedience. He enjoins obedience to rulers because rulers are his own appointment,—an observation naturally resulting



from this, follows. If rulers are God's appointment, to oppose them is to oppose the appointment of God. This enforces the duty by the guilt of disobedience. He that opposes civil rulers, not only opposes them, but also opposes God's ordinance. Another observation appended to this, shows the consequence of disobeying this ordinance of God. They who resist shall receive to themselves damnation. The 3d verse commences with an observation, exhibiting a fact that proves that rulers are of God, and which anticipates an objection that was likely to occur. *Rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil.*—The assertion that civil rulers, without any exception, are appointed by God, would appear strange, when it was considered that they were heathens, and tyrants, and persecutors. But heathens, and tyrants, and persecutors, as they were, they are proved to be of God, by their being a terror not to good works, but to the evil. With all their wickedness, they uphold the great principles on which society is founded, and on which only it can subsist. The Christian, then, has no reason to dread them; for he does not practise the evil works which they punish, and he does the good works which they approve. This verse shows the reasonableness of the command of submission to government. As if the Apostle had said, do not think this command a hard saying; *for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.* If you wish to avoid incurring the displeasure of rulers do that which is good, and then, instead of being punished, you will have commendation from them.

The 4th verse gives an additional reason why Christians should not think civil government a grievance, but a blessing. *To the Christian he is the minister*

*of God for good.*—Instead, then, of submitting with reluctance, he ought to submit with pleasure and gratitude. Indeed, civil government is more for the advantage of Christians, than for that of others. They need its protection more than any other class of men. Were it not for the protection of government, Christians could not live even in the countries where there are the proudest boasts of enlargement of mind with respect to civil liberty.

The remainder of this verse warns the Christian what he may expect from civil rulers, if he does what is evil. *The minister of God bears not the sword in vain.*—Not only have rulers power to punish what is evil, but the providence of God takes care to make this power effectual. It is wonderful to consider how the providence of God defeats the best concerted plans of rebellion, and brings the disturbers of society under the grasp of the magistrate. Were it not that civil government is an ordinance of God, it is not possible that it could subsist.”

*V. 5.—Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

Men, in general, obey the laws from fear of the punishment of transgression ; and if there was no punishment they would transgress every law which thwarted their inclinations. But this must not be the case with Christians. They must respect the laws of the countries in which they live, not merely from dread of the punishment of transgression, to be inflicted by the magistrate in exercise of the power with which God has armed him, but also from a higher motive. Even were they assured of impunity from the magistrate, they must not violate the law for conscience sake. Here a

necessity far more imperative than the former is added. Christians are to obey from a conscientious regard to the authority of God thus interposed. This is the motive which, above every other, ought to actuate them, and it is exhibited by the Apostle as the grand consideration, by which he terminates his injunctions of obedience to civil government. This is the foundation of true loyalty. If in operation, it will not only ensure the obedience of the Christian to the government under which he is placed, but prevent him from defrauding it by smuggling, evasion of taxes, or any illegal transaction. "I have set the Lord always before me," ought to be the motto of every Christian.

"To carnal wisdom," says Dr Carson, "the doctrine of unlimited submission to civil government in temporal things, appears a hard saying. Who can hear it? If this sentiment prevails, it may be said, rulers may tyrannise as they please. They who speak thus do greatly err, not knowing the Scripture, neither the power of God in the ruling of the world. It would be a hard thing, indeed, if God did not rule the rulers. But the Christian has nothing to fear, when he considers that every plan and proceeding of government is overruled and directed by his God. If he puts his children into the hands of men, he retains these men in his own hand, and they can injure them in nothing without his permission. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will,' Prov. xxi. 1. So far, then, from being a doctrine that fills the mind with discomfort, it is the only view that gives peace. Have not Christians more security for their safety in the care of their almighty Father, than in a permission given by

him to defend themselves against the oppression of rulers. They have peace whatever party gets into power, because they know that in every thing God fulfils his purposes by them. God rules on earth, even in the councils of his enemies, as completely as he rules in heaven. When God chooses to overturn the empire of tyrants, he is at no loss for instruments, he is not obliged to employ the heirs of glory in such scenes of blood ; he uses the wicked to overturn the wicked.”

In the preceding five verses the Apostle makes no provision, in matters of civil submission, for any case of resistance or rebellion, under any circumstances. He makes no exceptions, no modifications ; he discusses no hazardous cases of conscience upon emergencies not existing ; but in language which none can mistake, and with an authority, the commanding solemnity of which defies opposition, he proclaims to the Greek and to the Roman, to the barbarian and the civilized, *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. The powers that be are ordained of God.\**

\* Some feel it difficult to admit the plain and obvious doctrine contained in the preceding verses of this chapter, lest it should condemn what took place in bringing about the Revolution of 1688. But whatever may be thought of the manner in which that Revolution was produced, and however beneficial its effects have been, no such considerations ought to be allowed to interfere with, or in the smallest degree to modify or contravene the authority of God, which is here so plainly expressed. In that Revolution there may have been much evil, and though God has in his holy providence overruled it so as to bring out of it much good, yet, like every thing else, it must be judged of by the Scriptures, and not the Scriptures by it, or any thing connected with it.

V. 6.—*For, for this cause pay ye tribute also : for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.*

*For this cause pay ye tribute also.*—Some, instead of “pay ye,” translate the words “ye pay.” But it cannot be supposed that the Apostle first alleges, as a reason for rendering personal obedience, that they were already in the habit of conscientiously paying tribute, when, in the subsequent verse, he enjoins the duty of tribute as specifically as he did the duty of obedience. Besides, “for this cause, ye pay tribute *also*,” takes it for granted that they were already in the habit of rendering both tribute and obedience for the same reason, instead of urging obedience on the foundation that they already, for that reason, paid tribute. If *even* is chosen as the translation of the Greek particle instead of *also*, this supposes that tribute is much worse as a grievance, than is personal obedience, the contrary of which is quite obvious. *For this cause*, or on this account.—For what cause? Is it on account of conscience, or on account of civil government being an appointment of God? The latter is the true answer. The reason why the thing is a matter of conscience is, because government is a divine appointment. Taxes are to be paid to government for its support, because God has appointed government for the good of society, and this is the argument that is immediately added. *For they are God's ministers.*—They are public officers whom God himself, as the ruler of the world, has appointed to this business. Here, in order to impress the truth, that “the powers that be are *ordained* of God,” and that they are “of God,” it is for the third time repeated that they are “*God's ministers*,” *attending continually upon this very thing*; that is, civil gover-

nors are devoted to the affairs of the public. They give their time to the public, and they should be adequately remunerated. It is necessary that what is requisite for the support of the government and its dignity, should be supplied. God, then, has enjoined on his people to acquiesce in this reasonable appointment of his providence. "This very thing," then, does not refer to the gathering of taxes. The "ministers of God" are the "powers" of whom the Apostle was treating. The "very thing" to which they constantly attend, is not the collection of the taxes, but the ministry of God in the things of government. "The very thing" must be something either mentioned or necessarily implied in the text. But this can be no other than the ministry of the ministers mentioned. The collection of taxes, then, is not the very thing to which civil rulers attend. They are called the ministers of God, and after this they are said to be attending continually on this very thing.\* The thing to which they attend, is their duty as ministers of God in civil things.

*V. 7.—Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

*Render therefore to all their dues.*—Here the Apostle enjoins a general precept, applying not only to the particular instances which he had mentioned, but to every thing due by equity or love from one man to another. Here, also, it ought to be particularly remarked, that he calls taxes and customs "dues" or *debts*. A tax is a debt in the true sense of the word. The Apostle

\* The antecedent to which the words rendered, "This very thing" refers, is ministry of God taken out of "ministers of God."

here says, render to all their dues, and in exemplification adds—"Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom."\* Men sometimes act on the principle that taxes are not debts, and that they may evade their payment, although clearly liable by law. Such persons are condemned by the Apostle. It is here explicitly taught, that taxes stand by the law of God on the same footing as private debts, which every man is therefore under an equal obligation to discharge. The same truth is taught by our Lord, when, on the tribute-money, bearing the image of Cæsar, being presented to him, he said, "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." The produce of taxes is here determined by the Lord, to be the property of the government. By the laws, too, of every country, taxes are debts, to be paid as such to the government, and even preferable, in order of payment, to private debts. Christians have much reason to be thankful that they are thus, by the authority of God, freed from all responsibility respecting the application of every tax, and that this responsibility rests entirely with the government. Were it otherwise, they would be in constant perplexity on the subject, and almost in every case, unable to determine, whether it was their duty to pay or to withhold payment. They would thus be exposed every moment to be placed in opposition to the rulers, while, at all times, it would be actually impossible for them to live in a heathen or a Mahometan country.

Some persons make a distinction between general and particular taxes, and refuse to pay taxes levied for

\* *Dues*. The same word in the original, as in Matt. xviii. 32, rendered *debt*.

particular purposes, when these purposes are believed to be bad. But there is nothing that will render it unlawful to pay a particular or specific tax, that will not equally apply to a general tax any part of which it is believed is to be applied to a bad use. Why are we not accountable for the application of every part of a general tax? Because we have no control over it, and our approbation of it when we pay it is not implied. The same consideration exempts us from any share of responsibility respecting the sinful application of a specific tax. If taxes are debts, then the payment of them no more implies approbation of their object, than the payment of any other debt involves approbation of the purpose to which it is applied.

*Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom.*—Tribute refers to what are now called taxes, and custom to revenue raised from merchandise. These are particular instances of the dues or debts included in the previous precept. *Fear to whom fear.*—The Christian is not to brave the authorities whom God has set over him, nor to set them at defiance, on pretence that he is a servant of God. On the contrary, he is to fear them as God's institution for the good of society. *Honour to whom honour.*—Not only are all pecuniary exactions of government to be paid, but all customary civil honour and respect are to be cheerfully given to those in power. Christians are not to decline paying the customary respect to the civil powers, on pretence that they are Christ's servants, or that all men are naturally on a level. Difference of rank in society is God's appointment, for the ordinary government of men in society. That stubborn spirit which refuses to uncover to the king, or give the customary mark of re-



spect to men in power, is pride and rebellion against God's appointment.

On this verse, Dr Carson, in his review of Dr Brown, observes, "The substantive to *all* is evidently *men*—Render then to all men their dues." After this, he gives a specification of such dues as would be least likely to be considered as dues, or to be conscientiously paid as such, namely, taxes, fear, honour. Many Christians to this hour, who would put away with abhorrence the thought of evading an ordinary debt, think it no evil to evade the taxes, and to withhold that honour and fear that is due to men in authority. 'To him to whom you owe tribute give tribute : to him to whom you owe custom give custom : to him to whom you owe fear give fear : to him to whom you owe honour give honour.'—As if he had said, 'Not only pay your ordinary debts, but those debts also that in general are not conscientiously paid as debts.' This is the only view that can give meaning to the particle *then* or *therefore*. The spirit of the passage is to this purpose. Obedience and taxes are due to civil rulers ; pay these dues, *then*, as well as others. It is quite obvious that the Apostle specifies only such debts as would be most likely to be overlooked.

V. 8.—*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

*Owe no man any thing.*—In the beginning of the former verse the Apostle commands Christians to render to all their dues, which includes debts of money as well as of respect. Here he forbids them to owe any man any thing, that is, to withhold from any man what is his due. This duty is imperative, and requires to be particularly specified ; and in this way the Apostle fol-

lows out the precept he had given in the preceding verse. Christians ought to attend most scrupulously to this injunction. It is a great injury to men, and a reproach to Christianity, when the servants of God neglect this duty. It is a virtual breach of the eighth commandment, although it may not bring on them the same obloquy.

*But to love one another.*—Love is here beautifully represented as a debt that is never paid. It is a debt that ever remains due. Christians ought not only to love one another continually, but to abound in love more and more. The more they pay of this debt the richer will they be in the thing that is paid. *For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*—Here love is urged, on the ground that it is fulfilment of the law in all its precepts. The whole law is grounded on love to God and love to man. This cannot be violated without the breach of law ; and if there is love, it will influence to the observance of all God's commandments. If there were perfect love, there would be a perfect observance of the law. But no man loveth another in the perfection that the law requires, therefore, no man perfectly keeps the law. Love, then, is the fulfilment of the law, being the thing which it demands, and all that it demands in respect to both God and man.

*V. 9.—For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Paul here cites several of the precepts of the second table of the law, and observes with respect to each of them, that they are comprehended in the law that en-

joins us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Nothing can be more evident than that, if we loved our neighbour perfectly, we would commit none of the things here specified. The law of the Lord is admirable, both in its simplicity and comprehensiveness. It is also most reasonable and just. It requires nothing but what is implied in love. Its prohibitions, then, are not unreasonable restraints upon our liberty, but the just requirements of love.

V. 10.—*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.*—Love never injures our neighbour in any respect, but, on the contrary, as far as in its power, does him service. All disputes, then, among neighbours and among nations, proceed from a want of love. What, then, shall we say of the morality of men in general, who live in strife and contention, as often as their interests in the smallest degree interfere? What is the origin of all the disputes in the world but a want of love?

*Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*—As love will prevent every thing which the law forbids, love must consequently be what fulfils the law. Love, for instance, will prevent murder, and even the smallest degree of hatred to another. Love then will keep the sixth commandment, and so of each of the commandments of the second table of the law.

V. 11.—*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

The most appropriate meaning that can be given to the word translated *that* in this occurrence seems to be *especially*. The duties recommended were the rather to be attended to, from the alleged consideration that follows. Dr Macknight translates by supplying the

phrase, "I command," by ellipsis, "Also this I command." And Mr Stuart supplies the words, "Do this." There is no need for these supplements, and the above gives the most appropriate meaning. *Knowing the time.*—The time is understood by Dr Macknight and Mr Stuart as referring to the season of the gospel. But the ground of the observation, which is subjoined by the Apostle, shows that it refers to the present time, in distinction from the time when those whom he addressed first believed. Why is it time to awake out of sleep? The reason alleged is, *for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* It is plain, then, that the times contrasted are the time of their first believing, and the time then present.

Salvation is here understood by Dr Macknight, as signifying the glad tidings of salvation in the gospel. This meaning is so forced and unnatural, that it deserves no consideration. In the Scriptures, believers are considered as saved, from the moment they are partakers of a Divine life, by the belief of the truth. Salvation is also sometimes used with respect to the complete deliverance from the pollution of sin at death, when believers enter into heavenly happiness. And sometimes it refers to the day of judgment, when their happiness will be more complete, and when the body as well as the soul shall enter into glory. It is obviously in the second acceptation that the word *salvation* is here used. It was now a considerable time since the church at Rome had been gathered, and the brethren who were first called to the knowledge of the truth, were now approaching the period of their entrance into the land of promise. The near prospect of leaving this world, and entering into a state of glory ought to have a great effect upon Christians, in making them think less of this

world, and more of that of which they are about to become the inhabitants.

*V. 12.—The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

*The night is far spent, the day is at hand.*—Dr MacKnight understands this of “the night of heathenish ignorance,” which he says, “is drawing to a conclusion,” and to the same purpose Mr Stuart says that it “is the time of ignorance and darkness, in which they had once been.” But with respect to the time in which the persons here addressed were in ignorance and darkness, if he means heathen ignorance and darkness, this time was already at an end to them: and the day, as contrasted with this, was already present, and could not be represented as near. And as to the night of heathenish ignorance being nearly at an end, this is far from past. Nearly eighteen centuries have passed since this Epistle was written, and the night of heathenism, so far from being at an end, still broods over the greater part of the world. *The night* here must be the time of the believer’s being on earth; for his earthly state, with all its comparative light, is but night with respect to the light of heaven. The day which was at hand was not the day of judgment, but the day of death, with respect to those addressed. Mr Stuart notices and satisfactorily refutes the opinion of Mr Tholuck and the Germans, which represents the Apostles as believing the near approach of the day of judgment.

*Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*—In place of the clothing of sin, Christians are to cover themselves with the armour of light. The Christian is a soldier, and as such he is furnished with a complete suit of armour, to

fit him for the encounter with his enemies. It consists of *faith*, and *love*, and *hope*. "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

V. 13.—*Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying:*

*Let us walk honestly, as in the day.*—According to the present use of the language, "honestly" does not adequately represent the original. The word signifies decently, becomingly. We are, by this precept, required to conduct ourselves before the world in a modest, decent, and becoming manner. The allusion is to persons walking from place to place in transacting their daily business. The conduct of persons thus employed, shows, even in people the most immoral, some regard to appearances, and they who riot in the night will place a restraint on their conduct in the day. Christians, then, as in the light of day, ought to conduct themselves in a manner suitable to the day, and not like those who riot in the night. It may be observed, that the same figure is here still continued, but varied in its application. When it is said, that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, it is implied that it was still night, and that the day was future. But here the day is present. In one point of view it is night to the Christian, and in another it is day.

*Not in rioting.*—The word applies to all meetings for intemperance and debauchery. It denounces all amusements that minister to the impure passions of human nature, whatever may be their name. The fashionable follies of high life, and those practised by persons in inferior stations, are alike inconsistent with

the christian character and with this precept. It is vain to allege, with respect to them, that they are not expressly condemned in Scripture. The Scripture does not give out law with a verbose phraseology like the laws of men ; but condemns all the particular and ever-varying follies of mankind in every age and nation on general principles.

*Drunkeness.*—This sin is one of the greatest destroyers of mankind. Even were there no hereafter, a wise man would shun it as a pestilence. No other evil has so great a share in bringing ruin on individuals and families. Every approach to it ought to be most carefully avoided. Too much caution cannot be used, in order to guard against the formation of habits of intemperance. Many a promising professor of Christianity makes shipwreck of the faith by giving way to this vice. It is a mistaken hospitality that tempts to any approach to intemperance. If we are to eat and drink to the glory of God, we ought to drink no more than is really useful for the health.

*Chambering.*—The meaning of this is plain, as well as of *wantonness*, which refers to all licentiousness, in its most extensive import. *Strife and envy.*—The former applies to every kind of contention, and the latter designates that principle which, more than any other, excites to strife or contention, and tends to make a man an enemy to his kind.

V. 14.—*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

*Put ye on the Lord Jesus.*—Having given a specimen of the things that are unbecoming the Christian who walks in the day, the Apostle now shows, summarily, what the conduct is which he enjoins on us to

exemplify. Believers were in themselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; like Joshua, clothed with filthy garments; but when they come to Christ, he says, "Take away the filthy garments from him: behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." They are then clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness, Isaiah, lxi. 10; and being thus justified, those whom the Apostle addressed had put on Christ. But here it is their progress in sanctification he has in view. In the 12th verse he had exhorted them to put on the armour of light, now he is enjoining the duty of perfect conformity to his holy image, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; who gave us an example that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Thus we are to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and as the Apostle elsewhere exhorts, that as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we should walk in him. '*To put on Christ,*' says Calvin, 'means, our being surrounded and protected in every part by the virtue of his Spirit, and thus rendered fit for the performance of every duty of holiness. For the image of God, which is the only ornament of the soul, is thus renewed in us.'

*Provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.*—*Flesh* here means the sinful principles of our nature. We are to make provision for the wants of the body, but we are to make no provision for its lusts. Whatever, then, tends to excite our corrupt propensities ought to be avoided.

Beautiful are the reflections of Archbishop Leighton,



in his sermon on the four last verses of this chapter, from which what follows is extracted :—“ These words are as an alarm, or morning watch-bell, of singular use, not only awakening a Christian to his day work, but withal minding him what he is. The former verses, 11, 12, tell us, it is time to rise, and call us to put on our clothes, and, being soldiers, our arms. Verse 13th directeth our behaviour and employment throughout the day. The last verse doth shortly, and clearly, fold up both together.

“ All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things : Some light there is of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no day light till the sun arise. 'Tis night still, for all the stars, and the moon to help them : Notwithstanding natural speculation that are more remote, and all prudence and policy for affairs, that come somewhat nearer to actions, yet we are still in the night ; and men sleep on in it, and their heads are still full of new dreams that keep them sleeping. They are constantly drunk with cares or desires of sense, and so their sleep continues. Now sleep is brother of death, and so by it not unfitly is the same state resembled.

“ It is time to awake, *salvation is nearer than when ye believed.* The bright day you look for is posting forward ; it is nearer than when you began to believe : the night is far spent, the gross darkness is already past, some day light it is, and is every moment growing, and the perfect full morning light of it is very near. O blessed gospel ! revealing God in Christ, and calling up sinners to communion with him, dispelling that black night of ignorance and accursed darkness

that otherwise had never ended, but passed on to a night of eternal misery.

“ *Put on the Lord Jesus.*—Here we have the proper beauty and ornament of Christians. Him we put on by faith, and are clothed with him as our righteousness. We come unto our Father, in our elder brother’s perfumed garment, and so obtain the blessing, which he, in a manner, was stripped of, and did undergo the curse, and was made a curse for our sakes. So the Apostle speaks of him ; we put him on as *the Lord our righteousness*, and are made *the righteousness of God in him*. This investiture is first, when our persons are made acceptable, and we come into Court. But there is another putting of him on, in the conformity of holiness, which always accompanies the former, and that is it which is here meant. And this I declare unto you, that whosoever does not thus *put him on*, shall find themselves deceived in the other, if they imagine it belongs to them. He is the *armour of light* before spoken of ; all our ornament and safety is in him.

“ Now follows, *and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof* ; and it will follow necessarily. O ! to have the heart touched by the *Spirit* with such a word as is here—it would untie it from all these things. These are the words the very reading of which wrought so with Augustine, that, of a licentious young man, he turned a holy faithful servant of Jesus Christ. While you were without Christ, you had no higher nor other business to do, but to attend and serve the flesh ; but once having put him on, you are other men, and other manners do become you. There is a transcendent sweetness in Christ, that puts the flesh out of credit. *Put on Christ*, thy royal robe, and make no provision

for the flesh. A soul clothed with Christ, stooping to any sinful delight, or an ardent pursuit of any thing earthly, though lawful, doth wonderfully indignify itself.

“ Oh ! raise up your spirits, you that pretend to any thing in Christ ; delight in him, and let his love satisfy you at all times. What need you go a-begging elsewhere ? All you would add makes you the poorer, abates so much of your enjoyment of him ; and what can compensate that ? *Put on the Lord Jesus*, and then view yourselves, and see if you be fit to be slaves to flesh and earth.

“ These two, *put on the Lord Jesus*, and *make no provision for the flesh*, are directly the representation of the Church,—A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, needed borrow no beauty from it, or any thing under it.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

*V. 1.—Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*

*Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye.*—In this verse, and onwards to the 13th of the following chapter, the Apostle, as in the 8th and 10th chapters of 1st Corinthians, establishes the duty of mutual forbearance among Christians. The subjects of dispute often vary, but the principles here laid down are always the same. The discussion in this chapter regards things in themselves indifferent, as the observance of certain days, and the abstinence from certain kinds of food; the errors, however, into which we may fall respecting them, are represented as springing from weakness of faith, to which every evil that appears among Christians may be traced. We may here remark, that though faith is the gift of God, yet it is on that account no less a duty. Repentance and every good work are also gifts of God, Acts, v. 31; 2 Tim. xi. 25; Eph. xi. 10. All men, notwithstanding, are bound to believe, to repent, and to obey, under pain of God's most awful displeasure.

Calvin, Dr Macknight, and Mr Stuart, and others, with almost general consent, take it for granted that the weak are the Jewish, and the strong the Gentile believers.

There is no ground in the text for this opinion. Many of the Jews might be fully instructed in the points which are here treated, and many of the Gentiles might be weak with respect to the defilement of meats offered in sacrifice to idols. Why should it be thought that the Jewish believers in general should be uninstructed, and that every Gentile believer should be fully acquainted with his duty respecting meats. Some of them might in this easily adopt the prejudices of the Jews, and others might have prejudices of their own. To confine what is left general by the Apostle, must be useless, and, in some cases, very hurtful.

*Faith.*—Faith here regards the doctrine of the gospel as a whole. Improper views of any part of it always imply something defective with respect to its nature. But partial ignorance may be consistent with so much knowledge as is connected with salvation. Dr Macknight paraphrases this as referring to the Jewish Christian, who is weak in the faith concerning meats and days. But how does this consist with the second verse, which represents the weakness, as confining itself to eating herbs? This was no injunction of the Mosaic Law. The weakness referred to is weakness of any kind, and will apply to any thing in which it is discovered. The meats and days are particular instances, adduced as illustrations of the general truth; but that truth applies as directly to weakness of any kind now, as to a weakness of a particular kind at that time. *Receive ye.*—That is, into the Church, to the fellowship of the brethren, in all the ordinances of Christ's house.

*Doubtful disputations.*—The phrase in the original is variously rendered and explained. The meaning seems to be, that when they should receive a weak

brother, they should not press him to receive their views by harassing discussions on the points on which he is ignorant. Such conduct would either tend to wound his mind, or induce him to acquiesce without enlightened conviction. Disputation seldom begets unanimity. If a statement of the will of Christ from the Scriptures has not the effect of producing conviction, lengthened discussions are more likely to increase prejudice than to resolve doubts. While, therefore, it is greatly important that believers who have inadequate views of any part of Divine truth, should be taught more fully the way of the Lord, it is also true that the most likely way to effect this is to avoid disputations with them on the points in which they are weak. This observation is founded on experience, and it is warranted by the command of God. To push them forward faster than they are taught by the word and Spirit of God, will stumble and injure instead of making them strong. Christians seldom argue one another into their views, and more frequently each is more confirmed in his own opinion. When it is necessary to show the weak brother his errors, it is best to exhibit the truth in its evidences, to leave him to the general use of the means of edification, and to give him affectionate instructions, for the purpose of his becoming stronger in the faith and riper in his judgment, by the internal influences and teaching of the Holy Spirit. The principles on which the Apostle proceeds are not that the views of those who differ among themselves are equally well founded, but that they are all brethren, having in view the glory of God and obedience to his will, and that as their Heavenly Father is so indulgent to his children, that, notwithstanding their defects in know-

ledge, and the consequent difference in their conduct, they ought not to be less forbearing to one another.

*V. 2.—For one believeth that he may eat all things : another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*

*For one believeth that he may eat all things.*—“ The Gentile Christian,” says Dr Macknight, “ believeth that he may eat every kind of meat.” But why the Gentile ? The Jewish Christian might believe this as well as the Gentile, when the distinction of meats was now totally abolished. And doubtless many Jewish believers already understood this matter. This shows that the Jewish law in its ritual ordinances was abolished before this time, for otherwise neither Jew nor Gentile had ground for such belief. This seems also to imply that the prohibition of blood, in Acts, xv., was only as a law of forbearance to spare the prejudices of the Jews. When the Mosaic Law was at an end there appears to have been no reason for abstaining from blood more than from flesh. Here the strong in faith believed that they might eat all things, why then should blood be excepted ? If there had been an exception, doubtless it would have been given here. How could the *strong* in faith believe that they might eat all things, if one thing was forbidden on its own account ?

*Another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*—Why should this be confined to the Jewish Christians ? It is not in evidence that all Jewish Christians were so ignorant. Besides, this does not apply to their law. The law of Moses did not restrict the Jews to herbs. If it be replied that they abstained from all meat, lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to idols previously to bringing it to market ; it is answered that this applies to the Gentile as well as to the Jew ? This, besides,

does not refer to the distinction of meats by the law, but to the pollution of meats by being offered to idols. It affected the meats allowed by the law as well as the meats prohibited. The opinion, then, of the pollution of meats, by the mere circumstance of having been offered to idols as a sacrifice before it was sold in the shambles, might as readily be entertained by the Gentiles as by the Jews. The thing that they are thus represented as guarding against, is not the breach of the law with respect to the distinction of meats, but against the pollution of meats by idolatry. This concerned the Gentile equally with the Jew, and weakness in this point might be found in the former as well as in the latter.

*V. 3.—Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*

Here the peculiar sin to which each of the two characters is respectively liable is pointed out. The pride of knowledge is prone to hold the ignorant in contempt. The weakness of ignorance is prone to condemn those, who, from more enlightened views of Divine truth, are not affected by their scruples. They who could eat every thing, without exception, were strong, because they had just views on the subject in question. Their temptation was to despise their brethren for their weakness. This they are forbidden to do. They who thought it unlawful to eat certain things were weak, because they had inadequate views of the subject. They, therefore, were under a temptation to judge unfavourably of the motives of their brethren. Let us observe it is the brethren they are forbidden to condemn, and not the thing which they did. They could not but condemn the



thing as wrong which they thought unlawful. But they were not permitted to condemn those who did the thing, as if they did it from improper motives, as from the desire of gratifying the appetite from unwillingness to practise self-denial, or from a wish to conform to the world and avoid reproach. Weak Christians are often troublesome, by ascribing the conduct of their brethren to improper motives. The weak, then, are as liable to judge improperly as the strong are to despise them. They ought both to attend to the apostolical injunctions which are respectively given to them in this place.

*For God hath received him.*—God had no doubt received both of them as righteous in his sight, through the righteousness of his Son. But receiving here being asserted of the one and not mentioned with respect to the other, must respect the thing in which he is condemned by the weak brother. This implies that the distinction of meats, with the whole of the law of Moses in all its ritual ordinances, was abolished ; for the conduct of Christians could not be received or accepted by God, as far as it was in violation of his law. *Receiving*, then, here does not, as is generally, if not universally explained, refer to receiving their persons through Jesus Christ, but to the particular conduct in question. The strong were received in their using things prohibited by the law, because the law was abolished. Had not the word *receiving* this reference, it would be as applicable to the weak as to the strong ; whereas it is here affirmed only of the strong. But though the weak are accepted with God through the righteousness of Christ, this weakness is not acceptable to him. It is an error and cannot be pleasing to God. And accordingly the strong, and not the weak, are here said to be accepted.

V. 4.—*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?—*It is generally supposed, that the person who condemns here, is the strong believer, and the person who is condemned is the weak. But this is altogether without foundation. They were the weak who condemned the strong, and not the strong who condemned the weak in the 3d verse. The strong did not condemn, but despised the weak. When, therefore, in this 4th verse, the Apostle indignantly asks, *who art thou that condemnest another man's servant?* it must apply to him who was previously represented as having condemned the strong. Had it referred to the strong, it would not have been said, *who art thou that condemnest?* but “*who art thou that despisest?*” The weak condemned the strong, as if they were not at all believers. In this they were accordingly to blame. They assumed the prerogative of God, who alone is the Judge of his own servants.

*To his own Master he standeth or falleth.*—Dr Macnight, and after him Mr Stuart, translate this, “*by his own Master,*” and understand the words as asserting, that the person stood or fell by his Master's sentence. But as the standing in the end of the verse appears to refer to the standing in the profession of Christianity, and not in the day of judgment, the common translation is to be preferred. The servant is said to stand or fall to his Master, because it is to his Master that he is accountable.

*Yea, he shall be holden up.*—This man who is condemned as an unbeliever, or one who would soon fall

from the faith, would be held up or made to stand. It was the Almighty power of God that would hold him up, and not the observance of the precepts of the Mosaic law. *For God is able to make him stand.*—Here the certainty of his standing is rested on God's ability to hold him up—not on his own ability to stand. The strong are as liable to fall as the weak. Nothing can hold up either but the power of God. This is important, as showing that a man's standing is not in himself. It is also important, as it secures the standing of the true disciple. This standing is as sure as God's power. For it is rested on God's ability to make him stand. To say, then, that any of God's children shall finally fall, is to say, that God is unable to hold them up.

*V. 5.—One man esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

*One man esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day.*—Here what had been said respecting meats, is equally applied to the observance of certain days. The Apostle takes for granted, that on this subject likewise, different Christians held different views. For it is of believers only he is speaking. This is a clear point, but it is one of much practical importance. It recognises the Christianity of those who may be very inadequately acquainted with the will of Christ. It is proper, however, to remark, that the Lord's day cannot (which shall afterwards be shown) be included in what is here said, as the Apostle is speaking of those meats and days that were peculiar to the Jewish dispensation ; as when, in writing to the Galatians, he censures their observing days, and months, and times, and years, to which they desired

to be in bondage ; which he terms weak and beggarly elements, Gal. iv. 9, 10.

V. 6.—*He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord ; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*

*He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord.*  
—This regard of days, though contrary to what had been already revealed, was from ignorance of this fact, intended as obedience to the Lord. The persons who made this distinction, believed that the Lord required it. Therefore, though they were wrong in this, and on that account were guilty, yet they acted from a view of serving the Lord. The thing performed may be wrong, while the intention of performing it may be right. In like manner, the thing performed may be right, while the motive of performing it may be wrong. *He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.*  
—In the same manner, the believer who did not regard the day, acted from a view of honouring the Lord, and not from thinking the observance of the day a restraint. When he gave up the day which under the Mosaic dispensation was holy, because he believed that the Lord had made an end of that dispensation, it was honourable to the Lord.

*He that eateth, eateth to the Lord.*—The same thing is asserted with respect to meats, as was asserted with respect to days. He that eateth the thing that formerly had been forbidden, eateth to the Lord, because he believes that the Lord hath abolished the distinction. He also, who would eat what he bought in the shambles, without any respect to its having been previously offered in sacrifice to idols, because he knew that the

meat was the Lord's, and could not be defiled by such an occurrence, did so out of regard to the honour of the Lord. That he acted from this view, is proved by his giving God thanks for what he did eat. Had he considered that the thing was prohibited by the Lord, he would not have ventured to give *God thanks* for permitting him the use of it.

*And he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not.*—In like manner the weak brother, who not only abstained from the things formerly forbidden, but even from every thing that he considered as polluted, by being offered to idols, acted from a desire of honouring the Lord, because he thought such things were forbidden by God. *And giveth God thanks.*—Mr Stuart understands this of thankfulness 'for the light which is imparted to him,' as he supposes, 'with respect to making such a distinction in food.' But the meaning undoubtedly is, that he gives God thanks for what he is allowed to eat. He shows that he eats from a view of honouring God, because, instead of looking on what he supposes to be forbidden as a restraint, hard to be submitted to, he gives God thanks for what he considers to be granted to him by the Lord. There are other places in which the sacred writers exhort believers to grow in knowledge, and where they charge them as culpable, if ignorant of any part of the will of the Lord. But here the Apostle's object is to show, that those who have a reverential regard for the authority of Christ, and a true knowledge of his character, and thus call him their Lord, ought to be received and recognised as his disciples.

*V. 7.—For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.*

*For none of us liveth to himself.*—Having stated that

both parties referred to acted with a view to serve the Lord, the Apostle now extends this duty so as to embrace all Christians in all their actions. No Christian liveth to himself. As far as he lives to himself, he acts inconsistently with his character. We ought to consider ourselves as under law to God in every action of our lives. Even in temporal things, yea, even in eating and drinking, we should have in view the glory of God. To live to the Lord, supposes that in all things we regard his will as the sole rule of our conduct, and his approbation as our great aim in all that we do, and that in all things we seek his glory. It supposes that we are entirely resigned to his disposal, blessing him whether in adversity or prosperity ; that we submit to his dispensations in what he gives or takes away ; and, finally, that we only live to serve him, and show forth his praise. Whether, then, the Christian lives or dies, he belongs to the Lord, desiring that he may dispose of him as he sees best ; confident that, as being the object of the Saviour's love, whatever may befall him, he is safe in his hands. There is no danger, then, however great, there is no difficulty, however arduous, that ought to prevent us from obeying the will of the Lord. Property, character, life itself, ought to be at his service. But is it not obvious that most people have no conception of living but to themselves ? Do not the mass of mankind follow their own interest to the neglect of the authority of God ? Even among those who make a profession of religion, how few are there who follow the Lord at the expense of any great temporal sacrifice ? Nay, are not many induced to act inconsistently with the character of a Christian for every trifle ?

*And no man dieth to himself.*—A Christian is not to die to himself more than he is to live to himself. He has no right to yield his life as a sacrifice to his pride. This cuts off the pretensions to Christianity of all persons who, to comply with the laws of honour, risk their life or that of their opponents in duelling. So, also, is suicide here condemned. The man who dies in these ways, dies to himself, which no man has a right to do, and which no Christian will do. This shows, also, that if obedience to Christ requires it, a Christian must not decline to die to his honour. He is to risk his life rather than break any known commandment of God. He is to die rather than decline obedience to any commandment or institution of Christ. When he so dies he does not throw away his life. He devotes it for a sufficient purpose. He gives it to the honour of the Lord. He yields it back to him who gave it, and who has a right to it. He shows also that a Christian should not only be willing to die, when God wills his death, but that he should be willing to live as long as God pleases. Christians may transgress by being unwilling to die, and they may also transgress in wishing to die. They ought to be willing to live or die as it is for God's glory. From this it also appears, that the death of any Christian is precious in the sight of God, as well as his life. Every Christian, when he dies, dies to the glory of God. This accords with what is said with respect to Peter, "by what death he was to glorify God."

*V. 8.*—*For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

*For whether we live, we live unto the Lord.*—The

former verse denies that we live or die to ourselves ; by inference, therefore, we live or die to Christ. But this verse makes the assertion directly, which was implied in the other. Both in life and death, we ought to serve God, and endeavour to promote his glory. The end of the verse draws the conclusion. *Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*—Not only are we the Lord's in giving our life at his command, but we are the Lord's in the state of separation between soul and body. Our bodies are the Lord's, and will be preserved by him till the resurrection, when in glory they shall be given back to us ; and our souls, in the presence of God, will have happiness and glory till that period shall arrive.

V. 9.—*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived.*—It was the end of the death and resurrection of the Lord, that to him, as Mediator, all power might be committed. He has received the keys of the invisible state and of death, and governs all his people both during their life and after their death, ordering all things for his own glory and their good. Christ, then, is the Lord of the living ; he is also the Lord of the dead. He must then be God. This shows, also, that the dead are alive in their souls, while their bodies are dead. It is in this way that Christ reigns over them. It would be absurd to suppose that he reigns over them as mere insensible matter. “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” Matt. xxii. 32.

V. 10.—*But why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.*

*But why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost*



*thou set at nought thy brother?*—This shows evidently that the word judge, in the 4th verse, refers to the weak brother who condemned those who did eat things prohibited by the law, and not to the strong brother, for he is reprov'd for despising and not for judging. Here both the one and the other are brought distinctly forward, and each separately asked a question suitable to himself. The brother who thinks that it is wrong to eat things prohibited by the law, is asked, why he dares to take upon himself to condemn his brother who in this differed from him; and the brother who is better informed upon this matter is asked, how he dares set at nought his brother who was ill instructed on this point. Mr Stuart is certainly wrong in making both these questions refer to the strong brother. There could be no ground for asking the first question, with respect to the strong brother. He is charged as despising. He might despise without condemning his weak brother as acting from improper motives. The Apostle most evidently asks the two questions with respect to different characters, and the questions are most appropriate and suitable respectively to the two characters brought into view.

*For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.*—The Apostle gives here another reason to prevent believers from judging or despising each other. Not only are they all the servants of Christ and brethren, but they must all appear at his judgment-seat, each to give an account of himself. This is a good reason why they should neither condemn nor despise one another. To judge one another in this manner is to invade the prerogative of Christ, and to despise one another evidences pride and ignorance of the source of all our knowledge. This most clearly shows, that

Christians have no authority over one another's faith, or christian practice in this world. Both as to faith and christian practice, Christians may endeavour to enlighten one another ; but when they fail, they have no authority to force others to change their views. Each Christian, however, is bound to follow the Lord fully so far as his own knowledge extends, and not to be stopped by the ignorance of his brother. He is not to do what he knows to be wrong, in order to walk with his weak brother ; nor is he to avoid doing any thing that he judges to be the will of his master, in order to retain fellowship with other Christians.

*V. 11.—For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

*For it is written.*—This passage from the Old Testament, Isaiah, xlv. 23, the Apostle adduces as importing that all shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. It is remarkable that the Apostle so frequently quotes from the Old Testament in support of what he teaches, though, in reality, his own authority was equal to that of any writer of the Old Testament. But this proves that the Old Testament and the New are given by one Spirit, and harmonize in all their parts. It is also an example for us in proving and teaching any truth contained in the word of God. If the Apostle confirmed what he taught by the authority of the Scriptures, shall any man now, or body of men, presume to make the authority of their office stand in the place of the word of God ?

*As I live.*—The Apostle does not take the words literally ; but as the Holy Ghost spoke by him, we are assured that he gives the true meaning. *I have sworn by myself*, is substantially the same with *as I live*.

Uninspired translators must not be indulged with a like liberty, for it is only when they translate exactly that there is an assurance that they translate correctly. *Saith the Lord.*—The Apostle, by the addition of these words, shows that in the passage he quotes it was the Messiah, who, in the preceding verse, said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.” Isa. xlv. 22. *Every knee shall bow to me.*—As in Philippians, ii. 10, the same thing is asserted with respect to Christ personally, this is also applicable to Christ personally and directly. In judgment all will bow to God, seeing they will bow to Christ. *Every tongue shall confess to God.*—This is substantially the same with “unto me every tongue shall swear.”

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that God swears by himself, “because he could swear by no greater,” and thus Jesus Christ, in here swearing by his life, or by himself, gives, according to that declaration of the Apostle, a proof of his Divinity. In the preceding verses of this chapter, it is always to Jesus Christ that Paul refers, when he says *the Lord*. It is by him that we shall be judged at the last day; it is to him that Christians are entirely devoted, which, were he merely a creature, would evidently be a violation of the law of Him who says—“I am a jealous God,” and “my glory I will not give to another.” “The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”

V. 12.—*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

*So then.*—Consequently then, or by consequence

then. This is an inference which the Apostle draws from the passage quoted from the Old Testament. Every individual of the human race must give account of himself to God. This applies to believers, as well as to others. And though all their sins are blotted out through the blood of atonement, they should not indulge themselves in sin. The fact of a future judgment ought to have a constant influence on our conduct. Standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, of which the Apostle had just before spoken, is here represented as giving an account to God.

*V. 13.—Let us not therefore judge one another any more : but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*

*Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more.*—This dissuasive appears to be now addressed to both the parties. The Apostle having declared what was peculiarly adapted to each, now declares what is equally applicable to both. Judging or condemning was in a peculiar sense the fault of the one, but both of them in a more extended sense of the word might be said to judge or condemn one another. The strong brother who despised the weak virtually judged him or condemned him. Paul now takes them both together, and addresses them with the same caution. He extends the exhortation to himself, and to the whole body of Christians. They are not to usurp authority over one another, nor to usurp the right to judge for one another in any matter.

*But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*—The word *judge* is here used in an allusive sense, and not in its proper or literal sense. Instead of judging, we

ought to do another thing, which is not properly judging, but called judging, in allusion to the word immediately going before. This is similar to the expression, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The Scriptures abound with instances of this figurative way of speaking. Instead of judging one another, Christians are to avoid doing any thing that will have a tendency to stumble one another, or cause any to fall into sin. This is peculiarly applicable to the strong, who, by an improper use of their liberty, might ensnare their weak brethren.

*V. 14.—I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

*I know, and am persuaded.*—This clearly refutes the opinion of those who argue that, at the time of writing this epistle, the law was not abolished, and that it was not in this state that the different parties were to forbear with respect to one another, but that the Jew was still to keep the law till its abolition should be explicitly announced. But that it was abolished, is perfectly clear from this chapter. The Apostle knew himself, and here he teaches others, that the Mosaic dispensation was abolished, yet enjoins the strong and the weak to forbear mutually with each other.

*By the Lord Jesus.*—That is, Paul knew this by the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Calvin is unquestionably mistaken in applying this, not to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, but to the cleansing of meats by the Lord Jesus. He says, 'The Apostle adds, *in the Lord Jesus*, because his kindness and grace is the cause why all creatures are blessed to us by the Lord, which were otherwise cursed in Adam.' This is no doubt a fact ;

but it is not the thing here taught. Paul is here asserting that his knowledge of the abolition of the distinction of meats was not obtained by his own searching into the nature of things, but was a revelation from the Lord Jesus. This doctrine was not a private opinion of his own, but the revealed will of his Master.

*Nothing unclean of itself.*—This undoubtedly shows, that there is nothing unclean in blood more than in any thing else. The Apostle here asserts of every thing that could be used for food, that there is nothing unclean in itself. When blood and other meats were prohibited by the law, it was not because there was any thing in themselves that rendered them unclean. It was the will of God, because they were of a typical nature, and therefore all their uncleanness ended when Christ came. Why, then, it may be asked, was blood prohibited in Acts, xv. ? Evidently as a law of forbearance, because of the prejudices of the Jews. This is expressed in the very passage. “ For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.” It would still be a duty to avoid these things, if we were in such situations that it would give offence to the Jews. That such is the true view of the matter is evident from this, that though the Jews were prohibited from eating things strangled, they were not prohibited to give them or sell them to strangers. Had the thing been unlawful in itself, they would not have been permitted to give to strangers that which it was unlawful for themselves to eat. Dr Macknight justly remarks— ‘ It is ‘ observable, that in this discourse, which is intended ‘ to show that under the gospel all sorts of food may ‘ be used without sin, there is no exception of blood,

‘and things strangled.’ But he is wrong in his inference from this fact. ‘May we not from this infer,’ he says, ‘that the prohibition of these things to the Gentile converts, mentioned Acts, xv. 29, is to be understood of such Gentiles only as had been proselytes?’ This is forced and unnatural.

*But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*—This is self-evident truth, which has no exception. For if a person does what he thinks God forbids, he is guilty with respect to God, as really as if the thing had been actually prohibited by God. Persons in ignorance ought to be instructed, but they ought never to be encouraged to do what they themselves judge to be contrary to the will of God.

V. 15.—*But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.*

*But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.*—The weak brother would be grieved in his mind when he should see the strong eating meat which he considered unclean. Now, it is not love that will prompt us to do any thing to afflict another. If, then, the strong loves the weak brother, would he for the sake of his appetite eat any thing that would grieve him? Self-denial in such matters is the result of love, and when any one will not abstain from gratifying his appetite to avoid hurting his brother, it shows that he is deficient in love.

*Destroy not him with thy meat.*—This supposes that the weak brother may, by the example of the strong, be induced to do what he is not persuaded is lawful; and thus, though the thing be in itself lawful, it is sin in him, and consequently its tendency is to bring him

into condemnation. It is not indeed possible that this can ultimately be the case with any one for whom Christ died ; but this is a warning to avoid doing any thing that in itself tends to destroy him. *For whom Christ died.*—If Christ died for the weak brother, how unlike Christ is this strong believer who will do what he knows will destroy his brother if he follow his example without having his knowledge ! The love of Christ in giving his life for this brother, and the indifference with respect to him which is manifested by the person who should thus abuse his liberty, are here set in strong contrast.

V. 16.—*Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

*Let not then your good.*—Their *good* appears to be their liberty of disregarding the distinction of meats, and the law in general. This was a good thing to them, because the law was in itself a yoke and a grievous burden. They were doing what was good and right in itself, in using this liberty, but they should be careful to use it in such a way as not to be the occasion of being represented as if in what they did they were regardless of the authority of God. This is a decisive distinction between the dispensation of Christ and that of Moses. It was an advantage to be delivered from the peculiar restraints of the ceremonial law, but it would be no advantage to be delivered from any part of the dispensation of Christ. This shows the sovereignty of God in subjecting his people in one dispensation to burdens which he removes in another.

*Be evil spoken of.*—Their good would be evil spoken of, when their neglect of the distinctions of the law should be ascribed to the indulgence of appetite, and when their conduct should embolden the weak to do



what was contrary to their conscience. *Then.*—That is, since some of the brethren were so weak as to judge those who did eat certain meats to be influenced by improper motives ; then, in order to avoid this, they ought to decline the use of their liberty.

*V. 17.*—*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.*—This imports that the service which belongs to the kingdom of God, and which he requires from all his subjects, does not consist in abstaining from, or in using, any kind of meats. The typical dispensation of the Old Testament enjoined a distinction of meats. Men are peculiarly prone to cling to externals in religious worship. It is, then, of great importance to attend to this decision of the Holy Ghost by the Apostle Paul. The distinction of meats has nothing to do in the service of God under the New Testament. This settles the question as to blood. If the eating of blood is still prohibited, it cannot be said that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.

*But righteousness.*—This is not the righteousness of God which is imputed to the believer, as is evident from the following verse, but the righteousness of which he is the subject. Righteousness sometimes refers especially to the duties which we owe to men, but in its most comprehensive sense it includes equally our duty to God, and there is no reason why it should not here have its most comprehensive meaning. *Peace.*—This is a criterion of a true servant in the kingdom of God. Having peace with God, he endeavours to have peace with the brethren and with all men. Nothing is more unlike the spirit of genuine Christianity than a

contentious disposition. *Joy in the Holy Ghost.*—The joy of a Christian communicated by the Holy Ghost cannot be comprehended by any other. He rejoices even in the midst of trouble, and is often most happy when the world thinks him most miserable. Joy is the immediate effect of receiving the gospel, which is glad tidings of great joy, as announced to the shepherds on the birth of our Saviour. It springs from a sense of reconciliation with God. We see it exemplified in the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, in the Eunuch, and in the Jailor at Philippi, as soon as they received the truth. Joy is enjoined again and again as the duty of believers. “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.” “Rejoice evermore.” “These things write we unto you that your joy may be full.” Our Lord dwells much upon it in his last discourse with his disciples, which contains every thing calculated to impart joy to their minds, and in which he so often promises to send them the Comforter. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy in you might remain, and that your joy might be full.” He had spoken to them that their joy might be *full*, but he makes no such addition when he refers to his joy in them, for it was already full. This joy in his people is an everlasting joy, neither capable of increase nor diminution; but their joy is variable according as they are exercising faith in him, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Joy is one of the great blessings of his kingdom. In this passage peace is placed before joy, while joy is elsewhere put before peace, as in the following chapter, verse 13th, and especially in enumerating the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. The first feeling on receiving the

knowledge of the gospel of salvation will be joy, and peace or tranquillity of mind will immediately succeed the agitations of the troubled conscience. However, where the one exists, there will the other be found, and in an equal proportion. Peace and righteousness are here traced up to joy in the Holy Ghost, which shows, as in other places, that it is in effect before the others.

*V. 18.—For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

*For he that in these things serveth Christ.*—Here the Christian is said to *serve Christ* by righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Christ, then, must be God. Is any but God to be served? Are we servants or slaves to any but God? Here we are represented as the slaves of Christ. What is the service of God? Is it not righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? And here this service is considered the service of Christ; can there be any doubt, then, that Christ is God?

*Acceptable to God.*—Every righteous man is pleasing to God. But without faith it is impossible to please him. Then without faith it is impossible to live righteously, to live in true peace, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost. These are the things in which God is honoured. What a contrast between this account, as given by Paul, and the religion of the Church of Rome at the present time! If men abstain from meats, and observe the laws of the church, they are acknowledged as members of that church, though they should live unrighteously, though they should be agitators or disturbers of society, though they should have no joy in believing. How unlike, then, is the Church of Rome now, to that of Rome addressed by the Apostle. *Ap-*

*proved of men.*—When Christians live as becometh the gospel, they have a testimony from their very enemies. The conduct here recommended is eminently useful to society, and cannot but command the approbation even of the most ungodly.

*V. 19.—Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace.*—Since, then, meats have nothing to do in the religion of Christ; for “meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse,” 1 Cor. viii. 8; and since he is served by righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, let us pursue the things of peace. We are not only to live peaceably with all men, and especially with the brethren, but we are to pursue peace. Even should it fly from us we should follow it. *The things of peace*, that is, we should follow all things that tend to produce peace, and avoid every thing, as far as our duty to God permits, of a contrary tendency.

*And things wherewith one may edify another.—The things of edification.*—That is, such things as will have a tendency to increase the faith and establishment of each other. We are not to have an eye merely to our own growth and stability, but also to the growth and stability of the whole body. Christians in general are not sufficiently aware of this duty.

*V. 20.—For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*

*For meat destroy not the work of God.*—The believer is here called the work of God, in a like sense as believers are elsewhere called the building of God,

Dr Macknight understands it of "that which God is 'working in the heart of our brother; namely, *faith and holiness.*" The other sense seems to be the true one. The reason which he gives for not applying the word to persons, is not to be sustained; "For if," says he, "the Apostle had been speaking of *persons*, who, on 'account of their regeneration, are called the *work of God*, he would have used the word *ποίημα*, as he does, 'Eph. ii. 10.'" Why should he be confined to this word? The other word is equally applicable. Mr Stuart alleges that, as referring to the internal work of faith, it is a possible meaning, though he prefers the other. His observation, however, that faith is called the work of God, John, vi. 29, has no weight in confirming Dr Macknight's opinion. *Work of God* in that passage signifies not the work which God works, but the work which God enjoins. The question was, "what shall we do that we might work the works of God?" This surely is the work which God *enjoins*, not the work which God *works*. When, therefore, in answer to this question, Jesus replies, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" the work of God must also refer to the work which God *requires*. But it may be asked, how can this be, seeing faith is not a work? The reply is quite obvious; it is in an allusive sense only, as has been already observed, that faith is here called a work. The word is used merely in reference to the word in the question. It is not a work, but it is the thing that God enjoins in order to salvation. The Scriptures abound with examples of this manner of speaking. Dr Macknight observes, "that 'the Apostle's words, so interpreted, imply, that the 'truly regenerated may be destroyed.'" But as it is

contrary to the whole current of Scripture, that the truly regenerated can eternally perish—for who shall separate them from the love of Christ?—it must be understood in the sense already explained, of tending in itself to his destruction.

*All things indeed are pure.*—Every kind of meat is here declared to be pure. This at once shows that the abolition of the law had already taken place, and that blood is not in itself unclean. *But it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.*—Some understand the offence as referring to the man who causes another to stumble, and some to the man who stumbles through offence. Calvin appears to understand it in the former sense. But the other meaning appears to be the right one. The meaning of “with offence,” seems to be, that the eating by the person referred to, is occasioned by the stumbling-block which was laid before him.

V. 21.—*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

*It is good.*—The Apostle here extends the duty, not only to the things that were prohibited by the Mosaic law, but to every kind of flesh, and even wine, and every other thing that might be the occasion of causing a weak brother to stumble. *Nor any thing.*—The expression in the original is elliptical, and this elliptical translation is preferable to that of Dr Macknight and Mr Stuart, who supply the phrase *to do*. Without doubt, the words to be supplied, as left out by ellipsis, are *to eat or to drink*. This is the very way in which Mr Stuart himself, in his commentary, supplies the ellipsis. Why, then, does he translate on another principle? The Apostle declares that it is wrong to eat or to drink any thing that would be the occasion of bring-

ing sin upon our brother. *Whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*—The first of these words may refer to stumbling without falling; the second, to falling by a stumbling-block; and the third, to the effect of this upon the person who is stumbling—he becomes weak.

*V. 22.—Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

*Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.*—It is of no importance whether we read this as a question with our version, or as a declaration of a known fact. The meaning is substantially the same. Dr Macknight does not seem justifiable in representing the word translated *have* as a command to hold fast this faith. The man who has faith, should not disturb his weak brother with an unseasonable declaration of his faith in this matter. His belief in this point is correct; and let him rejoice before God in his privilege; but let him not wound the mind of his weak brother, by an injudicious exercise of his privileges. He is accountable to God for his faith in this matter as well as in all others. But he is not to intrude it upon his weak brother. Calvin well observes, “This passage is evidently perverted and misunderstood when it is adduced to support the opinion that a person may observe foolish and superstitious ceremonies without danger, provided his conscience is pure and undisturbed before God. The context clearly confutes such a misconstruction.” A Christian may forego his liberty with respect to meats and drinks, but he has no right to practise what God has not enjoined, nor to avoid practising what God has instituted.

*Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing*

*which he alloweth.*—That man is happy, and he only can enjoy peace in his conscience, who acts according to the persuasion which he has of the lawfulness of his conduct. And happy is it for the Christian when his just views are not acted on in such a manner as to stumble others.

V. 23.—*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat.*—That is, he that doubteth whether it be right to eat the meats forbidden by the law, is in this condemned, although the thing itself is lawful. The reason is obvious. The person does not fully believe that the thing is right, and consequently by eating he thinks he may be offending God. This shows us, that in the things of God we ought not to do any thing concerning which we are in doubt. To observe any ordinance of God with doubts as to its being an ordinance of God, is to commit sin. To obey God acceptably, we must have a conviction that we are doing the thing which he has enjoined. Calvin observes on this passage — “For if we are not allowed to take a single mouthful of bread with a doubting conscience, how much greater caution ought to be used in transactions of the highest importance?”

*For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*—That is, whatsoever is not done with a conviction that it is agreeable to the will of God is sinful in the doer, although it should be right in itself. This is the generalization of the preceding doctrine. It applies not merely to meats, but to every thing. If any person be convinced that a thing is contrary to God’s law, and yet practises it, he is guilty before God, although it should be found that the thing was lawful.



## CHAPTER XV.

*V. 1.—We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

*We then that are strong.*—The Apostle continues here to treat of the subject of mutual forbearance among Christians, ranking himself with those who are strong in the faith, and who know that under the new covenant there is no longer any distinction in the sight of God between different kinds of meat or any sanctity in the feast days enjoined to be observed under the Jewish dispensation.

To know the mind of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, is to be strong ; to be ignorant of it is to be weak. It is not the man of the greatest intellectual vigour who is strong, nor the imbecile in understanding who is weak. Many of those who possess the greatest talents, and are most distinguished for mental acquirements, even although Christians, may be weak in respect to the things of God. And many who are of feeble intellect may be strong in the knowledge of divine things.

*Ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.*—Mr Stuart explains the word here used as signifying “*to bear with, to endure patiently, to tolerate.*” The word, indeed, denotes both to bear and to bear with, but here it is evidently to be taken in the former signification.

The allusion is to travellers assisting a weak companion, by taking a part of his burden and carrying it for him. The strong believer is to carry the weak believer's burden, by acting as if he had the same weakness, and abstaining from whatever would cause the weak brother to sin. Strictly speaking, it is improper to speak of one believer *bearing with, enduring, or tolerating* the opinions of another, for over these he has no control. God only is the Lord of the conscience. The man who speaks of tolerating the belief of another speaks improperly. *And not to please ourselves.*—If there be not a spirit of love there will be a proneness in men to bring forward, and to urge with vehemence, any thing in which they have received more light than their brethren; this is not for the good of their weak brethren, but to please themselves and discover their own superior acquirements.

V. 2.—*Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

*Let every one of us please his neighbour.*—Though no part of the truth of God is to be sacrificed to peace, yet every thing consistent with truth ought to be done to avoid giving offence, or stumbling weak brethren. Some persons seem to value themselves on their setting at nought the opinion of their brethren; but this we see is far from the doctrine of the Apostle. We are not to gratify our own humour, but to do every thing in our power, consistent with our duty, to please our brother. *For his good.*—Mr Stuart renders this “in respect to that which is good,” or “so far as we may do so and do what is good.” The common version is preferable, and conveys the true meaning. We are to please our brethren only *for their good*. It is

for their good not to be urged to do what they cannot do with a good conscience ; but it is not for their good to have any part of the will of God concealed from them. Besides, to abstain from meats is not a good in itself. *To edification.*—This is the way in which it is for their good to treat them in the manner recommended. It is for their edification. Such treatment will convince them of the love of those by whom they are so treated, and will be the surest way to lead them forward to clearer views in the points in which they are ignorant. To urge them forward with dictatorial zeal, would shut their eyes closer, and prevent them from perceiving the truth.

*V. 3.—For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

*For even Christ pleased not himself.*—The Apostle confirms his injunctions by the example of Christ. He did not please himself, or look for the favour of men ; but, instead of this, voluntarily acted in such a way as to subject himself to every inconvenience and evil for the good of his people. If, then, our Lord himself acted in this manner, how does it condemn a contrary practice in his people, if they indulge their own humour at the expense of those for whom Christ died.

*But, as it is written.*—Instead of directly referring to the history of the life of Christ, the Apostle refers to the Old Testament, which testified of him. The chief facts in the life of Christ were in one way or other predicted, and foreshown in the law and the prophets. The manner in which they are quoted by the Apostle, at once shows their bearing, and attests their application to the great antitype. The actions of our Lord

were ordered in such a manner as to fulfil what was written concerning him.

*The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*—The reproaches of those who reproached his Father fell upon his only begotten Son, when he was in the world. This imports that all the reproaches cast upon God's people, on account of their obedience to God, are really directed against God himself. It imports that all the opposition made to Christ, was really opposition to his Father. The reason why Christ was so much hated and opposed was, because he revealed or manifested the Father. Had he avoided this, he would have been applauded by the world. Men, even the most wicked, approve of morality and acts of kindness to the human race. They hate Christ and Christians only because of their holding forth the character of God, which they dislike. Had Christ sought to please himself, he would have avoided whatever excited the enmity of the multitude. When, therefore, the people reproached him, because he pleased his Father and declared his will, it was his Father whom they reproached. The great aim of the intercourse of Jesus Christ with men, as it referred to them, was their good, and not his own pleasure. He bore the infirmities of the weak, accommodating his instructions to the capacities of those whom he addressed. But because of this condescension he was reproached by others. When he was found in company with the ignorant, to teach them, he was reproached as "a friend of publicans and sinners." This appears to be the meaning and application of this quotation, which, at first sight, does not seem clear.

*V. 4.—For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.*

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.*—This observation appears to refer to the Apostle's reason for making the preceding quotation. He might have referred, as already remarked, immediately to the history of the life of Christ; but, instead of this, he quotes from a passage in the Psalms. Here he justifies his doing this, and makes an observation which applies generally to the Old Testament, and shows us in what manner we ought to use it. Some persons have blasphemously said, that the Old Testament is now out of date. But the writers of the New Testament give no such view of the Old. Instead of this, they refer to it as proof, and treat it as of constant use to the people of God. All that is therein written, whether history, types, prophecies, precepts, or examples, although under another dispensation, is intended for the instruction of believers, to train them to patience, and to impart the consolation which the Scriptures provide for those that have hope in God. "Take, my brethren," says James, "the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience."

The passage quoted in the preceding verse is not only useful to us, as applicable to Christ, but it is, as the Apostle shows, useful as an example. If the reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Christ, the people of God ought to live and act in such a manner as the Apostle elsewhere enjoins, when he says, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach," If Christ did not please him-

self, neither ought his people to please themselves, but to please him and his people for their edification.

*That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures.*—Mr Stuart understands this of our patience, and translates the second word by *admonition* or *exhortation*: “That through patience, and by the exhortation ‘of the Scriptures, we might obtain hope.” But it is through the patience exhibited in example in the Scriptures, that we are to have hope. And though the original word signifies exhortation as well as comfort, yet here the latter is to be preferred. In the next verse, with reference to this declaration, God is called the God of patience. Now, God is the God of consolation, that is, the God who is the author of consolation to his people. But to call God the God of exhortation, would be an uncouth expression. *Might have hope.*—We ought to read the Scriptures with a view not to gratify our curiosity, but to increase and nourish our hope of future glory. This passage teaches, that we should encourage ourselves by the example of those who amidst similar temptations have overcome. For this purpose, the conduct of those who obtained a good report through faith is set before us, that we may not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

V. 5.—*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus;*

*Now the God of patience and consolation.*—The Apostle having, in the preceding verse, spoken of the patience and consolation which the Scriptures communicate, here designates God as the God of patience and consolation, and prays to him, who is infinitely patient, and the source of all consolation, to grant that the

believers at Rome might be like-minded. God is called the God of patience and consolation, because he is the author of patience and consolation to his people. Patience is essential to a Christian, and so is consolation ; but neither in himself nor from any other source but from God has he these graces. We cannot bear the evils of the cross without Divine support. The virtues, then, of the Christian character, are as much the fruit of the Spirit of God as faith is his gift. Every thing good in the man of God is of God ; all his sins are his own. When, therefore, we are in straits, difficulties, or troubles, we ought to look to God for patience to bear what he may see good to lay upon us, and for consolation under the burden. The form of the expression, *God of patience*, shows not only that God gives patience to his people, but that he gives it abundantly, and that there is no other source of this gift.

*Grant you to be like-minded.*—Mr Stuart understands the expression, translated *like-minded*, to relate to matters of belief. It is true that it has this signification, but it is equally true that it refers to the will and affections, and in this place, in accordance with the common version, it is to be so understood. There may be unity of sentiment in error, as well as in truth. Christians should labour to effect union of belief in all matters, because it is their duty to endeavour to know whatever God has revealed, and not merely for the purpose of union of sentiment, in order to walk together in church fellowship. It is true, that union of belief in all things tends much to harmony ; but it is likewise true, that difference of sentiment in some things tends more to manifest the degree of advancement in the things of God. There may be harmony from per-

fect agreement in belief, when there is not only error, but little of the true principle of harmony; for the true principle of harmony is love to Christ's people for Christ's sake. It is also true, that if we look to the New Testament, we do not always find perfect agreement in sentiment among the brethren. Although, therefore, the thing is desirable, it is not always to be expected, and much less is it to be made a term of communion. Christians are to walk together in the things in which they are agreed, and to differ without condemning each other. This is quite consistent with every degree of zeal for the interest of every truth about which they may differ, Phil. iii. 15, 16. If there be any who think that union of sentiment among Christians is not highly desirable, they are certainly far mistaken, and not of the same mind with the Apostle, who shows such earnestness on that subject. For surely it is desirable that Christians should know all that God has revealed, and if they know this they will have this unity. But a thing may be very desirable which is not essential to their fellowship, and, as a matter of fact, no two Christians have such an union of sentiment. There are among them babes, young men, and fathers, and they are of the same mind about Divine things, just as far as they are respectively taught by the Spirit. The faith of Christ is required absolutely in all who have a right to fellowship in a church of Christ, but fellowship is not to be refused to him whom we acknowledge that Christ has received.

*According to Christ Jesus.*—Mr Stuart understands this as meaning “in accordance with the Spirit of Christ, or agreeably to what Christ or the Christian religion requires.” It undoubtedly means, according



to the example of Christ Jesus, and accords with the expression, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Phil. ii. 5. Dr Macknight understands it, of the example of Christ, but he also includes the will of Christ. But these two meanings the phrase cannot have in the same place.

*V. 6.—That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*That ye may with one mind and one mouth.*—With one mind means accordance in affection and heart. Union of affection is much more necessary to harmony in worship than perfect harmony in sentiment. There may be harmony in the service of God among Christians who differ upon many things. But if any two of them are disaffected to one another, there is no harmony, though they should both have perfectly the same judgment in all matters. It is in this view that the Apostle charges Euodias and Syntyche that they should be of the same mind. Disaffection towards each other was the evil under which they laboured, and not difference about any matter of belief. *One mouth.*—That is, this harmony should be as complete as if they all uttered their voice through one mouth. It is delightful to see a body of Christians all uniting in prayer and praise with one heart, while there may be a great variety in their attainments in the knowledge of Christ. On the other hand, there may be a professed union in every thing, without having the mind that Christ here requires. The union of Christians in professed faith will not compensate for their want of union in him.

*Glorify God.*—God is glorified in the prayers and praises of his people. This object, then, they should never forget. They should acknowledge him and praise

him in every part of his character, however offensive it may be to the world. He is glorified by them literally with one mouth in prayer. He who prays is to be considered as uttering the prayer of the whole multitude of disciples, and each of them should follow in spirit, praying with him as he utters the words. *Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God of Christ as man, and he is the Father of Christ as God. The titles Father and Son, as applied to Christ and his heavenly Father, most evidently apply to relation in Godhead. Great efforts have been made by some to overturn this view ; but their efforts have been without success, and they have been most mischievous in taking away one of the strongest proofs of the Deity of Christ, and one which the Scriptures most frequently use. The dignity of the character of Christ is most frequently asserted in calling him the Son of God. But if he be the Son of God in a lower sense, or one corresponding with that in which it is applicable to every good man, no definite view of his character is given when he is called the *Son of God*.

*V. 7.—Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

*Wherefore.*—That is, since Christians ought not to please themselves, but to act in every thing for the edification of each other, they ought to receive one another, notwithstanding differences of sentiment among them. *Receive.*—Mr Stuart understands this as signifying to *show kindness*. But the word means only receive. It expresses nothing of kindness. It refers to the reception of each other as Christians to the fellowship of the church. They ought, indeed, to manifest kindness with respect to all who are thus received, but the word does not express

this. This method of giving, as is thought, a more emphatic meaning to words than usually belongs to them, is attended with the worst effects. Here it conceals a most important part of the will of God respecting the grounds on which Christians should receive each other to church fellowship. The command to receive into fellowship is turned into a command to show kindness.

*As Christ also received us.*—The manner in which Christians are to receive one another to church fellowship, is as Christ has received them. *As*, or according as. —Now Christ has received, and does receive, all who believe the truth even in the feeblest manner. He accepts those who have the lowest degree of faith in him. Thus he received the afflicted father, who said, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Christ receives those who are ignorant of many things—indeed of every thing but faith in himself. The most ungodly is saved by him the moment he believes, and Christians are received by him, and live upon him by faith, while they are in error as to many parts of his will. If Christ receives his people, notwithstanding their ignorance of many parts of his will, ought they to reject those whom he hath received ?

*To the glory of God.*—Some understand this of the glory which God shall bestow upon his people. But this cannot be the meaning here, as we are not yet received to his glory ; whereas the glory here spoken of is already manifested. The glory which God will confer upon his people is future. “By whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” Rom. v. 2. We have present access into the favour and grace of God, but we have now only the glory of God in hope.

The glory of God, then, here means the glory that belongs to God's character. It is to the glory of God that Christians are received and saved by his Son.

*V. 8.—Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers :*

*Now I say.*—The Apostle proceeds to reconcile the Jews and Gentiles to each other, by showing them the reason why Jesus Christ, who was equally the Lord of the Jews and the Gentiles, was born a Jew, as a *minister of the circumcision*. Jesus Christ was made under the law, and ministered among the Jews ; and though he gave some examples of his purpose of mercy to the Gentiles, yet he did not go out to preach to the nations. But this exclusive service among the Jews is not to be understood as indicating an exclusion of his mercy from the nations. It was *for the truth of God*. It was to fulfil the predictions and promises of Scripture, *to confirm the promises made to the fathers*. His ministry was the fulfilment of the promises that God had made to his ancient servants.

*V. 9.—And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name,*

*And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*—Though Christ's personal ministry was limited to the Jews, yet the efficacy of his work was not confined to them. The Old Testament itself contains evidence, that the Gentiles were to be interested in his redemption. It was the purpose of Christ's work, that Gentiles as well as Jews might glorify God on account of his mercy. The glory of God is therefore exhibited as the reason of Christ's work. This is the highest object of all God's works. Salvation is also

represented as *mercy*. There is nothing here, or any where else in Scripture, to encourage the presumption of men who suppose that they can merit salvation by their own works. Salvation is of mercy. In the preceding verse, Paul had spoken of the truth of God; here he speaks of his mercy. That which was *truth* to the Jews, having been promised to their fathers, was *mercy* to the Gentiles, who were admitted to participate in the blessings promised. This the Apostle proves, by the different passages he quotes, which declare that the mercy of God was to be extended to all nations. Consequently, both Jews and Gentiles had the strongest reasons thus presented to them, neither to condemn nor to despise one another, but, on the contrary, to regard themselves as united in Christ Jesus, as well as by the common sentiment of their obligations to him, and the love he had shown them. “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.”\* *As it is written*.—Paul quotes a passage from the Old Testament, to show that Christ was to be the Saviour of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.

*For this cause, &c.*—In the passage referred to, Christ is represented as confessing or acknowledging God among the Gentiles, and singing to the praise of his name. Christ did not appear personally among the Gentile nations. This prediction, then, must be fulfilled of him in his people, as one with him. Than this, nothing more clearly proves the unity of Christ

\* The same distinction between these expressions, *truth* and *mercy*, is made respecting Abraham and Jacob. What was truth to the one, was mercy to the other. “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old,” Micah, vii. 20.

and his people. What he does for them, they do, as they are one with him. It is thus that believers are saved in righteousness as well as in mercy. Christ's righteousness is their righteousness, because they are one with him. Those who repudiate the doctrine of imputation of Christ's righteousness, as both Dr Mac-knight and Mr Stuart have done, and that in a manner the most explicit and unreserved, not merely corrupt, but utterly overthrow the gospel, and entirely remove the grounds of the justice of the Divine procedure in the plan of redemption. Grace reigns *through righteousness* unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. In the 18th Psalm, David speaks of himself, and the things spoken are applicable to him ; yet the Apostle here quotes the words as applicable to Christ. This shows, most incontrovertibly, that David was a type of Christ, and that what is spoken of the type is in its ultimate sense spoken of the antitype.

V. 10.—*And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.*

*And again he saith.*—That is, God saith this, but it was Moses that said it, therefore what Moses here said was dictated by God. The words are the words both of God and of Moses. *Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.*—This quotation is from Deut. xxxii. 43. The Gentiles are there called upon to rejoice in fellowship with the people of God. This implies that they were to be converted by the gospel, and united with the Jews in the church of Christ. Calvin says, “ I do  
 ‘ not agree with those who consider this quotation to  
 ‘ be taken from the song of Moses ; for the Jewish  
 ‘ lawgiver intends, in that part of his writings, rather  
 ‘ to strike terror into the adversaries of Israel, than to

‘ invite them to the participation of one common joy. ‘ I take it therefore from Psalm lxvii. 3, 4.’ But this is a very unsafe and presumptuous mode of reasoning. We must rest on Paul’s authority, rather than on the authority of Calvin, as to what was the intention of Moses in the passage quoted. Though Moses intended to strike terror into the enemies of Israel, there is no reason why Gentile believers should be terrified with this, or should not rejoice with the Jewish people of God in the victories of the Messiah over his enemies. The perfect applicability of the quotation is clearly obvious. Besides, the passage alleged by Calvin, as the quotation, namely, Psalm lxvii. 3, 4, cannot without violence be made to correspond with the words of Paul. Why desert a passage where the words are easily found, and have recourse to a passage where the words are not found? Is this to be done on the strength of our own views of the words of Moses? Surely we ought implicitly to bow to the authority of Paul as a commentator on Moses. In fact, the quotation is as applicable to the Gentiles as to the Jews. In the typical sense of the passage, are not the Gentiles as much interested in the extension of salvation to the nations as the Jews? Are they not much more so? Is it not to them a matter of much greater joy? The Jews ought, indeed, to rejoice in the glory of God and the happiness of men in the extension of the gospel. But the Gentiles, in addition to this, rejoice in it as their own salvation. Even in the literal sense, as applicable to the victories of Israel over their enemies, ought not believing Gentiles to have rejoiced in them? Did not Rahab rejoice in the victories of Israel over their enemies?

V. 11.—*And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud him, all ye people.*

This quotation is from Psalm cxvii. 1. It calls upon all the nations to praise God. This implies that salvation was to extend to all nations, for none can praise God without the knowledge of God. Such addresses to the Gentiles are very numerous in the book of Psalms, and refute the opinion of those who think it wrong to call on sinners to praise God. It is true that none but believers can praise God. But sinners may be called on to perform every duty incumbent on men, and charged with guilt for neglecting it. They ought to praise God. But this praise ought to be in faith, as well as every other duty. To suppose that sinners are not bound to praise God, is to suppose that their neglect of this and any other duty is not criminal. There is no danger in calling on sinners to observe the whole law of God, if it be also kept in view that no obedience in any degree can be given to God except through faith in his Son. This is quite a different thing from making prayer and praise a preparatory process to conversion. "The original word," says Dr Macknight, "signifies to 'praise by singing,'" Luke, i. 13. This is unsound criticism, and proceeds on a false canon, namely, that a word designates every thing to which it is applicable. Words may apply to many things which are not designed by them. This word applies to praise by singing, but it does not express *singing*, because it also applies to praise in any manner.

V. 12.—*And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles ; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*

*And again Esaias saith.*—The Apostle has in this



place given multiplied quotations from the Old Testament, to prove the point in hand. One proof from Scripture, if applicable, is sufficient to prove any thing, yet the Apostle gives us many. This shows that Divine truth ought to be exhibited to gainsayers in all its strength, with a display of all its evidence. In proportion as prejudice is opposed to any truth, it is necessary to fortify it with multiplied evidence. The Jews were greatly prejudiced against that part of the will of God which the Apostle now teaches, and he heaps scripture upon scripture to overcome their prejudices, although his own authority and his own declaration was as valid as those of the inspired writers whom he quoted.

*There shall be a root of Jesse.*—Rather, there shall be *the* root of Jesse. It is a definite allusion to one particular person of the family of Jesse. Christ is called a branch in the same chapter, Isaiah, xi., but he appears here to be called the root, or a particular shoot from the root, as he is elsewhere called a root out of a dry ground. This limits the origin of the human nature of the Messiah to the family of Jesse. *And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles.*—This determines the Messiah to be the King of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. The passage quoted speaks of him as a *banner* to the Gentiles. This the Apostle interprets as a *ruler*, because soldiers follow the banner of their captain. *In him shall the Gentiles trust.*—This strictly asserts that the Gentiles would trust in the Messiah descended from Jesse.

V. 13.—*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

*Now the God of hope.*—God is called the God of

hope, because he is the author of all the well-grounded hope of his people. All hope, of which he is not the author in the heart of men, is false and delusive. The world, in general, may have hope ; but it is false hope. All true hope, with respect to the divine favour, is effected in the human heart by God himself. Not only is God the author of all true hope, but he can create this hope out of the midst of despair. The most desponding are often raised by him to a good hope through grace ; and the most guilty are in a moment relieved, and made to hope in his mercy. How remarkably was this the case with the thief on the cross, and with the three thousand on the day of Pentecost.

*Fill you with all joy and peace.*—The inward joy and peace of the Christian are the gifts of God, and not the natural effects of any thing in the mind of man. All the promises and declarations of Scripture would fail in producing joy and peace in the mind of a sinner, were it not for the agency of the Spirit of God. If the Christian possesses joy and peace, he ought to ascribe it altogether to God. He ought to reflect, that these blessings must be produced and continually maintained by Divine power, and not by any power of his own mind. It should always be kept in view, that these fruits of the Spirit, first of joy, and next of peace, Gal. v. 22, cannot be produced, except in connexion with the other fruits of the Spirit, and in the way of obedience, and in carefully abstaining from grieving the Spirit. David, when he had sinned, having lost his joy in God, utters this prayer : “ Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit : then will I teach transgressors thy way,” Psalm

li. 12. Here we may also observe, that they who seek to teach transgressors the ways of God, should first themselves have the experience of these ways.

*Fill you.*—This implies, that there are degrees of joy and peace in the minds of Christians. Some may have a measure of these graces who do not abound in them. It is a great blessing to be *filled* with them, and for this blessing the Apostle prays with respect to the Christians at Rome. If there be different degrees of joy and peace, how important is it to look earnestly to God for the fullest communication of these blessings. The Psalmist had more joy in his heart, bestowed by God, than worldly men have when their corn and wine most abound. *In believing*—Joy and peace, as well as all other spiritual blessings, are communicated by God through faith, and through faith only, and in proportion to faith. Faith, when spoken of without peculiar reference, means faith in Christ; and not, as Dr Macknight understands it, faith in any particular promise.

*That ye may abound in hope.*—The above blessings the Apostle prayed for to be bestowed on those whom he addressed, in order that they might abound in hope, and the more believers are filled with joy and peace, the greater will be their hope. The people of God have high hopes, and it is their privilege to seek from their Lord an increase and abundance of hope—not that faint and common hope of possibility or probability, but a certain hope. Such a hope springs from faith,—in effect, is one with it. Faith rests upon the goodness and truth of him who hath promised; and hope, raising itself upon faith so established, stands up and looks out to the future accomplishment of the

promise. *Through the power of the Holy Ghost.*—Hope is produced in the mind by the agency and power of the Spirit of God. Here, two persons of the Godhead are brought into view, as each being the bestower of this gift. The Father gives hope—he is the God of hope; but he gives it through the Holy Ghost. In the economy of redemption, this is the province of the Holy Ghost. Hope is natural to the mind of man; and, in general, men have hope in the worst of times. But, as to divine things, hope is not natural to man; it is the fruit of the Spirit of God through faith in his Son.

The prayer contained in this verse reminds us, that there is no blessing which does not come to us from God, James, i. 17. He is called the God of love, of peace, of patience, of consolation, of hope, who fills his people with joy and peace. If, then, we desire to be filled with joy and peace, we must look to God. If we desire to *abound* in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we must with confidence pray to obtain his sacred influences and divine teaching. We must be careful not to grieve him by our evil conduct and evil desires.

V. 14.—*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren.*—The Apostle here intimates, that the reason of his writing to the believers as he had done was, not that he considered them deficient in the christian character, or uninstructed in the doctrines and duties of their profession. On the contrary, even he himself was persuaded concerning them, that they were *full of*

*goodness.* Mr Stuart confines this to kindness. There is no reason why it should not be extended to goodness in general, of which *kindness* is a part. As we ought continually and prominently to maintain, that there is naturally nothing good in men, we ought likewise to give equal prominence to the fact, that all believers, being born of God, and made new creatures, work the works of God, and in their minds possess those dispositions which are produced by the Spirit through the truth. In our flesh there is nothing good ; but from the work of the Spirit on our hearts we may be full of goodness. The honour of this redounds to God, as much as that of our faith. If faith is the gift of God, so “ we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” to the praise of the glory of God.

*Filled with all knowledge.*—Paul acknowledges that those to whom he wrote excelled in the knowledge of divine things, though he wrote to them with respect both to truth and duty. The commendations bestowed by the Apostle on the attainments of this church, show that there are comparative degrees in the knowledge of the Lord’s people ; and also that it is proper, on fit occasions, to confer approbation and praise on those who excel in knowledge. It is mere worldly wisdom, not countenanced by Scripture doctrine and example, to withhold commendation when due, lest it should serve to puff up. *Able also to admonish one another.*—The word in the original signifies to put in mind of duty, especially when it is transgressed. The Apostle undertook to admonish them ; but this did not imply that he considered them as unfit to admonish one another.

V. 15.—*Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,*

*Nevertheless.*—Though the Roman Christians were eminent in their attainment, yet the Apostle thought it necessary to write to them as he had done, with respect to some things, as to which he trusted they were previously acquainted. Such things he judged it right to bring again to their remembrance. It is proper, then, in the pastors of a church, to bring forward the truths and duties with which the brethren are already acquainted, as well as those with respect to which they may either be ignorant or deficient in knowledge. *Because of the grace that is given to me of God.*—This was the ground of his boldness. He spoke as an Apostle, and in all things advanced by him he was only the mouth of the Holy Ghost.

V. 16.—*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ.*—The grace of the apostleship was given to Paul in order to his being a minister of Christ to the Gentiles. *Ministering the gospel of God.*—The original word for ministry signifies to labour in a sacred office. Our term ministry sufficiently represents it. Calvin blames Erasmus for at first translating it in this way, and prefers to translate it “consecrating the gospel.” But this is evidently an improper translation, for Paul did not consecrate the gospel. The gospel is God’s word, and needs no consecration. Erasmus afterwards translated it, “sacrificing the gospel,” which is still worse. It is not the gospel which is here represented as a

figurative sacrifice, but the Gentiles. Believers are a sacrifice presented by the Apostle to God through the gospel. The gospel is the means by which the Gentiles are made a sacrifice. Mr Stuart translates it "performing the office of a priest in respect to the gospel of God." But this is liable to the same objection. It is not *in respect* to the gospel that Paul considers himself figuratively a priest. It is with respect to the sacrifice, namely, the believing Gentiles, who are fitted for presentation as a sacrifice by the gospel. *That the offering up of the Gentiles.*—The Gentiles are the thing presented to God in this sacrifice. This, it is obvious, is a sacrifice only figuratively, just as prayer and praise are called sacrifices. There is now no sacrifice in the proper sense of the word, and the Apostles were not priests, except as all believers are priests.

Many of the errors of the man of sin arise from considering teachers under the New Testament as successors of the priests under the law. But there is now no priesthood, except in Christ, who abides a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The priests, under the law of Moses, were his types. As he is come, and has engrossed the whole duties of the office to himself, he alone possesses priesthood. There is no longer any need of a typical priesthood, and the great sacrifice has been already offered. When the Apostles are spoken of as doing any part of the priest's office, it is in a figurative sense. It is in the same sense that the altar is spoken of. As there is no sacrifice now to be offered, there is now no altar. To give the Lord's table the name of an altar is very erroneous. It is wonderful to consider, how, from the figurative use of a few words in the New Testament and in early church history, a

number of the grossest and most superstitious doctrines and practices, as has been already observed, arose in the Church. The bread of the Lord's table at length became the body of Christ in a literal sense ; the table on which it lay became the altar ; the teachers became the priests who offered the sacrifices of the mass ; and the contributions of Christians became offerings. In all these things, and innumerable others, the figurative sense has been, by a gross imagination and the artifice of Satan, turned into a literal sense, to the utter subversion of truth.

*Might be acceptable.*—The Gentiles became an acceptable sacrifice to God only through the faith of the gospel. It is only by the blood of Christ that sinners can be washed from sin, and only through faith in Christ that any sinner obtains an interest in Christ's blood, and only through the gospel that faith in Christ is produced. All those who attempt to come to God in any other way are unacceptable to him. This cuts off the hope of all self-righteous persons, and of all unbelievers. It takes away, also, the foundation from the doctrine of those, who teach that Christ may be the Saviour of what they call pious heathens who have not heard of him. According to the Apostle Paul, the offering of the Gentiles is acceptable only through the gospel. *Sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*—As the sacrifices under the law were sanctified externally and typically, this figurative sacrifice is sanctified truly by the Holy Ghost. No person, then, can be acceptable to God who is not sanctified by his Spirit.

V. 17.—*I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.*

*I have therefore whereof I may glory.*—Paul says on



another occasion, “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it not a contradiction, then, to say here—“ I have whereof I may glory ?” There is no contradiction. The glorying which he disclaims respects his acceptance with God. The glorying which he here acknowledges respects his success in the preaching of the gospel ; and even this is not a glorying in himself, but a glorying in Christ Jesus. It was the signal favour of his Lord that gave him his office of Apostleship, qualified him for its discharge, and made him successful. From all the Apostle’s writings we learn that of this he had the most firm conviction. He gives thanks to the Lord, who had counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. But elsewhere he declares that he had “ obtained mercy of the Lord *to be faithful.*” In like manner, all that he did in his service is ascribed to God : “ Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” He had whereof to glory in the abundant and unmerited favour of God, but he always carefully avoids speaking of any thing done by him that was not the work of Christ. *In things that pertain to God.*—That is, things that respect the service of God.

V. 18.—*For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,*

*For I will not dare.*—Paul would not take to himself any portion of praise on account of the labours and success of others. He spoke only of the success which Christ had given him in his own work. This shows, that although all success is of God, yet that it is an honour and a ground of praise to be successful in Christ’s work. Many have supposed that it is wrong

to give any praise to the Lord's servants on account of their labours, diligence, and success in his service. They have judged that this encourages a spirit of self-righteousness and of pride. But this wisdom is not from God. It is human wisdom, and tends to damp exertion in the service of Jesus Christ. All our success is in Christ Jesus, as well as our ability and disposition to labour. Yet God has given praise to his servants for their diligence and success in his work. It is a sinful refinement to blame what God approves. The Apostle speaks here of what Christ wrought by him. In other places, he also speaks of what God wrought by him, Acts, xiv. 27 ; xv. 12.

*To make the Gentiles obedient.*—The obedience of the Gentiles is their belief of the gospel. To obey the gospel is to receive it, for it commands belief. Now, this obedience of the Gentiles to the gospel was Christ's work. *Christ wrought it.*—Faith is the gift of God. It is not to be ascribed either to him that preaches or to him that hears, but to Christ who by his Spirit opens the heart to believe the truth. But the preacher is employed as an agent. *Christ wrought this through the Apostle.* No man is made a Christian by any power less than God's, and by no other means than God's word. Christ wrought the obedience of the Gentiles through Paul, but the instrumentality belongs to God's word, as well as the agency to himself. Some connect this with the word immediately preceding, and understand it of the profession and practice of the believing Gentiles. Others understand it of the preaching, labours, and miracles of the Apostles. The next verse seems to determine for the latter sense.

V. 19.—*Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

*Through mighty signs and wonders.*—Rather through, or by the power of, signs and miracles. These are the deeds through which, as well as by Paul's preaching, the Lord made the Gentiles obedient. This includes all the miraculous works of the Apostle for the confirmation of the gospel. *By the power of the Spirit of God.*—Some understand this of the power by which the signs and wonders were performed ; others of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the gift of tongues, prophecy, &c. The latter opinion appears to be the true meaning.

*So that from Jerusalem.*—Some suppose that, as there is no mention in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul's preaching in Illyricum, and as it is only said that he preached as far as Illyricum, he did not enter that country. But the silence of the Acts of the Apostles is no evidence of this, and verse 23d seems to prove that he did preach in Illyricum, as well as in the intermediate countries between that province and Jerusalem. If there was no place in those parts for him to extend his labours on unoccupied ground, he must have preached in Illyricum also. Besides, that the gospel had been preached and that there were churches in Illyricum, appears from Titus going into Dalmatia. *I have fully preached the gospel of Christ,* or fulfilled the gospel.—The gospel was to be preached to all nations. He filled all the countries with the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thus was it given to Paul, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

V. 20.—*Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation :*

*Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel.*—The word translated *strived*, literally signifies to *love honour*; and as the love of honour stimulates to earnest exertions, the word came to signify, in a secondary sense, to endeavour earnestly, to strive. In this place, however, the primary sense appears to be that of the Apostle. He is speaking of the honour which God had conferred on him in the labour and success of the gospel; and consistently with this, he speaks of his ambition to occupy ground that had not been taken possession of by others. This is not indeed worldly ambition, but it is ambition which is lawful and commendable in Christians. *Not where Christ was named.*—That is, in places that had not previously even heard of Christ. Similiar ambition has often stimulated modern missionaries, and by their labours the gospel has been carried to countries that were previously strangers to the very name of Christ. This appears to show, that when any are strongly inclined to have the honour of being the means of subjecting new countries to the authority of Christ, they ought to endeavour to accomplish their desire. It is through this means that God excites men to fulfil his purposes of mercy to the different nations of the earth.

*Lest I should build upon another man's foundation.*—This determines the meaning of the word translated to *strive* in this place. The Apostle was desirous of laying the foundation of the building in as many countries as possible. This is more honourable than to go into countries where others have been successful. Dr Macknight understands this reason to indicate re-

luctance to perform the office of a subordinate teacher. But he evidently mistakes Paul's meaning. To teach believers converted by others, is not necessarily to perform the office of a subordinate teacher. With respect to those of the church at Rome itself, Paul was not the first who taught them, and he doubtless preached in many places where Christ had been named. This he did not avoid, though he was ambitious, as far as possible, to break up new ground, and have the honour of preaching to men who had not previously heard Christ. Calvin well observes, "There is no foundation 'for perverting this passage by applying it to the pastoral office; for we know that the name of Christ 'must always continue to be preached in well regulated and properly constituted churches, when the 'truth of the gospel has been for a long period felt and 'acknowledged.'" He that lays the foundation has more honour than he that builds on it in the Christian's edification, but the latter is not without his reward. All cannot have the honour, and therefore have not the ambition, to go as missionaries to heathen countries. He that waters shall have his own reward, as well as he that plants.

*V. 21.—But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.*

*But as it is written.*—This ambition of the Apostle was the means of fulfilling a prophecy with respect to the spread of the gospel in heathen countries. Thus it is that God fulfils his predictions and his purposes. He gives his people an earnest desire to be the means of accomplishing them at the moment when he designs their accomplishment. It will be thus that the gospel will at last be effectually carried to every country under

heaven. It is thus that modern missionaries have, in some measure, carried the gospel to the heathen, and although the slothfulness of the people of God in former ages is not without blame, it is because the time to fulfil God's predictions to the nations was not come that a like ambition to that of Paul was not found more generally to animate Christians. Whenever the Lord has work to do, he raises up men with a heart to perform it. This, however, is no excuse at any particular time for indifference or want of effort to spread the gospel. *To whom he was not spoken of*, Isa. lii. 15.—This intimates the preaching of the gospel to the heathens, and it proves also, that the Messiah was spoken of to the Jews. The law and the prophets spoke of him.

V. 22.—*For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.*

Paul's ambition to carry the gospel into countries where it had not been previously preached, had long prevented him from visiting Rome, where the gospel had been preached by others. It is important to teach believers all things, whatsoever Jesus has commanded. But doubtless it is more important to convert sinners from the thralldom of Satan. The peculiar business of an apostle and of missionaries, is the latter; the former that of the pastor, though neither object is to be neglected by the one or the other.

V. 23.—*But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;*

*But now, having no more place in these parts.*—Paul could not advance further in that direction. This seems to prove, as already asserted, that the Apostle had preached in Illyricum, as well as in the intermediate places. Had he not done so, there would still have

been place for him in these parts. When an opportunity of serving Christ in one direction is shut up, we ought to turn to another. When there is no opportunity of preaching Christ to those who have not heard of him, we ought to occupy ourselves in labouring among those by whom he is already known. Paul diligently employed his time to the greatest advantage. He was always in some way occupied in the service of his master. *Having a great desire these many years to come unto you.*—This shows, that the Lord's servants, with respect to the field of their labours, may lawfully be influenced by their desires. Paul was, no doubt, always sent by God to the place where he would have him to be ; but sometimes he sent him not by direct command, but by his own desire or providential circumstances, or the persecution of his enemies.

*V. 24.—Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.*

*Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you.*—The commission of the Apostles extended to all countries, but they were not always immediately directed with respect to the scene of their labours. Sometimes they proposed what they were unable to accomplish. This, no doubt, was always overruled by God, for the fulfilment of his own purposes, and his sending them to the places in which he designed them to labour. Sometimes, however, they were immediately directed, and either enjoined to go to a certain place, or restrained from going. The intention of Jesus in allowing them in general to direct their own course, while he overruled it in every instance, was no doubt for an example to us, that in directing our labours we

are to judge according to our own views and desires, and that we are not to expect miraculous or immediate directions. Missionaries sometimes err on this point, and seem to look for miraculous interposition to direct them in going or not going to certain places. This is what the Apostles themselves had not at all times, and which is by no means necessary. The gospel is to be preached to every creature, and if nothing in God's providence prevent our going according to our views and desires, yet we ought to look for the Divine direction. This, however, should be sought by prayer, through the influence of the Holy Spirit on our minds, and in the providence of God, and not through any immediate impression or supernatural communication. The providence of Jesus, whose is the command to preach the gospel, and who directs the course of all things, will either open the door or shut it according as it suits his sovereign pleasure.

It has been made a question whether Paul was ever in Spain. On the one side, some argue that, from his inspiration in writing this passage, he must have gone to that country, and others, for want of evidence that he was in Spain, argue that in writing these words he was not inspired. Both these opinions are wrong. Paul's inspiration in announcing his purposes, does not imply the necessity of his always fulfilling these purposes. He had fully determined to visit Spain, and this the Holy Spirit inspired him to declare. But he did not pledge the Divine power to accomplish this resolution. It was useful to declare the resolution, whether it was to be accomplished or not. His inspiration, then, is no evidence of his having visited Spain. But much less is the want of evidence of his being in



Spain, a proof of that he was not inspired ; for, if the inspiration of this passage necessarily imported that he must have been in Spain, want of positive information that he was there, so far from furnishing contrary evidence, is not even an objection. There are thousands of facts of which there are no records. Dr Macknight, then, reasons without attending to first principles, when he says, “ This, among other instances, is a proof that, ‘ in speaking of what he meant to do afterwards, the ‘ Apostle did not make known any determinations of ‘ God revealed to him by the Spirit, but his own resolutions and opinions only. For there is no evidence ‘ that he ever went to Spain.” The want of such evidence is no proof that he did not fulfil his purpose. The writer proceeds upon a false first principle, namely, that a prediction or declaration cannot be accounted as being really fulfilled unless there are records of its fulfilment. There are, indeed, other instances which show that Paul was sometimes disappointed in his expectations and purposes ; but this is not such an instance. The only reason why we should hesitate in believing that Paul was in Spain is, that this is not necessarily required by the inspiration of the passage. It is possible that he might not be able to fulfil the purpose which he was inspired to declare. If the inspiration of the passage required that Paul must visit Spain, then we have the fullest warrant to believe that he was there. Tradition affirms that Paul was in Spain ; but this is not evidence.

*For I trust to see you in my journey.*—This shows that Paul’s resolution was his own, and that its fulfilment was a matter of uncertain hope, not of absolute prediction. He planned, it would appear, his visits in

such a manner as not unnecessarily to consume time. He purposed to visit Rome on his way to Spain. *And to be brought on my way thitherward by you.*—The original word translated “to be brought on my way,” signifies to conduct, escort, or send forward. In the latter sense, as implying the defraying all the expenses of the journey, the word seems to be used here, and on some other occasions in the New Testament. The Lord could have miraculously provided a supply for the apostles while they preached the gospel, or he could have commanded for this purpose the treasures of the Roman empire; but he chose to do this by the contributions of his people.

*Filled with your company.*—This shows the great delight that the Apostle had in the society of believers. Ought not Christians to delight in meeting one another from the remotest parts of the earth? What a hindrance to the cultivation of this principle are the divisions of Christians into sects and parties! *Somewhat filled.*—By this the Apostle intimates, that though their society for a short time would be highly gratifying to him, yet his delight in it could never be satiated. This is true christian love. An introduction to the Emperor and the great men of his council would not have gratified the Apostle so much as the society of the despised believers in Rome. Nothing should separate the mutual affection of those who are united in Christ. If the ignorance of the most ignorant of them does not shut the bowels of Christ with respect to them, should it do so with us? We all know but in part.

*V. 25.*—*But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*

The Apostle had proposed to visit Rome, the capital

of the world, and to carry the gospel into Spain, where it had not yet been preached. He had long been prevented from visiting the Roman Christians, and yet, instead of going thither now, he chooses to go to Jerusalem, carrying money for the relief of the poor. But was not the preaching of the gospel a greater matter than serving tables? Could not others have been found to carry this money without burdening Paul. If Paul, in order to save time for the preaching of the gospel seldom baptized believers, why did he spend it in carrying this gift of the Gentiles to the Jewish brethren? The object must assuredly have been very important; and doubtless it was that he might improve the opportunity of overcoming the prejudice of the Jews towards the Gentiles, by this evidence of their liberality and love. This would tend to knit the Jews and Gentiles more closely together. And it was for this purpose, no doubt, that the dearth was occasioned in Jerusalem. For a similar purpose, it appears that God, in all ages, places some of his people in circumstances where they require to be assisted, while he renders others able to assist, because this mutually attaches them to each other, as well as tries them. We here also see that it is not merely to the wants of the brethren in the same church that his people should attend, but where it is necessary, they ought to contribute assistance to the wants of the brethren in the remotest parts of the earth. This contribution was sent from one quarter of the globe to another. Nothing can more clearly show the importance of this matter than that in order to attend to it Paul postponed the most important engagements.

V. 26.—*For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

*For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia.*  
—Or, Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased, or have thought good. The words Macedonia and Achaia are here used for the brethren or churches of Macedonia and Achaia. The places are put for those who live in them. Not, however, all the inhabitants of those places, but the churches of Christ only. This shows that the Scriptures employ the same figurative language that is familiar to other writings. This phraseology also justifies the manner in which we speak of the epistles of the Apostles. The Epistle to the Romans, to the Corinthians, &c. By this we do not mean that the Epistles were addressed to the inhabitants of those cities universally—as Dr Macknight, with an ignorance of Scripture seldom exceeded, and of the character of the Apostolic Epistles, has asserted in his note, chap. i. 7, respecting this Epistle—but to the believers who resided in them. *It hath pleased.*—This contribution was not absolutely prescribed to them by the Apostle, but was a free-will offering of their own. The support of the Lord's poor is to proceed from the love of their brethren for Christ's sake. *To make a certain contribution.*—It was a collection in which they shared individually. Each contributed his part. *Poor saints*, or the poor of the saints. The word saints is not only as proper a name for all the disciples of Christ, as the word Christian itself, but it is one much more frequently used in the New Testament. Yet in after times the designation of Christian was extended to whole nations, while that of saints, as has been formerly remarked, was limited to a few exalted to that rank, on

account of supposititious piety, by the act of the man of sin.

V. 27.—*It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*

*It hath pleased them verily.*—Paul repeats this expression, in order to show the grounds on which he used it. They thought it good to act so, and good reason they had for it. It was, indeed, a matter of their own free will; yet it was one to which they were called by the voice of duty. They were debtors to the Jews for the gospel. Not only did the kingdom of God first originate with the Jews, but it was through the instrumentality of Jews that the Gentiles received it. They carried it to their doors, and besought them to receive the blessing. From this we may learn the extent of the obligation, and the unity of the body of Christ. The services of any one of the Lord's people lays those who receive them under obligations to the whole family to which they belong. If the Gentiles were under obligation to the Jewish brethren on account of being made partakers of the gospel through their means, how much more are converts under obligation to those who are personally the means of their conversion. *Spiritual things.*—This phrase denotes the blessings of the gospel, and communion with God, and every thing that concerns the soul and body in their future state, as distinguished from those things that concern the wants of the body, and relate only to this world, which are called carnal things.

V. 28.—*When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*

*When, therefore, I have performed this.*—That is,

when I shall have finished what I have commenced as to the matter of the contribution. This would be when the poor of the saints at Jerusalem had received the gift of their brethren. *And have sealed to them this fruit.*—Several different interpretations are given of this expression. The meaning appears to be this. Fruit means *fruit of the faith of the gospel*. The contribution of the Gentile churches was a fruit of their faith in Christ. As to the sealing of this fruit, it is to be remarked that a seal was used to stamp any thing as genuine, and to distinguish it from a counterfeit. Now this fruit was a convincing evidence that their faith was real, and that the Gentiles had received the gospel, not in name only, but in truth. The Apostle sealed this fruit, when he exhibited this evidence to the Jewish believers of the faith of their Gentile brethren. Dr Macknight, and Mr Stuart, with others, understand this sealing as indicating the security, or making sure the contribution to those for whom it was destined. But this gives an unworthy view both of Paul and the Gentile churches. It represents him as personally undertaking the charge or conveyance of this contribution, in order that it might be more securely carried. But surely there were confidential persons in the churches who could have carried the money with as much security as the Apostle himself; and Paul would not indulge such an injurious jealousy with respect to the brethren. He had a higher object in conducting this mission of mercy to the Jewish brethren. By this means he would remove the doubts and disarm the jealousy of the Jews with respect to the Gentiles. No other object could be of sufficient importance to detain Paul from visiting Rome and Spain, but that paramount

object of uniting the Jews and Gentiles. Union among Christians, we here see even placed before the carrying of the gospel to new countries.

*I will come by you into Spain.*—What Paul had stated formerly as a matter of hope, he here states absolutely. An absolute statement, however, does not necessarily bind by promise, but is only a declaration of the full intention of the present moment. Men speak absolutely of their purposes when they are fully resolved to perform them. But sometimes these purposes it may not be possible to fulfil. A promise is a very different thing from an absolute declaration. Some persons act like mere cavilling casuists in explaining duty with respect to this point. If a person once refuses the thing asked, it is looked on as a breach of truth if he afterwards yield. But there may be just reason to change his mind, and his absolute declaration in the negative was only the expression of his mind at the time of utterance. Some speculatists have held, that if a thing be matter of duty, gratitude is not due to the benefactor from him who receives the benefit, nor praise from others on account of it. This is false morality. To make this contribution was a duty as to the Gentiles, but it was the duty of the Jews to receive it with gratitude; and Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 2, praises the performance. “I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago.” Some persons would be afraid to bestow a word of commendation on the most disinterested christian conduct; but the Apostle does not scruple to boast of the conduct of Christians. We may here, also, notice the condemnation of the false morality of some casuists. They hold it unscriptural, and contrary to the simplicity of the gospel, to urge

people to duty by any other motive than the love of God. But the Apostle urges forward the disciples by the zeal of other Christians. In fact, in Scripture, every motive belonging to human nature, as it is the work of God, is freely employed to urge to duty and deter from sin. The refinement which refuses any of the weapons that God has employed, is calculated not to promote but to injure the service of God.

*V. 29.—And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

*And I am sure.*—Dr Macknight limits this knowledge to the Apostle's experience. But this limitation is improper. If he knew this, he could know it only from God. *Fulness of the blessing of the gospel.*—Paul was sure that God would give success to the gospel, and that he would come in the fulness of this blessing—that is, with the richest measure of this success. This visit, then, would be fraught with the happiest results to the Romans. How ought christian churches to go about all their affairs, and undertake all their work for the spreading of the kingdom and truth of Christ, with the most earnest prayers for this blessing! And all who preach the gospel ought to look for this as essentially necessary to their success. Dr Macknight expounds this, "I shall come empowered to bestow on 'you abundantly the gifts of the Spirit.'" This, no doubt, was included in the blessing, but it is far from exhausting it. Calvin's view of the passage, which he mentions as the general one, cannot be approved. He prefers the interpretation that makes Paul express the conviction, that he will find the Christians at Rome abounding in good works. The words have no appearance of expressing such a meaning. It is the Apostle



himself who was to come in the fulness of this blessing. It is not said, that when he should come he would find among them this blessing.

*V. 30.—Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me ;*

*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.*—To do every thing for the sake of Christ, implies that the thing is agreeable to Christ. It must show love or obedience to him. We could not be properly required to do any thing for Christ's sake which was contrary, or rather which we did not know to be agreeable to the will of Christ. To pray for one another in our mutual difficulties, is a thing most pleasing and honourable to Christ. But when we are called upon for Christ's sake to assist in the promotion or maintenance of superstition or false religion, or in any way to support or countenance it, we ought to resist and not comply. The votaries of the Romish apostasy have the love of God or of Christ in their mouth continually when they call for assistance in their superstitious works. But the disciples of Christ ought to testify loudly against them, instead of bidding them God speed with their aid. For Christ's sake, implies also that those addressed are the people of Christ. They who are not such can do nothing for his sake.

*Love of the Spirit.*—Some understand this of the love which the Spirit has for Christ's people, and others of the love to one another which the Spirit works in them. The expression is capable in itself of either sense, and other considerations must determine the preference. Some unite both opinions, which is the most mischievous of all methods of interpretation, as

it tends to encourage us in slothfulness with respect to the meaning of Scripture, and to a prostitution of Scripture as implying a sense which it does not truly bear. No passage unites two different senses at once. Yet those who, in interpreting Scripture, attach to it only one meaning, when, according to the best of their judgment, it is the true one, are often loudly accused of dogmatism.

The love of God may be either God's love to us, or our love to God ; and, accordingly, in Scripture, it is sometimes used in the one sense, and sometimes in the other. But it never at the same time signifies both. It is always the connexion, and other circumstances, that must determine the meaning. The love of the Spirit here, is most probably the love which the Spirit works in his people, which disposes them to love one another : Now, from this principle of pure love, Paul entreats their prayers for himself. Love is not the fruit of the natural heart of man. Men are by nature hateful and hating one another. When sinners believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit produces in their hearts love to one another. This phrase, also, whether it refers to the love which the Spirit produces in believers, or which he has for them, clearly implies his Godhead.

*That ye strive together with me in your prayers.*—The word here employed signifies the strongest exertion, alluding to the struggle of wrestlers in the games. Prayer, then, is not a formal exercise. This shows the great importance at all times, to the Lord's people, of an ardent spirit of prayer. It is through prayer that the Lord is usually pleased to bestow his favours. He requires to be asked, and asked repeatedly and earnestly, for the things which he has promised to

bestow. "Thus saith the Lord God,"—in promising to confer the greatest blessings,—“I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them,” Ezekiel, xxxvi. 37. *To God*, namely, the Father.—This verse refers to the whole Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and here the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, his power and influence, are referred to, as in verses 13, 16, and 19. *For me*.—This shows the propriety and importance of prayer for one another. Even the Apostle Paul, with all his distinguishing privileges, deems it a matter of the greatest importance to himself. If Paul needed the prayers of his brethren, who were so far behind him, can they be unimportant to Christ's people in general?

*V. 31.—That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;*

*That I may be delivered.*—What was the thing for which the Apostle requested the prayers of his fellow Christians? It was to be delivered from death and danger in the discharge of his work. This shows that, how willing soever we ought to be to sacrifice our lives for Christ's sake, yet that, as far as possible, we ought to desire to preserve life. The Apostle is not ashamed to call on his brethren to unite in the most fervent supplications for his preservation from death, and from the hand of his enemies. How different is this from the language of Ignatius, who seemed rather to call for the prayers of his brethren, that he might be honoured with a crown of martyrdom, than to be preserved from his enemies. Christians ought to be willing to give their lives for Christ rather than deny him or refuse to do any part of his known will. But

it is not only lawful but dutiful to take every proper means for their deliverance out of danger. If even an Apostle, in the cause of Christ, was so desirous of preserving life, what shall we think of those who profess a spirit of indifference respecting it, which would wantonly throw it away ?

*Them that do not believe in Judea.*—Paul knew the danger of the visit to his countrymen. He was in greater danger in Jerusalem than in any of the most barbarous heathen countries ; yet he did not decline his duty. This is true christian courage. We ought to take every precaution to preserve our lives, but we ought not to decline duty to save them. We should go forward and look to God to deliver us out of the hand of them who do not believe. Those who reject the gospel, will always be its enemies, and from such therefore the Apostle prays to be delivered. The gospel declares not only salvation to those who believe, but damnation to all who reject it. It must then be an object of hatred to all who do not believe. And it is remarkable, that, while the most debasing superstitions are looked upon with indifference by the wise men of the world, the coolest and most philosophic of their number kindle into wrath against the gospel. If, then, the Apostle foresaw the danger of this visit to Jerusalem, and if he so strongly desired to be delivered from it, his object of visiting his countrymen must have been exceedingly important.

*My service.*—Paul was in the highest dignity of the Church of Christ on earth, yet he willingly undertook an office of the most dangerous service for the supply of the temporal wants of his brethren. *For Jerusalem.*—This is another instance of figurative language em-

ployed by inspiration. Jerusalem is put for the saints in Jerusalem—the city for the inhabitants, and not all the inhabitants, but certain inhabitants well known to the reader. *May be accepted.*—This seems at first sight very strange. What fear could there be, that the supply of the wants of the distressed would not be acceptable to them. Yet Paul makes it a matter of the most earnest prayer for himself and his brethren, to whom he writes, that the saints at Jerusalem might be disposed to receive the gift cordially. This, beyond all contradiction, shows how averse the Jews were to the Gentiles, and the reason why the Apostle urged this collection so strongly, and conducted the mission in his own person. Why shall we now expect perfection in knowledge or attainments among the people of God? In the apostolic churches we indeed see none recognised as members but such as were judged to be believers, but they were believers with every degree of weakness, both in knowledge and in character. Calvin understands Paul's doubts with respect to the acceptableness of the gift of the Gentiles, to have reference to prejudice against himself on the part of the believing Jews. But this has no just foundation, and, had this been the fear, the danger could have been easily prevented without exposing Paul to the persecution of the unbelievers. Could not Paul have sent the money by the hands of others? This would have guarded against the supposed prejudice of the brethren in Jerusalem, and have prevented the danger of death with respect to Paul from the hands of unbelieving Jews.

V. 32.—*That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*

*That I may come unto you with joy.*—Dr Macknight

as well as Calvin, understands this as the result of the prayer, and not as one of the things prayed for. The result of the acceptable reception of the gift would be Paul's joyful visit to Rome. But, most evidently, the words referred to are not the supposed result of the prayer, but are a part of the prayer itself, along with the other things before mentioned. The Apostle besought them not only to pray that the saints at Jerusalem might accept the gift, but in addition to this, they were desired to pray, that he might, after delivering the gift, come to them with joy. It would, no doubt, be a matter of joy for the Apostle, that the gift of which he was the bearer might be well received. But it is not to this solely that he refers, but to joy in general. Dr Macknight seems to be greatly mistaken, when he says, "How much the Apostle was disappointed in his 'generous design, and in what disadvantageous circumstances he came to Rome, the history of the Acts informs us." There is every reason to believe that the gift was well received. He was indeed disappointed with respect to the manner of his coming to Rome, but he might not be disappointed in his joy when he arrived.

From this we may learn, that if even on God's errand we have need of prayer for success in our journey, how much more do we need prayer in our own daily business. So much does God encourage the exercise of prayer, that he wills us to pray for success when we do his own work. The whole passage, also, is the strongest refutation of the theory of those who suppose that prayer is useless, because of the unchangeable purposes of God. The express command of the Spirit of inspiration annihilates all the subtle speculations of men on

this subject. We here see that it is not only lawful and proper to pray to the unchangeable God, but that it is our duty to pray to him to prosper us even in his own work. How unlike is God's book to human wisdom!—on every page there shines the evidence of its Divine origin.

*By the will of God.*—This shows us that all events depend on God's will. Nothing happens without his appointment. All the efforts of his enemies, as well as all the exertions of his servants, only fulfil his irresistible purposes. Without his will, nothing takes place on earth more than in heaven. God not only permits every thing that takes place on earth, as some are inclined in this way to soften down his sovereignty, but he wills and appoints it. Calvin well observes on this passage, “The sentence, *by the will of God*, instructs ‘us in the necessity of devoting ourselves to prayer, ‘since God alone directs all our paths, and all our steps, ‘by his gracious and unerring providence.”

*And may with you be refreshed.*—The word literally signifies to recline together, in order to mutual rest, and in a secondary sense, to be refreshed together, after fatigue. Here it beautifully expresses that mutual comfort and refreshment which believers, amidst their toils, and dangers, and troubles in the world, enjoy in speaking together of the things of Christ. To reflect on the word of God gives great refreshment, but to reflect on this in company with other Christians is the most heavenly exercise. Dr Macknight confines the refreshment to the subject of the reconciliation of the Jews with the Gentiles. But it refers to every consolation that might be the object of their conversation about the things of Christ. From this we see that the

Apostle had like other believers the same need of refreshment from reflection on the word of God, and the intercourse with the brethren. Paul is not ashamed to speak of the refreshment which he expected from the company of the Roman Christians, as well as of that which they should receive from his company.

V. 33.—*Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

*Now the God of peace be with you all.*—In this manner the Apostle concludes this part of his Epistle to the believers at Rome, wishing them the presence and the blessing of *the God of peace*. This expression is used only by Paul in his Epistles, in which he employs it frequently. Peace, in Scripture, signifies generally all kinds of good and prosperity; as it is said, Isaiah, xlv. 7, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil.” To say, then, that God is the God of peace, is to say that he is the author of every blessing. The Spirit of God calls the good state of the conscience of the believer peace and prosperity, whatever may be his case regarding things external. This peace Jesus promised to his disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” But peace may be taken particularly for the love through which God has reconciled his people to himself by Jesus Christ, thus expressing the goodness of God revealed in the gospel. In the Old Testament God is called *the Lord of Hosts*; but, in the New Testament, having made peace by the blood of the cross of his Son, he is pleased to call himself *the God of peace*. It is this peace which the angel, with the heavenly host, celebrated in saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace, goodwill toward men.” The Apostles usually express this



in their salutations, saying, Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, uniformly, however, placing grace first, without which they could not have peace. Paul, in here employing this title, *the God of peace*, indicates the free access which his people have to God, and the assurance that their petitions shall be heard ; for what shall they not obtain from him who has laid aside all his wrath, and breathes towards them only grace and peace ? We see, then, the efficacy of the peace of God, and what consolation believers should experience, and what confidence towards God in their prayers, when they consider that God is the God of peace.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*V. 1.—I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea :*

*I commend unto you Phebe.*—Paul here introduces Phebe to the brethren at Rome. Letters of recommendation were unnecessary for those who derived their credentials specially from the Lord, and who were officially well known to the churches. Paul disclaims the necessity of such letters for himself to the church at Corinth, though at his first visit he needed the introduction of Barnabas to the brethren at Jerusalem. There might be doubts respecting Phebe at Rome, as there were doubts at Jerusalem with respect to Paul, and these could not be removed by mere profession, unsupported by sufficient evidence, whether of her faith, or of his apostleship.

*Phebe.*—This was the name of the moon, one of the objects of the worship of the heathens. The moon was revered by females in honour of the Goddess Diana. This person retaining that name shows that there is no necessity to renounce names that have been adopted under heathenism in honour of false gods. There is no necessity to give other names, as Christian names. *Sister.*—The terms brother and sister, taken from human relations, are given to express the new and spiritual relationship which subsists among believers, who by a new nature have become the sons of God

and the brethren of Christ. This shows how nearly Christians are related, and how affectionately they ought to love one another. If Christians be all really brethren and sisters, nothing should disunite them in affection.

*Which is a servant, or deaconess.*—As deacons were appointed to attend to the poor, so deaconesses were specially set apart in the churches in order to attend to the wants of their own sex.

*v. 2.*—*That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.*

*That ye receive her.*—The purpose of Paul's recommendation was, that Phebe should be received by the Church. *In the Lord.*—That is, that they would receive her as a member of the body of Christ. This shows that none ought to be received into communion by a church but those who are considered as being in the Lord. It shows, also, that all who are in the Lord ought to be received. The ground of Christian fellowship is union with Christ.

*As becometh saints.*—Literally, worthily of the saints; that is, in a manner worthy of the saints. This is usually understood as respecting the receivers,—in a manner that becomes saints to receive such persons. But it may respect the received, and signify—in a manner worthy of those who are received, viz. the saints. The latter appears to be the meaning. The word *worthily* applies best to this reference. The saints may be poor and despised, but they belong to the family in heaven; they are the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sons of God. They are therefore worthy of honourable reception by their brethren. *And that ye assist her.*—The saints are not

only to receive one another into fellowship and to hospitality, but also they are to pay attention to strangers thus received, assisting them in the business which may have brought them to their place of residence.

*For she hath been a succourer of many.*—In addition to the general claim, the Apostle enhances the particular claims of Phebe by a reference to her own character. She was a most devoted person, and had exerted herself in assisting the brethren in distress. *Myself also.*—In what way Phebe had ministered to the assistance of the Apostle we are not informed. But she might have many opportunities of relieving him, either by contributing to his support or ministering personally to his comfort. Here we see that while the Apostle often shows the obligation of the churches and individuals to himself, yet he acknowledges with gratitude the services of all who contributed to his relief.

*V. 3.—Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus :*

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila.*—The sending of salutations to particular persons or bodies was an indication of peculiar esteem and love. This shows us, in the first place, that in all things, not sinful, we may comply with the customs of mankind. There is no good, but much evil, in singularity, with respect to any thing, except such things as God has either forbidden or required. It is only when the authority of Jesus interposes that we are bound to depart from the world. There will be sufficient opportunities of doing this without creating them for ourselves. Singularity in dress or in phraseology has no countenance from the word of God. Christians are to show sobriety in their language and in their dress, but in neither are they to

form a fashion of their own. In the second place, we may learn from these salutations that it is not contrary to the universal love which we ought to entertain for the whole household of God, to have a peculiar regard for individuals. Paul singles out individuals from the body in general, as peculiar objects of his attentions and remembrance.

*My helpers.*—Paul is not ashamed to mention those persons, one of whom was a woman, who is here first named, as his helpers in the gospel. He shows no jealousy about the invasion of his office in their labours to spread the gospel. To fill any office in a church of Christ belongs only to those whom God has appointed to it, but to labour in the gospel, either publicly or privately, is not peculiar to any office—not even to the office of an Apostle, but belongs to every Christian, according to the ability conferred on him by the Head of the Church. Christians are in general to blame for labouring so little in the Lord's service, but they can never be charged with labouring too much. Priscilla and Aquila are styled by the Apostle, *fellow labourers in Christ Jesus*. And there is no doubt that Jesus will acknowledge all those persons as such, whether male or female, whether in office or out of office, in his churches, who have laboured to make sinners acquainted with the gospel of salvation.

V. 4.—*Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

*Who have for my life laid down their own necks.*—We also speak of venturing the neck, or laying down the head, and both idioms are proverbial expressions, denoting to expose to death in whatever manner it may take place. This expression is proverbial, and is

grounded on the manner of taking away the life of criminals on the block. Priscilla and Aquila are said to have laid down their necks, not because they had done so literally, but because they acted in such a manner as to expose their lives to jeopardy. A Christian is not required to substitute himself in the room of another Christian who is condemned to death. For this would be to go beyond the requirement of the law—it would be to love our neighbours better than ourselves. But there may be occasions when it is duty to act in such a manner for the benefit of the brethren, as to hazard life. This we are not to decline. This is what is meant by the Apostle John, when he says that “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

*Unto whom not only I give thanks.*—The devoted conduct of this disciple and his wife was nothing but their duty; yet Paul returns them thanks before all the churches, and all the world. The speculations of some on this subject would banish gratitude as a christian virtue. To do good to the brethren is duty in all Christians, but to be thankful for good done is equally duty. *But also all the churches of the Gentiles.*—Though the particular instance of exemplary benevolence shown by Priscilla and Aquila towards the Apostle is not recorded, yet no doubt it was well known at the time in all the churches, and the whole Gentile brethren considered themselves under obligations for the conduct of these two devoted Christians.

*V. 5.—Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.*

*Likewise greet the church that is in their house.*—Besides saluting Priscilla and Aquila, the Apostle

sends his salutation to the church which assembled in their house. The same expression respecting the church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla occurs in 1 Cor. xvi. 19. On this passage Calvin remarks: "It is 'worthy of observation, that Paul could not confer a 'more distinguished honour and ornament on this 'family, than by making mention of the church in their 'house. I am not satisfied with Erasmus's translation, 'congregation, for Paul undoubtedly made an honour- 'able mention of the *church* in this passage." *Salute my well-beloved* (rather, my beloved) *Epenetus*.—Paul here calls Epenetus his beloved. He loved all Christians, but when he styles any of them his beloved, it imports that they were peculiarly objects of his affection. But to show this, there is no need, with our version, to translate the word *well-beloved*, because the English word *beloved* is as capable as the Greek of expressing such a meaning. This is a distinguished honour to Epenetus. If he was the beloved of Paul, he must have been eminent as a servant of Christ.

*First-fruits*.—That is, the first converted in the place mentioned. Such persons are called the first-fruits of the place, in allusion to the first-fruits under the law. The first-fruits were offered unto God before any of the harvest was used, which was a setting apart of the rest to the service of man, and a pledge of the harvest. It is here implied to be a peculiar honour to be the first to believe the gospel in any country or district. This honour is conferred by God in a sovereign way. This shows that, though all believers are equally the purchase of Christ, and that they are all equally washed from sin in his blood, yet that they are not all partakers of equal honours. Here we see,

also, that Paul, instead of refusing to give praise to the saints, on account of any distinction, avails himself of every opportunity to bring into notice whatever may be creditable to those whom he mentions. *Of Achaia.*—Some, on the authority of certain manuscripts and versions, have substituted Asia for Achaia. The authority, however, does not seem sufficient. The objection, namely, that the household of Stephanas is elsewhere said to be the first fruits of Achaia, is not applicable, for Epenetus may have been one of that household, and in that case, the passages are quite consistent. Besides, the change to Asia may have been adopted in the manuscripts and versions, in order to avoid a contradiction which was apprehended from the common reading. *Unto Christ.*—That is, Epenetus was the first-fruits offered or presented to Christ, as the first-fruits under the law were presented unto God. This is a proof of the Deity of Christ. If believers are presented as an offering to Christ, he must be God.

*V. 6.—Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.*

That is, laboured much in serving us, not, according to Dr Macknight, who “laboured *with us*,” in the work of the gospel. Many women laboured in the gospel with the Apostle, but that is no reason for forcing this phrase to refer to such. Works of kindness to the Apostle were worthy of approbation as well as the peculiar work of disseminating the gospel. This shows that every one has a talent, and ought to exercise it in the service of Christ. All are not missionaries or preachers of the gospel, but all may in some way assist in it.

*V. 7.—Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

It is true, indeed, as Dr Macknight observes, that



the Apostle (Rom. ix. 3) calls all the Jews his kinsmen ; but as he here distinguishes individuals by this character, it is necessary to understand him as speaking of kindred in a more limited sense. Though every Jew was, in a certain sense, related to Paul, and he calls the whole nation his kinsmen in the sense to which he there refers ; yet there would be no propriety in singling out individuals of the nation, as related to him who were not so actually. Here, then, we see how desirous the Apostle is to express his consideration of the brethren individually, so far as was in his power. This, also, recognises the propriety of attachment to kindred. Though all Christians are brethren, yet this does not interfere with the attachment peculiar to the relations which God himself has established among men. This is of great importance, as it sets aside the speculations of persons who would have us believe, that all relations in life must be absorbed by the union of believers in Christ.

*My fellow-prisoners.*—When, where, or by whom, this imprisonment took place, we have no account ; yet it is not the less certain. How absurd, then, is it to reason, as many do, as if research were necessary, in order to prove what the Scriptures allege in general terms. It is a distinguished honour to be imprisoned for the cause of Christ. As that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination with God, so this, which is disgraceful in the eyes of men, is the highest honour before God. *Who are of note* or distinguished.—This is another proof that, though all Christians are equally pardoned and equally justified, God acts as a sovereign in this as in every thing else. *Among the Apostles.*—Those persons, from their active co-opera-

tion with the Apostles, were well known to them and distinguished among them.

*Were in Christ.*—To be in Christ is to be a Christian, to be a member of the spiritual body of Christ. This takes place by faith, and in the first moment of believing in him. *Before me.*—Here priority of conversion to God is reckoned an honour; and Paul, instead of claiming all honours to himself, is solicitous to exhibit what is honourable in every man's situation, and to give the preference to others whenever that preference is due. The fathers, as they are called, were pious men, but often lamentably deficient in judgment, and generally bad reasoners. From the fact that these persons, Andronicus and Junia, were Christians before Paul, and that they were distinguished among the Apostles, Origen infers that they were of the number of the seventy disciples. This is a conclusion without premises. Such conjectural reasoning imposes on many, as it has the appearance of giving us additional information, and containing nothing contrary to the Scriptures. But it affords a most mischievous precedent for perverting the word of God, and in no instance can it be of any service.

V. 8.—*Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.*

This person is another of those distinguished objects of the Apostle's love. Paul loved all the brethren, but for some he had a peculiar affection. Amplias was beloved of Paul in the Lord, as a Christian, or one who was a member of the spiritual body of Christ. Amplias, then, as he was one of the peculiar objects of Paul's love in Christ, must have been distinguished for his devotedness to Christ.

V. 9.—*Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.*

Paul, as we have before seen, felt no jealousy of others labouring in the Lord, but distinguishes all of them as peculiar objects of his regard. They who endeavour to check the efforts of any of the disciples of Christ, in aiming to save sinners by communicating to them the knowledge of the gospel, have a spirit very opposite to that of Paul, and are counteracting what he commands. It is worthy of observation, also, that though Paul was an inspired teacher, yet he freely distinguishes the humblest of those who were, in any manner, engaged in the work of the gospel as his fellow-labourers. Stachys is one of those whom Paul honours with an expression of peculiar love for Christ's sake. How unlike is the spirit of this Apostle from that of men who, under mistaken notions, regard with coldness, dislike, or jealousy, the labours of those who are not called to office in the Church of Christ.

V. 10.—*Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.*

Apelles is here distinguished as a tried disciple. It is mentioned to his honour, that he was tried and *approved in Christ*. The Lord's people have various and widely diversified characteristics as Christians. The Apostle selects that peculiar trait in the characters of those of whom he writes, for which they are severally distinguished. Some of them are tried with peculiar afflictions, and their obedience to their Lord is put to the severest test. When they stand this fiery trial it is the most distinguished honour, and their trials in the service of Christ ought to be held up to notice. This is due to them from their brethren, and it is a great en-

couragement to others who are similarly tried. All the Lord's people are not exposed to trials equally severe ; and when the Lord calls any of them to glorify his name by suffering peculiarly for his sake, we are here taught to treat them with peculiar honour. How very unfounded, then, and unscriptural, are the views of those who would fear the encouragement of a proud legal spirit, were they to utter a word of praise with respect to the characters of any of the Lord's servants. From perceiving an extreme on one hand, they plunge into the opposite. But they confound things entirely distinct. That praise which a worldly spirit is accustomed to seek or to give, is quite different from that which the Apostle confers. The latter excites to greater devotedness ; but the former puffs up, and is quite opposed to the spirit of the gospel. " How can ye believe," says Christ, " who receive honour one of another." Such persons love the praise of men more than the praise of God. But the honour which is given by the Lord's servants, after the example of Paul, is to the honour of the Lord, and for the interest of his cause.

*Aristobulus' household.*—Aristobulus was evidently a personage of great distinction who had many domestics, of whom there were some who had believed the gospel. When the head of the family believed, he was usually saluted, and his household with him. When, therefore, salutations are sent to some of his family or slaves, and not to himself, there is no reason to conclude that Aristobulus was a believer. It is true, as Dr Macknight suggests, he might have been abroad or dead, but there is no need of such suppositions where no part of the statement implies that he was a believer.

From this we see the sovereignty of God, in calling some of a family, and leaving others in unbelief. And we may see the peculiarity of this sovereignty, in calling the slaves and overlooking the master. God does not judge as man judges. It would have been as easy for the Lord Jesus to have called Aristobulus as the meanest of his domestics; and human wisdom would have given the preference to the master. We see this exemplified in a thousand instances in our own day. Religious parties, in order to advance their interests, often select as their chief patrons and officers the greatest personages who will consent to give them their names; and even though they should be manifest enemies to the gospel by wicked works. When the Lord has need of the talents of the great, the rich, or the learned, he can convert them, and when he does convert them, they are a blessing for which God ought to be praised; but some persons choose those whom Christ has not chosen, even the enemies of Christ, for which they will have no praise from their master.

V. 11.—*Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the hous hold of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.*

*Salute Herodion my kinsman.*—This is another person that Paul acknowledges as a relation, thereby recognising the affection becoming the natural ties of kindred. The household of Narcissus is saluted like that of Aristobulus. Whether this Narcissus was the distinguished favourite of the Emperor Claudius, the Scriptures do not determine, and it, therefore, can be of no importance to be ascertained. It might minister a question to curiosity, and thereby lead away from profitably considering what the Scriptures contain, in order to discover what they do not contain. This is a

vain as well as an unprofitable way of spending time. Persons who indulge in it may fancy that they are studying, and throwing light upon Scripture ; but they are only covering God's word with a heap of rubbish, gratifying an idle curiosity and tending to draw away attention from the truths of eternal importance which the Scriptures reveal.

*Which are in the Lord.*—This shows us what sort of persons were recognised in the first churches. They were such only as were believed to be in the Lord, that is, members of the spiritual body of Christ. It shows, also, that persons, who, at the time appeared to be Christians, were considered as such, without any distrust with respect to the reality of their faith, though, with respect to some, the fact might afterwards manifest the contrary. Man judges by evidence, and is warranted to proceed with confidence upon that evidence, though the Searcher of hearts may see the profession to be without the true knowledge of God, or change of heart. This explains the passage in Ezekiel with respect to the righteous turning away from his righteousness ; and the passage in Hebrews, “ If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

V. 12.—*Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.*

*Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord.*—These were women who laboured in the gospel. This shows that, while women are excluded from speaking in the Church, they are not excluded from labouring in the gospel. The Lord has not only permitted women to labour in the gospel, but he has, both in the apostolic, and in the present time, singularly blessed their la-

bours. *Beloved Persis*.—She was another woman who employed herself in the service of the gospel, and is peculiarly distinguished as labouring much in the Lord. Even among the faithful servants of the Lord there is a difference of activity in service, and the servant who labours much is peculiarly noticed by Paul. As, however, all the good deeds of the Lord's people are done only by the influence of his Spirit, none have in themselves ground of boasting.

V. 13.—*Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

All believers are chosen of God. When Rufus is distinguished as *the chosen*, he must have furnished distinguished evidence of his election. He was *chosen in the Lord*, for none are elected but in Christ. Their election is without regard to merit in themselves; they are chosen in Christ. *His mother and mine*.—The word mother seems to be used in its proper signification in respect to Rufus, and figuratively in its application to Paul. This is a high honour to be so distinguished by the Apostle. This person, it appears, had behaved to the Apostle with the kindness, affection, and tenderness of a mother. This inculcates kindness and attention, on the part of Christians, towards those who are devotedly labouring in the service of Christ. It may, indeed, be a matter of lamentation that there are few like this woman; but it is equally a matter of lamentation that there are so few believers who manifest that devotedness which was constantly exhibited by Paul. When the labourers in Christ's vineyard make no sacrifice they should not expect what is due only to signal devotedness and disinterestedness.

V. 14.—*Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.*

V. 15.—*Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.*

Here a number of brethren are selected without distinction. This mark of brotherly attention would gratify those whom the Apostle here names, besides the *brethren* who were with them. The Lord's people are not equally distinguished, but they are all brethren equally related to him who is the elder brother of his people. Some of them are eminent, and others are without peculiar distinction. They are all, however, worthy of love. A church is not to consist of the most eminent believers, but of believers, though some be of the lowest attainments. A church of Christ is a school in which their education is to be perfected. *And all the saints which are with them.*—That is, the believers in their families and neighbourhood. These might not be personally known to the Apostle, but as believers they were worthy of his notice.

It might at first sight appear strange, that in an inspired letter, which was to be preserved to the end of the world for the edification and instruction of the churches, there should be so much of it taken up with what many might consider as useless ceremony. But as the Apostle was inspired by the Spirit of God in this, as well as in the highest matters, it is evident that we ought to look for instruction from this peculiarity of his writings. This shows the value of inspiration; for were these writings merely human, we should not look for instruction from such things. It shows us, that every attention that expresses and promotes love, ought to be exhibited among Christians, who should employ



the forms and courtesies of social life, that manifest respect, in order to show their esteem and affection for one another.

V. 16.—*Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*

From the salutations sent to the brethren Paul passes to the injunction of a form of salutation to be used among those to whom he wrote. He enjoins them to salute one another with a *holy kiss*. He calls it a holy kiss as distinguished not only from that which is sinful, but also from the kiss that merely expresses common affection. The latter was proper in itself, as an expression of kindness among relations or friends; but this is grounded on the love that Christians should have for one another, and is a holy kiss. Much ridicule has been cast on this practice. But it was enjoined on the churches by the Apostles. It is again and again repeated, and was practised by all the primitive churches. Peter calls it a kiss of love. Justin Martyr, in giving an account of the weekly assemblies of the Christians of the second century, says, “We mutually salute one another by a kiss, and then we bring forward the ‘bread and the cup.’” And the form is still maintained by the Church of Rome in what they call the *osculum pacis*. *The churches of Christ salute you.*—Not only did individuals send salutations to churches or individuals with whom they had a personal acquaintance, but whole churches sent salutations to one another in consideration of their common union in the Lord.

V. 17.—*Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

*Now I beseech you, brethren.*—The churches of Christ

have here the most solemn injunction given, in the most earnest manner, with respect to a thing to which at one time or other they will all be found obnoxious. They are warned against the artful attempts of dangerous hypocrites, who, for sinister and interested purposes, endeavour to make divisions in the churches with which they are united. The injunction does not respect the conscientious errors of good men, but the plausible efforts of men, who, under the mask of religion, are serving themselves. There is no essential difference, whether the divisions are internal or external—whether they are merely calculated to distract the body to which they belong—or whether they tend to schism or separation in fellowship. Indeed, the most dangerous and mischievous divisions are those which do not call for separation. They eat like a gangrene ; and their authors should not be tolerated. Every Christian may profess and follow his own views of the will of his master without exciting any division in the body of Christ ; and even when he is called to separate, to maintain his fidelity to his Lord, this is not dividing the body of Christ, but the most effectual way to promote its union. The motive is not self-interest, or pride, but obedience to the will of God.

*Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.*—The force of the passage lies in this sentence. The factious persons, against whom the Apostle here warns the Church to which he writes, are to be watched and guarded against. Their motives are bad, and their efforts are contrary to the gospel, and the doctrine which the Church had already learned ; for the gospel teaches unity among all who believe in the Saviour. They are all one, as united in Christ, the head of the

body. Such persons are to be avoided. Men who, from a view of exalting themselves, endeavour to sow division in the Church, are more to be shunned than if they were infected with pestilence ; and the brethren who are connected with them ought not, from their confidence in their own stedfastness, to expose themselves to their conversation on such subjects. Such persons are in the service of Satan, who will prevail to deceive the strongest of the people of God, if he obtains permission.

*V. 18.—For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Persons of this description *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ*.—To serve Christ is their profession, and this profession they may render plausible, but with all its plausibility it is a false profession. They are not doing the Lord's work, for they are disuniting those whom Jesus has united. Instead of serving the Lord, they have a design of making gain by this conduct, which is equally to be condemned, whether they are led by vanity or ambition, or any other selfish motive not sanctioned by the word of God.

No injunction ought to be attended to with more vigilance than this. The evil that is here condemned in the persons denounced by the Apostle is more dangerous than the open profligacy of those who turn away from the truth. No one could be deceived by the openly profane, but the hypocritical professions of such factious persons, is calculated to injure or to destroy the Church of Christ, under the cloak of religion. *And by good words and fair speeches*.—Here the Apostle points out the means which those wicked persons em-

ploy to give them success. They use good words and fair speeches. Their soothing address is the bait by which Satan teaches them to ensnare the brethren. Accordingly, the Apostle says, that in this manner they *deceive the hearts of the simple*. The authors of heresies have, in general, been remarkable for a winning manner, and seductive address, and thus some of the Lord's people may at least for a time be entangled in their snares. It is quite obvious, that the injunction here given is not designed to discountenance Christians from denouncing any error or corruption that may have obtained place among his people. The persons against whom the Apostle warns us are those who, for their own interest or selfish purposes, excite divisions among the brethren. Calvin observes, "To separate such as agree  
' in the truth of Christ, is an impious and sacrilegious  
' divorce ; but to defend a conspiracy for promoting lies  
' and impious doctrines, under the pretext of peace and  
' unity, is a shameless calumny. The Papists have no  
' foundation for exciting, by artful guile, an unfavour-  
' able impression, and low opinion of us believers,  
' from this passage, for we do not attack and confute  
' the gospel of Christ, but the falsehoods of the devil,  
' by which it has hitherto been obscured.'

V. 19.—*For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.*

*For your obedience is come abroad unto all men.*—The Apostle intimates here, that he gave the believers at Rome these warnings, not from any peculiar jealousy with respect to their liability to err. On the contrary, he praises them for their ready obedience to the will of God as delineated by his epistles. Obedience here

may indeed respect their reception of the gospel, which was a matter much spoken of, but it is not to be confined to this. It will apply to their readiness in receiving every thing taught by the authority of God. The same authority that requires obedience to the gospel, requires also obedience to every ordinance and precept. It is the greatest praise to any church or individual to obey cheerfully, with a childlike disposition, whatever the word of God teaches. Many Christians are not teachable, and while they have obeyed the gospel to salvation, yet use their own wisdom in many other things respecting the institutions of God. They employ subtle and plausible reasonings, by which they impose on themselves and deceive others. This in the end will procure them neither honour nor profit. It will at last be found, that he who submits most unreservedly to every tittle of the Divine injunctions, has been the wisest man. Blessed shall that servant be, who, when his Lord comes, shall be found doing his will fully.

The obedience of the Roman Christians had been published most extensively, and this notice of the fact shows, that it is important that the disciples should publicly make a profession of the gospel, and of every commandment of the Lord. They should not be ashamed either of him or of his word. They should boldly profess faith in his revealed character in every part of it, and of his ordinances and precepts even in the things most offensive to the world. This is to the honour of their Lord, and is designed as a testimony to men. Christians are not at liberty to decline obedience to any thing that the Lord has appointed, out of fear of the reproach of the world. On the contrary,

they are to hold forth before all men every thing that God hath commanded. This is different from ostentation. To attend to any religious appointment to be seen of men, is the vilest hypocrisy. But to hold forth the will of God in things that the world hates, is true christian obedience.

*I am glad therefore on your behalf.*—So far from suspecting the obedience of the brethren at Rome, the Apostle rejoiced concerning them. It was the greatest pleasure to him to hear of their obedience so extensively published. All Christians should imitate the Apostle in this joy. It should be matter of rejoicing to them to hear of believers in every part of the world fully obeying Christ. The disposition which the Apostle here manifests, and of which alone the Lord will approve, is a joy in hearing of Christ being honoured, and the people of Christ advanced in devotedness to his will. We ought to be zealous for every part of our belief with respect to the will of God. But we should be on our guard lest this should arise from any selfish motive, and not solely from love to Christ and Christ's people. Christ cannot be honoured, and his people cannot be profited, when they practise the inventions of men as the appointments of God. And it is hurtful to believers, as well as injurious to the honour of Christ, when his people decline conformity to any part of his will, either from disaffection to it, or from a desire to avoid the offence of the cross.

*But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good.*—This is the reason why he warned them against the authors of division. The Apostle wished them to be wise with respect to that which is good. They ought not only to understand the doctrines and ordinances of

Christ, but also to be aware of the fact, that even in the churches of Christ, there would from time to time arise deceivers to lead away the simple. Had they not been warned of this, they might be ready to think that no evil person could ever be found among the disciples, who would thereby be liable to be ensnared by crafty men. *Simple concerning evil.*—Simple here appears to mean, not merely *pure*, as Dr Macknight translates it, but *simple*, as opposed to wise. The two words are here evidently contrasted. As to evil, the Apostle wishes the Christians to be without cunning, or dexterity, or skill. In this, it was his desire that they should be quite unknowing and unpractised in the ways of sin.

V. 20.—*And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

*And the God of peace.*—After the exhortation which the Apostle had just given to the saints at Rome to maintain peace among themselves, he here designates their heavenly Father, as in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, the God of peace. God is the God of peace, because he it is that is the author of all the peace that his people enjoy. Were it not for the overruling power of the Lord, his people would have no rest at any time in this world. But the Lord Jesus rules in the midst of his enemies, and he gives his people peace in the midst of their enemies. This shows us that we ought constantly to look to God for this peace. If we seek it not, but grow self-confident and secure, dangers and troubles may arise from every quarter. Our only security is God, and our duty is constantly to ask peace of him in the midst of a world of trouble. God gives his people different gifts, but

peace is a blessing which they all need, and without which they can have no happiness. We ought, therefore, constantly to pray for peace to God's people all over the world. We ought to pray for the peace of Jerusalem as our chief joy. Instead of thinking it strange that unbelievers should disturb us, or that Satan should stir up confusion even among Christians, it is owing to Almighty power that his people have any peace on earth.

Even in the churches there would be no peace, were it not for God's presence. Such is the cunning of Satan and the remaining ignorance and corruption of the Lord's people, that Satan would keep them in continual broils, if God did not powerfully counteract him. God is here called the God of peace, with a peculiar reference to the factious persons against whom the believers were warned in the preceding connexion. The emissaries of Satan strive to distract the churches, but God—the God of peace—counteracts their wicked designs. When it is considered that there is so much remaining evil in the best of the children of God, it is amazing that they ever have peace. But it is the presence of God that gives them any degree of peace. Were it not for this, no church could continue one day in peace.

*Shall bruise Satan under your feet.*—Christ, the seed of the woman, bruised the head of the serpent, and his people will, through Christ, bruise Satan likewise. The word *Satan* signifies adversary. The term *Devil* means calumniator or accuser. He accuses the brethren before God day and night. He is called *Leviathan*, the *Serpent*, the *great Dragon*, the old *Serpent*, the *Tempter*, *Beelzebub*, a *Murderer*, a *Liar*,



*Prince of this world, Ruler of darkness, God of this world, Prince of the power of the air, Belial, the Angel of the bottomless pit*, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon* ; but in Greek hath his name *Apollyon*, that is, a destroyer.

The Apostle here encourages the believers to sustain the combat against Satan, their mortal enemy, who does every thing in his power to disturb their peace, and to tempt them to all evil. There were two victories to be obtained over Satan. By the first, his head was to be bruised under the feet of Jesus Christ ; and by the second, the rest of his body will be bruised under the feet of believers. Of the second of these victories, Paul here speaks. In the first prediction, God speaks as the *Lord of Hosts*, the God of war—" I will put enmity." The war continues till the bruising of Satan's head has taken place and his empire is overthrown, and when it is subverted, peace is made, and God is the *God of peace*. As, then, the seed of the woman has bruised the head of the serpent, so his people will, through Christ, likewise bruise Satan. The Apostle says not *we* shall bruise him under our feet, but God shall do it ; yet he says not he shall bruise him under his *own* feet, but under *yours*. The victory shall be ours though wrought by him ; and he shall do it *shortly*. The God of peace shall subdue that grand disturber of our peace, and shall give us perfect victory, and after it endless peace ; he shall free us of this trouble and molestation. It is not, then, in our own power that we must encounter this adversary ; it is God who bruises him under our feet. " We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ;” and it is only when covered with the armour of God and by his power, that we can overcome enemies so formidable. Dr Macknight says, of the word Satan, that “ Here it is given to the unbelieving Jews, and also to the Judaising teachers and their adherents, who, for selfish purposes, bred divisions at Rome, ver. 17, and in every church where they could obtain a footing ; they are therefore, called *ministers of Satan,*” 2 Cor. xi. 15, &c. But it is of Satan himself that the Apostle speaks. Though Satan works by his instruments, yet he truly works ; and when his instruments are crushed, he is crushed. Paul wrote this Epistle, and Tertius wrote it : The one as dictating, the other as amanuensis. But when Paul is said to write the Epistle we are not to say that Paul means Tertius. Satan works personally in disturbing the churches, though his work is carried on through the instrumentality of men. He excites his emissaries and suggests his devices to them, and they are successful through his artifices.

*Shortly.*—Some understand this of the final victory that all the Lord’s people will obtain at last over Satan and all his emissaries. But though they will not be free from the attacks of this subtle adversary as long as they are in the body, yet from the phrase “ speedily,” or “ shortly,” as well as from the immediate reference to the power of God in the church, it appears rather to refer to a present victory. The meaning, then, is, that all the churches of Christ are to be hurt by factious people rising up among them, emissaries of Satan, under the cover of religion, and if the church is not led away by the error of Satan, God, as the God of peace,

will shortly deliver them from the malignant influence of this apostate spirit. Satan will not be permitted to harass them continually. It is consistent with God's wisdom to permit Satan to try his people ; but when they are sufficiently tried, they are delivered from the temptation. So it was with the Son of God himself. Satan was for a time permitted to harass Him, but at last he was dismissed. In like manner, churches and individual Christians are all to be tried in various way ; but if they abide the trial they shall be delivered from the temptation, and, in the most emphatic and extensive sense, they shall all at last bruise Satan under their feet. They shall obtain a complete victory over him in the day of the appearing of their Almighty Lord, who will then finally consign him to his awful punishment, and cast him into the lake of fire and brimstone. On that day the full import of this expression will be seen.

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*— This form of expression has always been understood to import the Deity of Jesus Christ, and justly it has been so understood. It is essentially and necessarily a prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ ; and if he is not God, what grace has he to bestow on his people ? “ My grace,” said he to Paul when praying to him, “ is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” It implies that there is a constant supply of grace to be communicated from Christ to his people, and if Christ so communicates his holy influences to his people in all ages, in all countries, to every individual of them, at every instant of time, what can he be but the Almighty God ? This implies that they who have been bought by the blood of Christ, are to be

supplied with grace by him continually, in order to their standing in the truth. All their perseverance is in virtue of this. Of his church it is said, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

V. 21.—*Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

Timothy was a most devoted servant of the Lord Jesus, more of the same spirit with Paul than any of his other fellow-labourers. The Apostle, instead of designating himself by the superiority of his office with reference to that of Timothy, calls him his workfellow. How different is this from the conduct of those who seek earthly honours and distinctions as the servants of Christ. All Christians are not alike obedient, and, therefore, not all equally honoured before God, but their honour will be revealed in another world though not in this. The other persons mentioned in this salutation were the kinsmen of the Apostle, whom he thus honourably recognises as his relations.

V. 22.—*I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.*

The Apostle generally employed an amanuensis to write what he dictated. Tertius wrote the Epistle, but it was, in all things, communicated by Paul, as what Paul communicated was dictated to him by the Holy Ghost. Tertius likewise salutes the brethren. *In the Lord.*—These salutations were not those of mere worldly acquaintance or friendship, but in the Lord, that is, as a member of the body of Christ of which they were members. He might have no acquaintance with any individual among them, yet he was full of affection to them as a christian brother. That conformity to the world which the Scriptures condemn, is a conformity

to things contrary to the law of God. All the innocent customs of society may be imitated by Christ's people without any sin. As the people of the world are accustomed to express good will by their salutations, so the Lord's people ought likewise to show their love by similar expressions. Love ought not only to exist in the heart, but also ought, on proper occasions, to be outwardly expressed. Without this it cannot edify or console those who are its objects. The people of the Lord, then, ought to recognise one another, and express their mutual love in all those ways usual among men.

*V. 23.—Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*

Gaius was distinguished for Christian hospitality. The Apostle abode in his house at the time of writing this Epistle; but his hospitality was of the most liberal and extensive kind. He is praised by the Apostle as the host of the whole church. Gaius also sent his salutations to the church at Rome. While Christianity does not destroy the different orders in society, all Christians are brethren, and recognise each other as such, though of different nations and of different ranks.

*Erastus, the chamberlain of the city.*—This is another personage of distinction, who sends his salutation to the brethren at Rome. He held an important office in the city where he lived. The Apostle designates him as chamberlain, which might correspond in a good measure to treasurer. But in such cases, in most instances no word in one language can be found to correspond perfectly to that of another, because no two countries may have the same modification of offices. The notice of the office of Erastus, although in itself

it may appear trifling, is in reality of great importance. It shows us that Christians may hold offices even under Heathen governments, and that to serve Christ we are not to be abstracted from worldly business.

*Quartus a brother.*—The Apostle having no peculiar distinction to notice in this person, calls him a *brother*. This was a common name for all believers, because they are all brethren in Christ. It may at first sight appear superfluous to designate this person by a characteristic belonging to all Christians. But though it belongs to all Christians, yet it is not needlessly expressed. The Apostle directs attention to this circumstance, that they are brethren, and that it is a real and important relation. We may know that all Christians are *brethren*, but it is nevertheless useful to be reminded of this, as we may be prone to act towards them in an unbrotherly manner.

*V. 24.*—*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

This important prayer is repeated from ver. 20, which shows us that all repetition is not vain repetition; but that it may mark a thing of peculiar importance. Three times did our Lord employ the same words in his prayer in Gethsemane. And the Apostle, from the abundance of his heart, and his great concern for the Christians at Rome, here within a short compass, twice prays that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with them. Indeed there is great need of such earnest petitions, for without the constant supply of the grace of Christ, we could not abide in him. Dr Macknight observes, that in the Syriac version this benediction is omitted at the 24th verse, and added at the end of the Epistle. But this has the appearance of human wisdom correcting the language of the Holy Ghost.

V. 25.—*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.*

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you.*—From this we learn that establishment in the faith is not of ourselves but of God. It requires the power of Jehovah to establish his people in the truth. So far from being able to bring themselves into the faith of the gospel, they are not able to continue in it without God. What blindness, then, is it to boast of the power of man to believe and to keep himself in the truth. Power to do any thing in the service of God must be communicated from above.

*According to my gospel.*—Here we see in what a Christian is to be established, namely, in the faith, according to the gospel. Men may be established in error, they may die for human traditions, and have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; but this is of no value. Paul calls the gospel his gospel, to intimate that different doctrines would be preached by false teachers as the gospel. But all other gospels, except that of Paul and the other apostles, are false. Believers must be established in Paul's gospel. How many other gospels are now preached as the gospel of Christ! yet none of them can avail for the salvation of the soul. *And the preaching of Jesus Christ.*—This phrase is not the mere repetition of the same thing. It is indeed the same truth, but in a different point of view. In the one it is considered as the gospel or good news, and this, according to the doctrine of Paul. In the other it is considered as the publication of the truth about Jesus Christ. We are to be established according to what the Apostles preached concerning Jesus Christ.

Believers have nothing to do with the vain speculations and opinions of men about the way of salvation. They must believe, and ought to be confirmed in the truth, according as it was originally preached by the apostles. The preaching of the gospel is called preaching Jesus Christ, Acts, v. 42, who is the subject of the gospel.

*According to the revelation of the mystery.*—This is another view of the same truth, but not a mere synonymous expression. The gospel is here considered as the revelation of a mystery. It was couched in dark figures under the Old Testament dispensation, but is now developed by the apostles of the Lord. It is first considered as the gospel, or good news, characterised as the gospel of Paul ; secondly, as the doctrine preached concerning Jesus Christ by those whom he had inspired to reveal and publish it ; and lastly, it is considered as a mystery revealed. In this there is no tautology. It is designed to present the same thing in several different aspects. The word mystery here refers, not as Dr Macknight and many others suppose, to the calling of the Gentiles, but to the gospel itself, which was obscurely revealed in the Old Testament. Calvin, without sufficient ground, states this as a difficulty, but in reality there is no difficulty in it. “ In what sense,” he says, “ Paul calls the gospel a hidden mystery in this passage, in Eph. iii. 9, and Col. i. 26, is not fully determined even among the learned. The opinion of those who refer it to the calling in of the Gentiles is the most forcible, to which Paul himself expressly alludes in his Epistle to the Colossians. I grant this to be one, but not the sole cause ; for I think there is a greater probability in supposing Paul to have regarded other points of difference between the Old and New



‘ Testament.’ All these passages use the word mystery with the same reference ; none of them represent the calling of the Gentiles to be the mystery, or the reason why the gospel was called a mystery. It is the gospel itself which is called a mystery, in Ephesians, iii. 9. The thing hid in God from the beginning of the world, was the plan of salvation through the death of his Son, and the revelation of it by Christ and his apostles was making known the manifold wisdom of God in the redemption of his people. In Colossians, i. 26, it is the gospel as the word of God that is the mystery. In ver. 27, this mystery is said, by the preaching of the gospel, to be made known among the Gentiles, just as in the verse before us. The calling of the Gentiles is not called a mystery.

*Kept secret since the world began, or in eternal times ; that is, in all preceding eternity.*—The common version very well expresses the meaning. The translation of Dr Macknight, “ the times of the ages,” is an uncouth expression, and founded on views, which as stated by him are quite fanciful. The mystery kept secret was the hidden sense of the Old Testament dispensation, which all pointed to the kingdom of God, but still left it concealed under various historical, prophetic, and typical representations. The whole of the Old Testament, indicating the truth which is revealed in the New, may properly be termed a parable, the meaning of which is, that it conveys information embodied in an action designed to represent some truth called the moral, or mystery. This method of parabolical instruction, Jesus Christ himself, as had been predicted, Psal. lxxviii. 2 ; Matt. xiii. 35, adopted towards the multitude, concealing under it the mysteries

to which he referred. When "his disciples asked him, saying, what might this parable be?" "He said, unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." Thus the mystery, or concealed sense of what he said, was kept secret from them. It is to the Old Testament, taken as a whole, that our Lord seems to refer, when he says, "Know ye not this parable, and how then will ye know *all parables*?"

V. 26.—*But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith :*

*But now is made manifest.*—Mr Stuart construes the words translated "the scriptures of the prophets," with "made manifest," and translates thus: "But is now revealed by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God." But these words, "the scriptures of the prophets," are evidently to be construed with "made known." He observes, that "the Apostle refers to the most ancient times, before any revelation was given, as the *χρονοι αιωνιοι* 'next to the Messianic prophecies, contained in the 'Old Testament.'" But this is a forced view. In the text, there is no appearance of dividing the times of the Old Testament dispensation from ancient times. All the times preceding Christ are included in the words translated in our version, "since the world began," and by Mr Stuart, "ancient ages." The revelation of the Messiah in the Old Testament could not be spoken of as now revealed. There was now a new revelation. In the time of the Old Testament the mystery of the Messiah was couched in figure and in prophecy. The

Messiah, indeed, was in a certain degree discovered by Moses and the prophets, but he was not made manifest. This was done when he himself appeared. The mystery of Christ and of the gospel is always spoken of in the New Testament as being manifested *then*, and not in the former dispensation. In the same manner, although the bringing in of the “everlasting righteousness,” namely, the righteousness of God, Rom. i. 17, was predicted by the Prophet Daniel, ix. 24, and so often made mention of by Isaiah, yet Isaiah speaks of it as not yet revealed or made manifest, but as shortly to be so. “Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed,” Isaiah, lvi. 1. And in accordance with this, Paul in this Epistle, chap. i. 17, and iii. 21, declares, that *now it is revealed*. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” This corresponds with what the Apostle here announces respecting the manifestation of the mystery of the gospel. Until the *Sun of Righteousness* arose, all the testimonies of the prophets were as “a light that shineth in a dark place;” but they came to be plainly confirmed, 2 Peter, i. 19, by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

*And by the scriptures of the prophets made known to all nations.*—Dr Macknight justly construes these words, not with the words “made manifest,” like Mr Stuart, but with “made known.” But as, probably, it did not appear to him obvious how the mystery was now made known by the scriptures of the prophets, he uses violence to evade this sense of the expression. He makes

a transposition in translating the words which is not justifiable, and renders the passage thus : “ But is now ‘ made manifest, and by the command of the eternal ‘ God, in the prophetic writings, is made known to all ‘ the Gentiles, in order to the obedience of faith.” This not only deranges the order of the Apostle’s words, but also gives a translation that is not warrantable. He renders the phrase not *through* or *by* the Scriptures, but “ in the Scriptures.” This bends the words of the Apostle to a supposed meaning. But, whatever difficulty may appear in the affirmation that the mystery is now made known by the writings of the prophets, yet as this is what the Apostle has said, our duty is to search for its signification, and not arbitrarily to force on the words a translation which is unnatural. The meaning appears to be, that, by the fulfilment of the prophetic writings, which had now taken place, such a light was thrown on these writings, that by them the mystery which was in perfect consistency with their representations, was made known. In the same way, the Apostle Peter, besides referring to the voice from heaven, which was heard by him and the other Apostles, on the holy mount, appeals to the word of prophecy not as “ more sure,”—a sense which would be degrading to the apostolic testimony, than which nothing can be more sure—but as made more firm, or confirmed by its accomplishment. The revelation now made of the mystery of Christ and of the gospel, by the Apostle, was through the prophetic writings, inasmuch as, though he was as fully inspired as the prophets themselves, he proved his doctrines by the Scriptures, and pointed to them as containing in prediction what was now accomplished. This is a characteristic feature in

the teaching of the Apostles—a feature which to many has appeared strange. In the same way as Paul here declares that the mystery was made known by the scriptures of the prophets, Peter affirms that the prophets prophesied of the grace that should come to us.

*According to the commandment.*—The publication of the gospel was by God's special command, and by the injunction of God it was to be made known to all nations. Thus the interest of the Gentiles, in the salvation of the gospel, is made to rest on the direct authority of God. The Jews were prone to consider the blessings of the Messiah as confined to themselves; but they had no warrant, or even plausible pretext, for this error in their own Scriptures. *Of the everlasting God, or eternal God.*—God is distinguished from all besides as eternal. All other objects that have been worshipped, and all other beings had a beginning. God is without beginning as well as without end. *For the obedience of faith.*—That is, to be believed; for to believe is to obey the gospel. The command of the gospel is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one who believes in him obeys the gospel.

*V. 27.—To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

*To God only wise.*—There are three different ways in which the words in the original are translated. *God only wise*, according to our version; or *The only wise God*; or *the wise God alone*. Between the first and the second there is only this difference, that the one represents God as the only wise being, and the other as the only wise God. Dr Macknight's objections to the common version, and his reasons for the adoption of the third translation do not seem convincing. When

God is called the only wise God, it may not imply, as he alleges, that there are some gods who are not wise, but that the character of God, as exhibited in the Scriptures, is the only character that ascribes wisdom in proportion to God. The gods of the Heathen are not wise. The god of the Deist is not wise. The god of the Arian is not wise. No view ever given of the Divine character exhibits the infinite wisdom of God in redemption, but that which is found in the gospel. The expression, God only wise, does not imply, as Dr Macknight again alleges, that God possesses no perfection but wisdom. It means that God is the only wise being. Yet, John, xvii. 3, where the word rendered *God* is similarly situated, seems to favour the second mode of translating the words, as in 1 Tim. i. 17; Jude, 25.

*Be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.*  
—All the glory that will redound to God, through the ages of eternity, from the salvation of sinners, proceeds through Jesus Christ. Through him it is manifested. It is through Jesus Christ that we ought to ascribe to God the glory. In Jesus Christ all things are united which are in heaven and which are on earth,—not only saints but angels. Christ is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” “God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” All this shows that Jesus Christ is God, for Christ’s work is the glory of the Father, because he is one with him. In the same way Jude concludes his Epistle—“To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

STATE OF THE HEATHEN—SANCTIFICATION OF  
THE SABBATH.

IN the first and second chapters of this Epistle to the Romans, the deplorable state of the heathen world, without the written law, is pointed out. In the fourteenth chapter, reference is made to certain days that may either be regarded or not, without a violation of the law of God, which it is necessary to show has no connexion with the observance of the weekly Sabbath. Both of these subjects are of such practical importance, that a more enlarged consideration of each of them is here subjoined than could with propriety have been given in the exposition of these chapters. The condition of the nations destitute of divine revelation, while it presents a most impressive view of the value of that gospel by which life and immortality are brought to light, furnishes a powerful argument in favour of Christian missions, and a cogent reason for unfeigned gratitude to the Sovereign Disposer of all events who has cast our lot in an age and country in which the light of the gospel shines. To every Christian, the permanent obligation of sanctifying the Sabbath, is a subject of the deepest interest, and whatever tends to render this duty in the smallest degree doubtful, must be productive of the most pernicious consequences.

THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD DESTITUTE  
OF THE GOSPEL.

While it is on all hands admitted that the knowledge of the gospel is highly beneficial, there are many who hold that it is not indispensable to salvation. This opinion is opposed to the whole testimony of the Scriptures, whether they refer to the way of salvation, or to the condition of all who are strangers to the gospel. From every part of the word of God, it is obvious that salvation comes to none of the human race in any other way than through the knowledge, more or less clear, of the Messiah, before or after his advent. "Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Multitudes, however, are unwilling to admit that salvation should be so limited in its extent as to be confined to those who have enjoyed the advantage of a revelation with respect to the Messiah. They have, therefore, endeavoured to show that the benefits of Christ's death may be available to those whom they term the virtuous in all nations, even although they have heard nothing of the revelation of mercy. Some commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans appear to have this object chiefly in view, and labour to prove that the faith through which a sinner is saved may be found in the heathen, as well as in the Christian. Faith, they attempt to show, is not the belief of the truth respecting the Messiah, or the belief of any particular truth, but a general reliance on God, so far as he is known, and a desire to discover and to obey his will. Even were this a just account of saving faith,



it would not avail one of all the heathen world. There is not, of all the sons of Adam, any one who naturally desires to know and to do the will of God. But this account of faith is utterly unscriptural and false. It is faith in God, as manifested in the Messiah, to which salvation is attached, and this is so clear from every part of Scripture, that he may run that readeth. .

Some who reject with abhorrence the error for which Dr Macknight contends, which represents saving faith, as altogether abstracted from the belief of the gospel, and as applicable to Heathens as well as to Christians, are yet unwilling to abandon the idea of the salvation of Pagans. While they allow that this is not positively taught in the Scriptures, they allege that there is nothing said to the contrary. The extending or not extending of the salvation of Jesus to nations that have not heard of him, is, as they think, a matter on which the Scriptures are silent—a deep mysterious point which the human mind cannot determine. But whatever may be the truth on this subject, it presents no mystery. It is a matter of divine testimony as simple as any thing that can be testified. The mysterious doctrines of Scripture continue to be mysterious even after they are most clearly revealed. But in this point there is no mystery. If the Scriptures declare that some Heathens may be saved without any knowledge of a Saviour, the truth is to be received on the divine testimony. If they teach the contrary, they must be submitted to with humility. If nothing be either said or implied on the subject in the language of Scripture, then nothing can be decided, not because the matter is mysterious, but because there is no evidence. But that the Scriptures are not silent on this subject, and that they declare the

condemnation of unenlightened heathens in the most express terms, appears as clear as language can make it. To allege that the thing is undecided by the divine testimony, is to shut our eyes against the plainest revelation.

Immediately after the entrance of sin, animal sacrifices were instituted as the principal type or representation of the way of salvation announced in the first promise, which was to be effected by him who was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The history of Cain and Abel, the two men first born in the world, evidently proves that it was only in virtue of that great sacrifice afterwards to be offered, that God holds communion with guilty man. Cain offered to God the fruits of the earth, but by not presenting an animal in sacrifice, he showed that he had no respect for that atonement which the sacrifice of animals was appointed to prefigure. This proved that he did not believe the truth exhibited in that institution, and his oblation was rejected. Abel, on the other hand, offered of the firstlings of his flock, thus solemnly acknowledging that he was a sinner, and approaching God in the way appointed to represent the atonement to be made for sin, Heb. xi. 4; for "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," Lev. xvii. 11; "and without shedding of blood is no remission," Heb. ix. 22. At the very opening of the Scriptures, then, the manner of deliverance from sin and Satan, and of acceptance by God, was indicated in a promise and illustrated by an example.

All who believed in the first promise were justified by faith, as we see by various examples contained in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and became heirs *of the righteousness which is by faith*. By

the covenant with Abram, and by means of the Mosaic dispensation, a further discovery was made respecting the accomplishment of that promise. But, although the Israelites were bound to receive men of every nation who desired to unite with them, no command to this purpose was given to the Gentiles. If the Gentiles retained and believed the ancient tradition of the first promise, or believed in the righteousness of which Noah was a preacher, it was as efficacious for their salvation, as these had been in the beginning. Melchisedec was a "priest of the Most High God." Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, although he did not join himself to Israel, was an accepted worshipper of God, as we learn by the communion which Moses and the Princes of Israel had with him in sacrifice. Rahab was justified by faith, before being united to Israel. The Magi who came from the East adored the promised Messiah as soon as he appeared in the world, and were honoured to be the first heralds of his appearance to Israel.

In setting apart the nation of Israel, and conferring on that people peculiar privileges, it was not the design of God to exclude the rest of the world from communion with himself, but to preserve the true light "*till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.*" And it was always a truth, that with God there is no respect of persons, but that, in every nation, he who feared him and wrought righteousness was accepted of him. For, "in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Of this truth, the example of Abraham is recorded in the Scriptures as a proof, since he was justified by faith before he was circumcised.

In order to prove, from the Scriptures, that men may be saved without the knowledge of the revelation of mercy in the gospel, communicated either orally or in writing before or after the coming of Christ, it is customary to appeal to the case of Cornelius. But to such an opinion, no countenance is given by what is said of that centurion in the Acts of the Apostles, which is entirely consistent with every other part of Scripture. As, however, very mistaken notions of Cornelius are entertained by many, it is proper to consider at some length what is recorded concerning his history.

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#### CASE OF CORNELIUS.

We are informed, Acts, x. that Cornelius lived in Cesarea, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; that he was *a devout man, and one that feared God, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway; that his prayers and his alms came up for a memorial before God; that he was a just man, and of good report among all the nations of the Jews; and that he was acquainted with the word which God sent unto the children of Israel after the baptism of John, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.*—After all this, although Cornelius was a Gentile, and uncircumcised, it would be contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture had he not been accepted of God, who is equally the God of Jews and of Gentiles. But his acceptance with God is in perfect conformity to all that the gospel declares concerning the salvation of men.

1st, Cornelius was a *devout man* (*ευσεβης*), Acts, x. 2, that is, godly, pious.—This word is found only in three other passages in the New Testament—in the same chapter, verse 7, where it characterises one of the ser-

vants of Cornelius ; and again, in the book of Acts, xxii. 12, where it is applied to Ananias, who is expressly called “ a disciple,” and who received from the Lord the singular honour of being charged with his first message to the Apostle Paul. Finally, this expression is employed in the 2d Epistle of Peter, ii. 9, where that Apostle designates by this epithet the servants of God, whom he knoweth how to deliver out of temptations, and who are there opposed to the unrighteous. The application, therefore, of this epithet to Cornelius, is of itself sufficient to determine his character as one who was justified by faith ; for we know, that all those who are justified, are, till the moment of their justification (*ασεβης*) *ungodly*, Rom. vi. 5, which is the opposite of (*ευσεβης*) *godly*.\* Here, then, we have full proof that Cornelius was a justified believer.

2d, Cornelius was *one that feared God*.—When the Scriptures make use of this expression, it always respects the true God ; Cornelius, therefore, is here represented as fearing Jehovah, the God of Israel. It is the character of all who are wicked, or in their unregenerated state, “ *there is no fear of God before their eyes.*” On the other hand, it is a promise made by God to all his people, that he will put *his fear* in their hearts ; Jeremiah, xxxii. 40. It is declared to the praise of the churches in Judea, that they walked *in the fear of the Lord*, which is connected with *the comfort of the Holy Ghost* ; Acts, ix. 31. It is by *grace* that the children of God *serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear* ; Heb. xii. 28. There is not a

\* See Titus, ii. 12, *ασεβεια*, ungodliness, in opposition to which the gospel teaches to live *ευσεβως*, godly ; and see 2 Tim. iii. 12.

more definite characteristic of a believer than the *fear of God*.

3d, Cornelius *gave much alms to the people*.—This declaration concerning him is made in connexion with that of his fearing God ; and immediately afterwards it is noted, that this service was accepted of God, proving that it was good in his sight. But no work is recognised in Scripture as good and acceptable to God, except it proceeds from faith. The expressions, *good works* and *well-doing*, are not employed in the New Testament to signify any moral virtue practised by those who do not believe the gospel, nor any works, but such as are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The only passage which appears an exception to this is, Rom. xiii. 3. The children of God are saved by grace through faith. They are the workmanship of God, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. In the same chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Apostle says, that without faith it is impossible to please God, he refers to the memory of those who *through faith wrought righteousness*.

4th, Cornelius *prayed to God alway*.—Men may worship an *unknown God*, or a God of their own imagination, but they cannot pray to the true God, without believing in him as he hath revealed himself to man. *Without faith, it is impossible to please him ; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. And this last proposition no one can believe without express Divine testimony ; for there is no other means of knowing this fact. Nor can we believe that God is what he really is, without the knowledge of that revelation of

his character which he has vouchsafed. Faith is not a conjecture, or a doubtful opinion, but a persuasion and cordial reception of the truth of what God has declared. On this subject, the wisest of the ancient philosophers were entirely ignorant.\* *The world by wisdom knew not God.*—How a *sinner* could be justified, a subject on which the works of creation, and the work of the law written in the heart, are silent ; how such an one could approach to God, who is holy ; what communion could be established with him ; and, above all, on what foundation man could hope for a reward from God—are questions which none but God could answer. *The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ?* Besides, in order to be heard as was Cornelius, a man must *ask in faith, nothing wavering : for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed ; for let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. But how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ?* Rom. x. 14.

5th, The prayers and alms of Cornelius *came up for a memorial before God* :—Did ever the prayers and the alms of an unbeliever go up before God for a memorial ? Is not the sacrifice of the wicked an abomination in his sight ? † Here, then, we have a proof that Cornelius worshipped in the faith of the promised

\* “ I think,” says Seneca, “ we are not only blind to true wisdom, but are very dull and slow of apprehension in those things which seem to be discerned and understood.”

† “ Until Christ’s righteousness be imputed to you by faith,” says Mr Romaine, vol. vi. 175, “ your prayers are an abomination, and your fancied good works are nothing but sin.” After quoting the 13th article of the Church of England, he proceeds : “ We

Mediator ; for no man can come to the Father but by him. This is a solemn truth, declared by Jesus Christ himself, and strikingly held forth in all the ceremonial observances of the Old Testament. But if Cornelius was accepted by God on account of his alms and prayers, without faith in the Messiah, then it follows, that, *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own righteousness*, he had attained to righteousness by the works of the law and not by faith, in direct opposition to all the Apostle Paul has declared in respect both to Jews and Gentiles. Besides, it is twice intimated, that Cornelius, on praying to God, had respect to the instituted worship at Jerusalem. It is said that he prayed at the ninth hour, which was the hour of prayer in the temple, Acts, iii. 1, and the time of the evening sacrifice. What reason can be assigned for this, but his faith in the Messiah ? The Temple of Jerusalem was a re-

doubt not but the best of them—works done before the grace of Christ—are only so many splendid sins. They may adorn a man's outward conversation, may gain him the honour of men, but in the eyes of God they are of no price, because they flow from an unregenerate heart. So that works done before we receive Christ's righteousness, can do nothing towards meriting it, and works done after receiving it, can add nothing to it. It is a free gift, therefore ; works done before cannot merit it. It waits for no qualification, no condition in the receiver, because it is given to the most unworthy, and is given to supply the want of all qualifications and conditions—it is given to the unrighteous and to the ungodly. And it wants no works done after receiving to add to it, because it is infinitely perfect. It is the righteousness of God, and will prove itself to be from God by its fruits, which fruits evidence us to be righteous, but do not make us so ; for if they were to make us righteous but in part, that would be going about to establish our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God."



markable type of the Redeemer, and the medium of communication between God and the people of Israel. There alone the appointed sacrifices could be offered, and the prescribed worship rendered to God. When the Jews were at a distance from the temple, they showed their respect for it, by lifting up their hands towards the Holy Oracle. At its dedication, Solomon besought the Lord to hear from heaven the prayers of his people when they spread forth their hands *towards that house*. Jonas said, in the belly of the fish, "*I will look again toward thy holy temple!*" Daniel in a distant land prayed, *his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem*; and when, during his prayer, a messenger was sent from Heaven to make known to him that remarkable revelation concerning the birth of the Messiah, it was "*about the time of the evening oblation.*"\* It was also *at the ninth hour*, at the time of that oblation, while Cornelius prayed, that an angel brought to him a message from God. In the dedication prayer of Solomon, express mention is made of the stranger who shall pray towards that house. "*Moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake (for they shall hear of thy great name, and*

\* It was at the same hour that Elijah offered his prayer and sacrifice; 1 Kings, xviii. 36. And at the same hour Jesus Christ gave up the ghost; Matt. xxvii. 46; Luke, xxiii. 44. So exact, in this respect, was the correspondence between the type and what it represented. There is a remarkable coincidence too, between the seventy years at the end of which the temporal deliverance of the Jews was to take place, and the seventy weeks of years when the great deliverance was to come. That space of time—490 years—includes ten Jubilees, at the last of which, not one nation only, but all the nations of the world should hear the sound of the gospel trumpet.

*of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm), when he shall come and pray towards this house, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for."* The prayers and alms, then, of Cornelius came up before God, in the name of the same Mediator through whom the prayers and the alms of the people of Israel were accepted.

It is said, Acts, x. 31, "*Thy prayer is heard.*" This is conclusive. Not only did the prayers of Cornelius in general find acceptance with God, but the prayer that is here said to be heard must have concerned the Messiah. How otherwise could his vision have been an answer to his prayer? The direction to send for Peter to make known to him the actual appearance of the Messiah, is stated as the answer to that prayer. But it could not have been an answer to it, unless it had concerned the coming of the Messiah. "Thy prayer is heard, Send, therefore, to Joppa." The things which he learned by sending to Joppa, were the things which had formed the subject of his supplications. The knowledge of the Messiah, as come in the flesh, was the answer to his prayer. It must then have been the object of it. As believing Jews were now every where looking for the redemption of Israel, what should prevent Cornelius from having the same expectation? What was there known to them that could be unknown to him? He lived among them, while many of the Jews themselves sojourned in distant countries. To suppose that Cornelius could not have been saved, without hearing the words of Peter, and that he must have perished had he died previously, is to condemn all the Old Testament

saints, without excepting Abraham himself. Had the salvation of Cornelius been the only object, this message, this journey of Peter, and his vision itself, were all unnecessary. The grand object of the vision and extraordinary message was to instruct the Apostle, and to reconcile the Jewish believers to the calling of the Gentiles.

6th, Cornelius, whom his servant calls "*a just man*," \* was "*of good report among all the nation of the Jews.*" The same testimony is given to Ananias; he had "*a good report of all the Jews which dwell*" at Damascus. Another centurion, who was not an Israelite, was recommended to Jesus, as one who loved their nation, and was worthy; of whom Jesus said "*unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel.*" Here is a case parallel to that of Cornelius, decided by the Lord himself. A just or righteous man is the most distinguishing descriptive appellation of a servant of God.

Finally, Peter addressed Cornelius as one who was acquainted with "*that word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.*" "*That word,*" said he, "*YE KNOW, which was published throughout Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him,*"

\* Besides the Lord Jesus, who is the *Just One*, there are in Scripture nine other persons called just or righteous; Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Simeon, Joseph, John the Baptist, and Joseph of Arimathea, and Cornelius.

Acts, x. 37. On what ground, then, is it asserted that Cornelius was ignorant of the true God? Not only the whole tenor of Divine revelation, from beginning to end, forbids us to entertain such an idea; but we find in the narrative itself, accumulated proofs which demonstrate the contrary.

And what is the foundation on which, in the face of all these proofs, the opposite opinion is built? Solely on the declaration of Peter, "*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,*" Acts, x. 34. We have already seen who are those that, according to the Scriptures, fear God, work righteousness, and are accepted by him. That God is no respecter of persons is often repeated; Paul affirms it both of Jews and Gentiles. In spite, however, of all that had been said by the prophets, and notwithstanding the express commandment given by the Lord Jesus Christ himself to the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, the prejudices of the latter were so strongly rooted, as to render a new revelation to Peter necessary, in order that he might be convinced of the duty of announcing the gospel to the Gentiles. A revelation, by the vision he saw, was for this purpose accordingly made; but even then the import of it was not understood by him. Nor did he comprehend it fully till informed by Cornelius of the revelation with which he had also been favoured. Peter had then no further doubt concerning the meaning of the words uttered to him by the voice from heaven, "*What God hath cleansed that call not thou common,*" and he immediately exclaimed, "*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.*" Can words be more decisive than these to demonstrate that Cornelius was a converted man before he saw Peter.

Peter here takes it for granted that God had before accepted Cornelius, and that if he had not accepted him it might be said he was a respecter of persons. If so, Cornelius must have been a believer in the Messiah. His faith must have been the same with that of Abraham and the believing Israelites. Destitute of faith in the Messiah, God's rejection of him would have shown no partiality, and the God of the whole earth could not have been said to be a respecter of persons. Cornelius must, in all respects, have been on a level with Jewish believers who had not heard the gospel. Peter also here determines the import of the phrase *fearing God*. According to him, it belongs only to the person who is accepted of God. Such a person is accepted by God to whatever nation he may belong. It must imply, then, the knowledge of God in his true character, as the just God and the Saviour. It is here necessarily implied, and was before expressly stated, that Cornelius was a *fearer of God*. Here also it is implied that Cornelius was a worker of righteousness. But does this character belong to any unconverted man? Can any worker of righteousness perish? Here, also, Cornelius is said to be accepted of God before he hears a word from Peter. The news that Peter brought concerning the appearance of the Messiah was indeed glad tidings, but now, though the first time he knew it as an accomplished fact, yet he had previously known it, like Abraham, as a thing to be expected. If Cornelius was a man accepted of God before he saw

Peter, he could not have been ignorant of the hope of Israel. What more could have been said of Abraham himself than that he was accepted of God? Did God ever accept any unconverted man?

Not only was Cornelius a man accepted by God before his interview with Peter, but according to the necessary import of Peter's language, every man of any nation who fears God and works righteousness is accepted by him. Salvation never was confined to the Jews, and those who were incorporated with their nation. To enjoy the ordinances of the Jewish religion, circumcision was absolutely necessary. But to have salvation through Abraham's seed, it was only necessary to believe the promise made to Abraham about the Messiah. This faith produces the fear of God and works of righteousness in all who receive it, Gentiles as well as Jews. But the true fear of God and works of righteousness are never produced without some knowledge of the grand promise made to our first parents that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent.

In one word, Cornelius the centurion honoured God, in the same manner as the elders did, who, by faith, "*obtained a good report.*" He was acquainted with the worship of the Jews, and was informed of the message which God had sent to Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, although not hitherto addressed to uncircumcised Gentiles. Until Peter was sent to Cornelius, Jesus had not been announced to them as the Saviour. Before his advent it was only necessary to believe in the Messiah to come, the seed of the woman, the promised deliverer; but after he appeared on earth, and was preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, it

became indispensable for all who heard of his name, to believe that *Jesus was the Christ*, or Messiah. It is on this account that the Apostle John declares, that “whosoever believeth that *Jesus* is the Christ, is born of God;” 1 John, v. 1. This implies two things. *First*, A proper understanding of the character of the Messiah who was to come; and, *Secondly*, That Jesus, whom the Apostles preached, was he. This could not be known till after he appeared, and was pointed out as “The Son of God.” Accordingly, Cornelius was informed by the angel, that the person of whom he was directed to inquire, would tell him “*words whereby he and all his house should be saved.*” This did not prove that he was not till then accepted of God, any more than the apostolic commission proved that none were accepted in Jerusalem previously to their hearing and believing the proclamation concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, as God was about to afford to Cornelius new light, and to give him a new commandment—“*THIS is my beloved Son; hear him,*” it was requisite that he should attend to it; just as it is indispensably requisite for every Christian, who is ignorant of any part of the will of God, to obey it as soon as it is made known to him.

It is only necessary to remark further, that when it is said, “*The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word,*” Acts, x. 44, this does not refer to their first receiving the Holy Spirit, but to what Paul calls “*the manifestation of the Spirit,*” 1 Cor. xii. 7, for it is immediately added, that “*they spake with tongues.*” It was in the same manner that, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was poured out on the apostles, in his miraculous gifts, long after they were the subjects

of his internal influence, and after they had received the Spirit from the Lord Jesus Christ, by his breathing on them, John, xx. 22.

Cornelius, then, was a spiritual worshipper of God, under the old dispensation, who, like the Eastern Magi, the Ethiopian Eunuch, and many others, was waiting for that Messiah, who, when he should come, "was to tell his people all things," and who was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed." All in Israel, and others besides, professed to be looking and waiting for the Messiah. But his advent was to be the test of their sincerity. It was to show who should abide the day of his coming, and who should stand when he appeared; for he was to be like a refiner's fire. The case of Cornelius, therefore, forms no exception to that universal truth which the Scriptures declare of the way in which man shall "be just with God."

It is an argument usually adduced in favour of the salvation of the Heathen, that as no revelation of mercy has been vouchsafed to them, their condemnation would be unjust. This objection the Apostle Paul meets, in the beginning of this Epistle to the Romans, and shows, that though they had not a revelation of mercy through a Mediator, they had, in the works of God, a revelation rendering them *inexcusable* in their guilt. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest to them: for God hath shown it unto them. 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;



so that they are without excuse." Here the grounds of the just condemnation of the heathen are clearly expressed. Though they had not a revelation of mercy, they had a revelation of Almighty power, and infinite wisdom, against which they transgressed. In all the heathen world, there was not one who worshipped and served God as manifested in creation. If this be so, they are as justly liable to condemnation, according to the light afforded them, as *they* who obey not the gospel. There will indeed be a great difference in the degree of their punishment, as there is in the degree of their guilt. But all shall be punished according to the revelation afforded them. The heathens will not be condemned for not believing in Jesus, of whom they have not heard, but for not knowing and serving God as manifested in the works of creation and providence.

Nor can any of the sages of Greece and Rome be excepted from this condemnation. Not one of them knew as much of God as he might have known from his works, and not one of them served him even to the extent of his knowledge. All of them conformed to the worship of their country, and were thus, without a *single exception*, IDOLATERS. Some of the best among them, as Trajan and Pliny, the latter of whom was distinguished as a devout frequenter of the temples of the gods, instead of receiving the gospel, when proclaimed in their time, violently opposed it, thus proving their enmity against God, and cruelly persecuted the disciples of Jesus. The sages whom human partiality views as not obnoxious to condemnation as guilty, are evidently exhibited by the Apostle as more deeply criminal, than the most ignorant. "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were

thankful, but became vain in their imaginations (or reasonings), and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Here is the divine testimony with respect to the wisdom of the heathen philosophers, which is still the admiration of the world. That wisdom which has rendered them the admiration of ages, is reckoned by God as only a manifestation of their folly. While their wisdom and virtue are of so much account in the estimation of many who profess Christianity, that these are deemed sufficient to give them a title to the favour of God, the Searcher of hearts himself declares them to be fools. And what human vanity now calls the sublime speculations of the illustrious sages of antiquity, Divine Wisdom designates as vain reasonings, the effusion of a foolish and darkened heart. There can be no doubt, from the most express, as well as the implied testimony of Scripture, that the heathen philosophers, instead of being excepted from the condemnation denounced against the Pagan world, were the most guilty of all the heathens. Their greater light only rendered them the more inexcusable in their sin, and their service of false gods. It is the express testimony of God himself, that they are "*without excuse.*"

That no part of the heathen world can be exempted from this condemnation is clear from the fact that the Apostle in the passages quoted from the 1st chapter of this Epistle, is describing the character of all men of all nations, and his conclusion from the whole is, that all are guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19. If any could be exempted from this character, this conclusion would be unsound. To say, then, that there may be an exception in favour of those called "virtu-

ous heathens," is to make an assertion in opposition to the testimony of God. Whatever might be the virtue of individuals, as far as external conduct was concerned, that virtue had nothing in it that could meet the law and justice of God. They might have done many things good and acceptable to men, but these were not done from the motives that render human actions good in the estimation of God. Not one of their actions could be justly called good, while they are all condemned for not glorifying God as he was manifested in his works. All the heathen world were not equally flagitious in their conduct, but the character ascribed to them by the Apostle applies to them all.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Here is God's account of the character of the heathen world. This is a description of the persons that appear to many to be too good to be condemned by God, and whom they argue it would be unjust to condemn. They were, says the Apostle, "*haters of God.*"

It may be alleged that the benefits of the death of Christ might be extended to heathens. That this

might have been the case, had it been the will of God, none should question. But it is a matter of testimony, and the Scriptures affirm most pointedly, that heathens are without excuse in their sin, and perish without remedy. God could have enlightened the heathens, with respect to the way of mercy, as easily without the Scriptures as with them. But this has not been the good pleasure of his will. It is an undoubted matter of fact, that there is nothing to be found in any human records concerning the life of any man who enjoyed no external testimony to the Messiah in which we can discover the least resemblance to the holiness of the truth. The genius by whom Socrates pretended to be instructed, taught him nothing about his lost and ruined condition, nothing about the way of mercy. In his virtue there is nothing like the obedience of a man born of God; and nothing that indicates spiritual life in any part of his character. Could that man have been born of God who died in the worship of idols, giving with his latest breath his public testimony in favour of the superstition of his country? Socrates, then, was not a fearer of God or a worker of righteousness. Instead of dying, as he is usually represented, as a martyr to the faith of the unity of God, he died an IDOLATER, doing homage to the Devil, and not to Jehovah.

God has declared that the heathen world shall perish in their sins. This is expressed in the 2d chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in the 12th verse, as clearly as language can convey a meaning. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." It might be objected that it would be unjust to condemn men who had sinned without the knowledge of

the law which prohibits sin. To this objection the Apostle replies in the 14th and 15th verses, that, although the Gentiles had not the written law, they were not without a law. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

On this 14th verse, some have attempted to ground the salvation of those whom they call virtuous heathens. They insist that the language implies that some heathens fulfilled the law of nature. But this is altogether unfounded, and entirely at variance with the meaning of the passage. The words do not assert that the persons alluded to keep the law of nature in such a manner as thereby to obtain salvation, for this would be to conclude against what had before been so expressly asserted; and also against the whole scope of the Apostle's reasoning, which goes to prove the truth of what he had asserted in the 16th and 17th verses of the 1st chapter,—that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because *therein is the righteousness of God revealed*. In order to confirm this declaration, Paul announces that the wrath of God is revealed against all *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness*, and then proceeds to show that man has no righteousness of his own, being both ungodly and unrighteous. This he proves in the 1st and 2d chapters, respecting both Jews and Gentiles. And after having fully shown in the 3d chapter, where he includes them both together, that *there is none righteous, no not one*, he

arrives at the conclusion, that, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified. This conducts him back to the declaration with which he had commenced, respecting the manifestation of that righteousness or conformity to the law which God himself had provided, in order to justification, which is received by faith. The doctrine, then, of the passage in question, is, that the Gentiles prove by their conduct that they have the work of the law, that is, what the law teaches written in their hearts, which renders them fit subjects of judgment. Every man in the world in this way does many of the things which the law teaches, though not one of them perfectly. There is no man so wicked as not to have done many things because he thought them right, and to have avoided many things because he thought them wrong. The most wicked man on earth will approve of certain things as right, and condemn other things as wrong. And this shows that all men are fit subjects of judgment, because they all have the knowledge of sin,\*—a standard of right and wrong in their minds, to which, however, no man acts up.

It is alleged, that, although the Apostle's language shows that all the Gentiles are guilty before God, yet it does not imply that they will be condemned. They may be guilty, yet be saved by mercy through Jesus Christ. But the language of the Apostle entirely pre-

\* Were it granted for a moment that this passage teaches that the Gentiles might keep the law of nature in such a way as to have salvation by it, even this view of the matter would contradict the scheme of salvation invented for them by some commentators on this Epistle, through the principle of faith. If they can keep the law of nature so as to have salvation by it, there is no need of salvation by faith, in whatever sense faith is understood.

cludes the possibility of such a supposition. It is not said that they who have sinned without law are guilty without law, but that they shall "*perish without law*," Rom. ii. 12. The language, then, does not merely assert their guilt, but clearly asserts their condemnation. *They shall perish*.—No criticism can make this expression consistent with the salvation of the Gentiles who know not God.

The truth of that decisive passage, above quoted, with which the Apostle opens his discussion, and on which he grounds all that follows in this Epistle to the Romans, should never be lost sight of. The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Here it is asserted that the gospel is the means by which God exerts his power for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, because in it is revealed the righteousness he has provided for them, which is received by faith. This, according to Scripture, is the only way in which men are saved.

The condemnation of the heathen, the grounds of which are shown by Paul in this place, is also asserted or implied in many other parts of Scripture. There is the most abundant evidence, from the character given of the Gentile world in many passages, that in the state of nature men are universally under condemnation. This is implied; 1st, in the empire ascribed to Satan; 2d, in the character given to the Gentiles, and in the character given to believers from among the Gentiles before their conversion; and 3d, in the passages that declare the final doom of idolaters.

FIRST, *This is implied in the empire which the Scrip-*

*tures ascribe to Satan.* He is called the prince of this world—the god of this world—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, and he and his angels are called the rulers of the darkness of this world. John, xii. 31 ; xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11 ; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4 ; Eph. ii. 2 ; vi. 12. All such passages imply that the world in general are the subjects and slaves of Satan. “ We know,” says the Apostle John, “ that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness,”—or in the evil one.

SECONDLY, *The same thing appears from the character given of the Gentiles, and the previous character of Gentile believers,* Matt. vi. 32, “ For after all these ‘ things do the Gentiles seek.’” Here the Gentiles are supposed to be unconcerned about the things of God, and to be solely intent about the things of this life, Acts, xxvi. 18, “ To open their eyes, and to turn them ‘ from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan ‘ unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, ‘ and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by ‘ faith that is in me.’” Here the Gentiles are supposed not only to be in utter darkness, but to be totally blind, and under the tyranny of Satan, and in the guilt of their sins, 1 Cor. x. 20, “ But I say that the things which ‘ the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils (or de- ‘ mons), and not to God.” Here the devil is declared to be the god worshipped by the Gentiles, 1 Cor. xii. 2. “ Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away ‘ unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” Here the Gentiles, instead of being the worshippers of the true God, are represented as the worshippers of dumb idols, 1 Cor. vi. 16. “ What agreement hath the ‘ temple of God with idols?” There is an utter in-



consistency between idolatry and the service of God, Gal. iv. 8. "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." Before these persons were called by the gospel, they were not serving God according to the light of nature, but doing service to them which by nature are not gods, Eph. ii. 2. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Here sin is designated as the course of this world; and all the Christians addressed are declared to have been previously walking in this course. There was not among them one servant of God, even according to the light of nature. The devil is here spoken of as the spirit that works in the hearts of all till they are made acquainted with the Messiah. Every Christian, not only among the Ephesians, but every Christian to the end of time, till he knows the truth, is thus represented as having his conversation among the children of disobedience, living in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Where, then, are the virtuous heathens living in such a manner as to obtain salvation by their walk according to the light of nature? Eph. ii. 11, 12. "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,

‘ and strangers from the covenants of promise, having  
‘ no hope, and without God in the world.’ Here all  
Gentiles unacquainted with the Messiah are supposed  
to be without Christ. They are aliens from the com-  
monwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants  
of promise. And that this implies not merely that  
they were excluded from communion with the Church  
of Israel, but from the whole Church of God, is evi-  
dent from the 19th verse : “ Now, therefore, ye are  
‘ no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens  
‘ with the saints, and of the household of God.” At  
the time the Apostle wrote, they were no more strangers  
and foreigners, but they were still equally strangers and  
foreigners to the Jewish Church and system. In this  
passage, also, they are represented as having been for-  
merly without hope, and without God. This is not  
the character of any who are living in such a manner  
as to be saved. What can more clearly express the state  
of all the Gentile nations than Eph. iv. 17-19 : “ This  
‘ I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye hence-  
‘ forth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity  
‘ of their mind ; having the understanding darkened,  
‘ being alienated from the life of God through the igno-  
‘ rance that is in them, because of the blindness (hard-  
‘ ness) of their heart : Who being past feeling, have  
‘ given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all  
‘ uncleanness with greediness.” Believers are here  
warned not to walk as other Gentiles in the vanity of  
their mind. This implies that all unenlightened Gen-  
tiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Their under-  
standing is said to be darkened, and themselves to be  
alienated from the life of God, through their ignorance,  
occasioned by the hardness of their hearts. Can men

be in the way of salvation yet be alienated from the life of God, past feeling, and working all uncleanness with greediness ? 1 Thess. i. 9, " For they themselves ' show of us what manner of entering in we had unto ' you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve ' the living and true God." These believers were all formerly the worshippers of idols. None of them were walking according to the light of nature, 1 Thess. ii. 16. " Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they ' might be saved." Here it is implied that, in order to be saved, the Gentiles must hear the gospel, 1 Thess. iv. 5. " Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the ' Gentiles which know not God." Here it is implied that all unenlightened Gentiles live in the lust of concupiscence. This is ascribed to their not knowing God, and it is implied that nothing but the knowledge of God can deliver from this state. 1 Peter, iv. 3, " For ' the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought ' the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, ' and abominable idolatries." Here all the unenlightened Gentiles are supposed to be living in a course of sin. No such characters are to be found among them as persons serving the true God according to the light of nature.

THIRDLY, *The condemnation of the heathen world is implied in the denunciations of wrath against all idolaters.* In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, it is declared that idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If this be one of the true sayings of God, how can Socrates, or any other heathen, enter the heavenly Jerusalem. Idolatry, although a species of worship, is declared, Gal. v. 19, 20, to be one of the works of the

flesh that excludes from heaven. This shows that idolatry does not originate in want of evidence of the God of creation, but in the corruption of the heart. It is then without excuse. It is asserted, 2 Thess. i. 8, that the Lord Jesus will be revealed to take vengeance on all them that *know not* God, as well as on them who *believe not* the gospel. This implies the condemnation of all in every age, who did not know God as revealed in the promise of the Messiah. It is to be observed, however, that many in the early ages of the world were acquainted with the original promise made to our first parents, who were not acquainted with the Scriptures. And many in every age might have been acquainted with the coming of the Messiah, who had no communion with Israel. All idolaters are said, Rev. xxi. 8, to have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And in Rev. xxii. 16, idolaters are declared to be "without" the city. Since, then, all heathen nations have been idolaters, and not *one* exception among their wise men is to be found who did not conform to the worship of idols, and since all idolaters are to be condemned, every hope that is entertained in their favour is a hope in rebellion against the will and the truth of God.

The same awful truths are declared throughout the whole Old Testament Scriptures respecting idolaters and those who know not God. Psalm, lxxiv. 20, "Have respect unto the Covenant ; for the dark places ' of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty ;" Ps. xcvi. 7, " Confounded be all they that serve graven ' images, that boast themselves of idols ;" Ps. lxxix. 6, " Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not ' known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not

‘ called upon thy name.’” In Jeremiah, x. 25, the same threatening is repeated. Job, xviii. 21, “ Surely ‘ such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the ‘ place of him that knoweth not God.” Proverbs, xxix. 18, “ Where there is no vision the people perish.” The same representations as those contained in the above passages, of all who are ignorant of God’s way of salvation, is uniformly given throughout the Scriptures. It is held forth in the whole Mosaic dispensation, and in all that is said to Israel respecting the surrounding nations.

Upon the whole, nothing can be more clearly taught in the Bible, than that, since the entrance of sin into the world, there never has been any real religion or any saving relation formed between God and man, except by the revelation, more or less distinct, oral or written, of mercy through the atonement of the only begotten Son of God. Jesus Christ is the *way*, and the *truth*, and the *life*; no man cometh to the Father but by him. “ No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to ‘ whom the Son will reveal him.” All *immediate* friendly intercourse between God and man has since the fall been cut off; and it is only through faith in the one Mediator that it is restored. The efficacy of the obedience of the Son of God unto death, reached back to the period when, according to the first annunciation of mercy, it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.\* The meaning of this promise, as well as of the threatened punishment of transgressors, was afterwards unfolded

\* In this annunciation the human race was divided into two companies,—the one called the seed of the woman, the other the seed of the serpent,

with increasing clearness. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, 2 Peter, ii. 5—of the everlasting righteousness of God to be wrought by the Messiah, which is received by faith ; so that, at the renovation of the world after the flood, the way in which man should be “just with God” was proclaimed by the second parent of the human race, as it had been intimated to Adam at the beginning. If, therefore, in any age or nation this great truth has been forgotten and lost, it has been owing to the ungodliness of mankind rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. The wisest among the heathen, as has been already remarked, are described by the Apostle as “HATERS OF GOD,” who “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge,*” and who not only were “*filled with all unrighteousness,*” and guilty of the greatest immoralities, but had arrived at the very last limits of wickedness and moral degradation—“having pleasure in them that do them.”

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism, Question 60, it is asked, “*Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature ?*” Answer—“They ‘who, having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus ‘Christ, nor believe in him, cannot be saved, be they ‘never so diligent to frame their lives according to the ‘light of nature, or the law of that religion which they ‘profess ; neither is there salvation in any other, but ‘in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of his body ‘the church.’”

The 18th Article of the Church of England is as follows :—“They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the

‘ law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent  
‘ to frame his life according to that law, and the light  
‘ of nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us  
‘ only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must  
‘ be saved.’”

It may appear to some, that though the above doctrine is true, as it is very offensive to the world, and even not quite agreeable to many Christians themselves, it would be more prudent to pass it over in silence. It may seem a curious question rather than a doctrine which is for edification. But this, as it respects any part of the Word of God, is a most ungodly sentiment. It is the wisdom of man opposed to the wisdom of God. It blasphemously supposes that God teaches what his people should not learn—it charges the Scriptures with inconsistency.

But it is not a question of curiosity, it is a truth calculated to produce the most powerful influence on the mind of every believer. It strikes down man to the dust, and exhibits God as a sovereign. This doctrine, which the carnal heart of man cannot bear, meets us in the Scriptures at every step ; and accompanies the whole procedure of Jehovah, both in his providence and in his grace. What God in so many ways teaches concerning himself, Christians ought not to hide in their representations of his character. The wisdom that conceals any part of the divine character with a view to recommend it, is akin to that blasphemy which charges God with the same, as a blemish. Christians ought to take their views of God from his own revelation of himself, and not from the conceptions which their depraved minds would suggest. To hide what God is, or to represent him in any point of view

as what he is not, is to deny Jehovah, to be ashamed of Christ, and to form to ourselves an idol of our own imagination. Let it be remembered that this is a part of the divine testimony of which Christians are not to be ashamed. Jesus Christ has declared not only that he will be ashamed of that man who is ashamed of him, but of all who are ashamed of his word. It is at our peril, then, if we are ashamed of any part of the divine testimony as far as we know it. Let it further be remembered, that *every doctrine contained in the Scripture is of a practical nature, and of practical importance.*

The human mind is fruitful in the invention of excuses for the heathen, while God most unequivocally declares that they are *without excuse*. Is this a light matter? Is it safe to join issue in a cause against the Most High? That we should feel for the condemned heathen is highly proper. If the misery of any creature occasion us no pain, we are deficient in love, and guilty before God. Nor does it appear that acquiescence in the Divine will implies that in this life at least we should not have a wish that all men might be happy. This seems to be clearly intimated in the conduct of Paul before Agrippa. "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He had no reason to believe any such thing. But it would have given him great satisfaction had it been true. Jesus Christ also, who in the highest degree possessed all the sympathies of our nature without sin, wept over Jerusalem when he announced its impending fate. But while Christians ought to feel for the misery of every fellow-creature, they should beware of manifesting their



love to them by calling in question the word or the justice of Jehovah. It is enough to know that, although we are unable to fathom the Divine counsels, the Judge of all the earth will do right.

Those, however, who contend for the truth as declared in the Scriptures on the subject in question, are often considered to be deficient in charity. The heathens in the same way charged the Christians in the first ages as haters of mankind, because they would not grant that all religions were equally safe and good. The same spirit often manifests itself in the disapprobation of the conduct of those who faithfully declare doctrines that are generally offensive. But it is not a christian spirit that would induce us, out of complaisance to men, to hide or avoid any thing taught by the Spirit of God; or to express hopes, or at least to suppress fears, respecting those whom the Scriptures condemn. Charity or love does not require us to believe, contrary to evidence, that all is well with our neighbours, or to say that it is so; but it prompts us to neglect no means in our power to do them good. The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of love and of a sound mind, and these ought never to be separated. We should speak the truth in love; but love without truth, like faith without works, is dead. Spurious charity\* aims at extending the em-

\* Charity, taken in its true sense, renders the duties of Christians at once clear, intelligible, and compatible with one another. If we take it in a different acceptation, we shall immediately perceive a constant opposition between it and zeal for the service of God; and in the same measure in which we abound in the one, in the same degree shall we be necessarily restrained in the other. But if we view Christian charity in its true light, as meaning sincere love for its object, instead of there remaining any opposition, we shall perceive the most complete harmony betwixt these duties. Far from opposing or limiting each other in their

pire of the gospel, by hiding some of its characteristic features, and hopes to make it agreeable to the world, by suppressing part of its testimony. This is injurious to the character of Divine revelation, and ought to be loudly denounced as one of the means by which Satan, under the appearance of an angel of light, endeavours to turn men from the truth. The spirit that dictates such a course may dignify itself with the appellation of a christian spirit, and may be hailed and admired as such by the world, but will for ever find its condemnation in the example of our Lord and his Apostles. The Apostle John, who speaks so much of the importance of charity, and who was himself so bright an example of that heavenly grace, employs the strongest expressions to show the hatefulness and the danger of error. And what is his definition of charity? "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." Had the truth respecting the condition of heathens not been kept so much in the background, from a fear of giving offence; had not Christians shut their eyes to the doctrine of Scripture on the subject, they would not have satisfied themselves without making earlier and more vigorous efforts, to proclaim in the benighted regions of the world, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

This doctrine is calculated greatly to enhance the value of the gospel in the esteem of Christians, reminding them that the knowledge of it is indispensable in order to their being saved, and exciting within them the most lively gratitude. When so many millions of

exercises, they will reciprocally fortify and mutually direct in their application. In order to possess just ideas of different duties, we must always consider the relations they bear to each other.

the human race are suffered to live in ignorance of the way of salvation, what thanks are due to God on the part of those whose lot has been cast in a land of light! It is likewise calculated to awaken the most ardent zeal for the dissemination of the gospel. If men might be saved through Christ by the law of nature, what encouragement would there be for any extraordinary exertions for this object? The view, then, which is here given of the subject, is the only one which stimulates zeal for the spreading of the glad news of salvation. If the gospel is the only medium of communicating to men the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, let Christians do all that lies in their power for its diffusion, till the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

## SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH.

THE general attention which has of late years been drawn to the observance of the Sabbath, cannot fail to be a subject of congratulation with every Christian. The importance of the institution is fully perceived only by those who tremble at the Word of God ; yet every reflecting mind is compelled to acknowledge, that whether as regards mental or physical exertion, some such interval of rest is necessary for the well-being of society.\* But no argument, however cogent, unless immediately derived from the Scriptures of truth, is sufficient to establish the obligation to sanctify the seventh day, which must always be rested on the authority of God. It is, therefore, of great moment that the divine character of the Sabbatical Institution should be distinctly understood, and the more so, because many have been led to imagine, that it is a mere Jewish ordinance, unrecognized in the New Testament, and even set aside or in a measure superseded by our Lord and his Apostles, as in chapter xiv. 5, 6, of the Epistle to the Romans. This is a most pernicious error ; an error exhibiting great ignorance of spiritual things, and one highly calculated to retard the progress of the Chris-

\* Mr Burke, in his celebrated letter to a Member of the National Assembly of France, attributes much of the terrible mischiefs occasioned by that body to their continuing their sittings on the Sabbath. "They who always labour," he observes, "can have no true judgment. You never give yourselves time to cool, and when men are thus engaged in unremitting labour, they exhaust their attention, burn out their candles, and are left in the dark."

tian in the divine life. The Apostles, when speaking of days which might or might not be observed without sin, obviously alluded to holy days peculiar to the Jewish economy, and with it about to vanish away; but the Sabbath was set apart from the beginning of the world, and was therefore intended to be held equally holy under the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian dispensations.

In proving the duty of Christians to hallow the Lord's day, it is necessary to show, that there is nothing in this duty peculiar to the law of Moses; but that it rests on the permanent obligation of the original institution, afterwards embodied in the decalogue, and also recognised by our Lord and his Apostles. It is necessary, also, to prove that the change of the day from the last to the first day of the week, has not made void the import of the primary institution, or of the fourth commandment, whose binding and permanent authority is by no means affected by that change. If it could be ascertained that the Sabbath is not appointed to be observed on the first day of the week, the consequence would be, not that we should be freed from its obligation, but that we ought to sanctify it on the original day. This would be incumbent on all the posterity of Adam to the end of the world.

We are taught that it is the reasonable service of every intelligent creature to hold all that he possesses at the disposal of "Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being." In paradise a grant was made to man of the fruits of the earth, with one reservation; after the flood this grant was renewed and extended, and without such a grant it would have been an act of robbery for man to seize upon any one of the pro-

ductions of his Maker. The same is true in regard to our time. Every minute belongs to God, and it is for the Almighty to determine in what manner we are to number and employ our days. On this subject He has not left mankind in ignorance ; but has instituted the ordinance of the weekly rest, and commanded it to be observed according to his appointment.

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#### THE SABBATH ANTERIOR TO THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION.

The Sabbath neither originated, nor ceased with the law of Moses. It was instituted immediately after the Creation, before man had sinned, and for a reason that has no dependence on that economy. "*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made,*" Gen. ii. 2. Here a reason is given for the sanctification of the seventh day, unconnected with anything local or temporary ; and the blessing pronounced on it as well as its sanctification, imply, that it is blessed and sanctified for man. All the days of creation were good. None of them was cursed or unholy,—the seventh day, therefore, was not blessed and sanctified on account of possessing any natural superiority or pre-eminence. It was sanctified by a command to Adam, and through him to all his posterity, to keep it holy as a day set apart and blessed by the Creator, on which he rested from his work ; and this is the reason given in the fourth commandment, more than two thousand years afterwards, for sanctifying this day. If, then, on a certain account, one day of the week is declared to be blessed and sancti-

fied, it must be distinguished from the other days, and a peculiar blessing must rest upon it. Are, then, the Jews alone concerned in this? What exclusive connexion has such a Sabbath with Jewish institutions of a mere temporary nature? Are not all men in all ages equally interested in it? If, even in a state of innocence, the Sabbath was a blessing to man, how much more is it necessary for him in a state of sin, degradation, and toil?

Two great laws were delivered to man at the beginning, in both of which God asserted his sovereignty. The first was the appointment of the Sabbath, or a seventh day's rest. The second was the law of marriage. These two ordinances were instituted as the basis of that relation which was to subsist between God and man, and of every relative connexion among men. They were ordinances coeval in their appointment with the existence of the human race upon earth, and must subsist while man has a being upon it.

Notwithstanding the proof from the words of the institution, Gen. ii. 2, that the Sabbath was to be universally observed, it has been urged by those who impugn its authority, that no mention is made of it during the Patriarchal ages, and, therefore, that it cannot then have been in force. But, considering the nature and brevity of the Scripture history, even were it true that no intimation is given respecting the Sabbath in that period, this would furnish no valid argument against its existence. In several books of the Old Testament, even in those where the omission was hardly to have been anticipated, the Sabbath is not mentioned, although in the periods in which they were written it continued to be regularly observed. Numerous allu-

sions, however, are from the beginning, and all along, to be found to the Sabbath. Besides many others, the division of time into weeks of seven days, may be noticed ; and the frequent introduction of the number *Seven*, as even in the short account of the Flood, Gen. vii. 2, 3, 4, 10 ; viii. 10, 12, relating both to casual occurrences and to the worship of God. The number seven is expressed in Hebrew by a word signifying fulness, perfection, or completion ; and to this number it may be farther observed, a sacred character has been attached from the earliest ages, among all nations, whether idolaters or worshippers of the true God. But even if no mention had been made of the observance of the Sabbath, and no allusion to it had been found during the Patriarchal ages, or at any other period, its binding obligation would remain unimpaired, since the institution itself, and the ground on which it rests, are so fully declared at the commencement of the Scriptures, as to render any recurrence to the subject in the way of authority unnecessary.

In the account of the gathering of the manna, Exodus, xvi. 4, before the law was delivered from Sinai, we have satisfactory evidence of the obligation to observe the Sabbath day. "Then said the Lord unto ' Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for ' you ; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether ' they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come ' to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that ' which they bring in ; and it shall be twice as much ' as they gather daily." Here is direct reference to a "law" previously existing, by which God was to prove the obedience of the Israelites, and here also is



a clear intimation that the law referred to required the separation of the seventh from the other days of the week. On the Sabbath they were to rest; on the Sabbath they were not to gather the manna, and, in the providence of God, it was declared that this should not be necessary, for God would give them as much on the sixth day as would also suffice for the seventh. Accordingly, it is said, verse 22, "And it came to pass, ' that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much ' bread, two omers for one man : and all the rulers of ' the congregation came and told Moses. And he said ' unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, to- ' morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord : ' bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ' ye will seethe ; and that which remaineth over lay ' up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they ' laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade ; and it ' did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. ' And Moses said, eat that to-day ; for to-day is a Sab- ' bath unto the Lord : to-day ye shall not find it in the ' field. Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh ' day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." When, notwithstanding this injunction, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather the manna, "The Lord," it is added, verse 28, "said unto ' Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my command- ' ments and my laws ? See, for that the Lord hath ' given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the ' sixth day the bread of two days : abide ye every man ' in his place ; let no man go out of his place on the ' seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh ' day." Here is express mention of the seventh day, and of the Sabbath, and reference to God's *laws* and *com-*

*mandments*, previously given, respecting it. The Sabbath, it is to be observed, too, is spoken of in the past time—the Lord *hath given* ; and the manna in the present—he *giveth*; while the Sabbath, formerly given, is declared to be the reason why there was twice as much manna on the sixth day. “ The Lord hath given you ‘ the Sabbath, *therefore* he giveth you in the sixth day ‘ the bread of two days.” In all this we have clear proof of the previous existence of a “ LAW,” namely, “ *the rest of the holy Sabbath.*” This law was imposed on Adam when he stood as the representative of the whole human race, and is consequently binding on all his posterity. We may here observe, that three miracles in honour of the Sabbath, and to secure it against desecration, were wrought every week before the promulgation of the law. Double the quantity of manna fell every sixth day. None fell on the Sabbath. The manna preserved for that day did not corrupt. We have thus seen that the duty of the sanctification of the Sabbath was enjoined before the existence of the Mosaic dispensation, it shall now be proved that it remains in force since that dispensation has passed away.

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THE SABBATH BINDING ALIKE UNDER THE JEWISH AND  
CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS.

The duty of the observance of the Sabbath, resting on the original institution, forms a part of the ten commandments, and on this account also is of permanent and universal obligation. It is most erroneous to suppose, that because these commandments were delivered to the Israelites, that for them they were exclusively intended. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, and they were appointed his witnesses to all na-

tions, Isaiah, xliii. 10, 12. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the general laws delivered to Israel as a testimony for all mankind, and those national laws—the statutes and the judgments—which were peculiar to that people. All the other nations had fallen into idolatry, because “they did not like to retain God in ‘their knowledge.’” From these the Israelites were separated, in order that by them the worship of the true Jehovah might be maintained; and, above all, that from among them the Messiah should spring. For the purpose of continuing this separation, as well as of rendering it subservient to the future dispensation, the law in its various parts, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, was delivered to Israel. The moral law, contained in the ten commandments, was, from its nature, of universal and permanent obligation; while the laws that were political, ritual, or ceremonial, had previously no existence, and were to be abrogated when their destined end was accomplished. But the decalogue, on which these other laws were grounded, the sum of which is the love of God and of our neighbour, containing the eternal rule of right and wrong, had been in force from the beginning, and must for ever continue immutable. It was accordingly distinguished from the other laws in a very remarkable manner, both in its promulgation and in its preservation.

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#### THE MANNER OF THE PROMULGATION OF THE DECALOGUE.

The ten commandments alone were *promulgated* by the voice of God, amidst the most manifest tokens of the divine presence and majesty. They were delivered to a whole nation, who trembled when they heard them, and solemnly promised obedience. When they were

proclaimed, Moses and Aaron only were present on the mount, which the people and the priests were forbidden even to touch. And as these commandments had been pronounced by the voice of God, in the hearing of all the people, they were also written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, while the other laws were delivered to Moses only, and written by him in a book. "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in ' the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, ' and of the thick darkness, with a great voice ; and he ' added no more : and he wrote them on two tables ' of stone, and delivered them unto me," Deut. v. 22. Such were the striking peculiarities of the promulgation of the ten commandments.

The two tables of the law were given to Moses on the mount, but before he returned to the people they had violated and trampled on its great commandment. Moses, in consequence, cast the tables out of his hand and brake them, thus significantly indicating that the law given to man had been broken, and that, if committed to his keeping, by him it could not be fulfilled. With man this was impossible, but with God all things are possible. It was his eternal purpose, purposed in Christ Jesus, that his law should notwithstanding be fulfilled, and that by his own power this fulfilment should be accomplished. Moses was therefore commanded to prepare two new tables, on which God again wrote "the words that were in the first tables," Exod. xxxiv. 1, which he delivered once more into the hand of Moses ; but in doing so not even Aaron, and no man but Moses, representing on that occasion the one Mediator between God and man, was allowed to go up, or to be seen throughout all the mount. "And

‘ the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The  
‘ Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long  
‘ suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keep-  
‘ ing mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and trans-  
‘ gression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the  
‘ guilty,” Exod. xxxiv. 3, 6. It was thus declared that  
through the goodness and mercy of God, sin, the trans-  
gression of the law, should be pardoned ; but that this  
should be effected in consistency with his holiness and  
justice ; that the sinner should be forgiven ; but sin  
should not go unpunished.

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THE MANNER OF THE PRESERVATION OF THE DECALOGUE,  
AND THE LESSONS THEREBY TAUGHT.

In the manner of their *preservation*, the ten com-  
mandments were as much distinguished from all the  
other laws given to Israel, as they had been in the  
mode of their promulgation. A tabernacle was prepared  
for their reception, by the special direction of God, and  
within it an ark placed, in which the two tables of the  
law were to be deposited. The ark, formed of the most  
durable wood, was overlaid with gold, within and with-  
out. It was called the ark of the covenant, and over  
it was placed the mercy-seat, that eminent type of the  
Mediator of the new covenant. On this mercy-seat  
the divine glory was to descend, and thence as from a  
throne Jehovah was to hold communication with his  
people. When the tabernacle was “ set up,” the ark,  
covered with a veil, was placed in it, and Aaron and  
his sons were consecrated. When this was done, Moses  
“ took and put the testimony (the two tables of the  
‘ law) into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and  
‘ put the mercy-seat above upon the ark. And he

‘ brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the  
‘ veil of the covering, and covered the ark of the testi-  
‘ mony ; as the Lord commanded Moses,” Exodus xl.  
20, 21.

Similar solemnities were observed when the ark was transferred from the tabernacle to the temple. “ And  
‘ the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the  
‘ Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to  
‘ the most holy place, even under the wings of the  
‘ cherubims. For the cherubims spread forth their  
‘ two wings over the place of the ark, and the cheru-  
‘ bims covered the ark, and the staves thereof above.  
‘ And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the  
‘ staves were seen out in the holy place before the ora-  
‘ cle, and they were not seen without : and there they  
‘ are unto this day. There was nothing in the ark  
‘ save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there  
‘ at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the  
‘ children of Israel, when they came out of the land of  
‘ Egypt,” 1 King viii. 6-9.

Into the holy of holies, in which were the ark and the mercy-seat, the high priest alone entered, and that only once every year, after offering a solemn sacrifice of atonement for himself and all the people, and the punishment of death was denounced against him, if he entered at any other time ; and at no time was any other man allowed to enter. Even in the tabernacle there was to be no man when he made the atonement, Lev. xvi. 17. When the tabernacle was to be removed, Aaron and his sons were to take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the testimony with it, and to put two more coverings over it. “ After that, the sons  
‘ of Kohath shall come to bear it : but they shall not

‘ touch any holy thing lest they die,” Numbers, iv. 5, 15. It was death to touch the ark. Uzzah was smitten with death for putting his hand to it, 2 Sam. vi. 7. It was death to look into it. “ And he smote the men ‘ of Beth-Shemesh, because they had looked into the ‘ ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty ‘ thousand and threescore and ten men,” 1 Sam. vi. 19. Both these examples contain most salutary instruction to those who have fled to Christ for refuge, and to all who are yet in their sins. To this hour it is death to look, in a spirit of self-righteousness, on that law which the ark contained. It is death to look on it, except through Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The importance attached to the tabernacle and the ark containing the ten commandments, and *these alone*, demands particular attention. While the history of the creation of the universe—of the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars, is related by the sacred historian in *one* short chapter, the account of the construction of the tabernacle and the ark is detailed in *thirteen*. In his account of the creation of the universe, Moses is brief and general ; in that of the construction of the tabernacle and the ark he is copious, and records the smallest peculiarities. The world was created in order that God should be glorified by the church, and that by it his manifold wisdom might be made known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly place, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, Eph. iii. 10. In the tabernacle and the ark his law was to be deposited, till by the coming of his Son it should be fulfilled for the redemption of his people from its curse ; and, accordingly, the

construction of the tabernacle and the ark is spoken of more amply and more particularly than the formation of all the elements and all the universe.

The remarkable prominence thus given to the construction of the tabernacle, and the extraordinary precautions regarding the ark, as subservient to the conservation of the holy law, prove its importance in the sight of God,—of that everlasting law by which he governs the world, which is holy, and just, and good, and which in its substance must be eternally binding on all intelligent creatures, both men and angels. This law had been broken by man. But, though broken and dishonoured, its authority was in due time to be vindicated, not merely by the infliction of its awful penalty, but also by the fulfilment of its holy precepts, and that, too, upon earth, which had been the scene of its violation. Had not this been the purpose of God, we may be assured, that the law would never again have been promulgated to man. Nothing would have remained but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation to consume its transgressors. But God in the midst of wrath remembered mercy. Glory to God in the highest was at length, through the fulfilling of this law, to be proclaimed, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

In the renewal of the tables of the law, accompanied with the proclamation of the mercy of God, and their being placed in the ark, covered with the mercy-seat, intimation was given of that future fulfilment of the law, and the removal of its curse. In other words, it was intimated that a righteousness adequate to all its demands, which could not be performed by man, should be provided by God. And this solemn transaction,



and the purposed fulfilment of its import, were, in the 40th Psalm, prophetically declared of Him who alone could bring in this righteousness, where he himself announces his coming to do his Father's will. "Lo, I  
' come : in the volume of the book it is written of me,  
' I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is  
' within my heart. I have preached righteousness in  
' the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my  
' lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy  
' righteousness within my heart." Here we are made acquainted with the reason why the holy law was promulgated by the voice of Jehovah himself with the sound of a trumpet, amidst thunderings and lightnings from the mountain that burned with fire, and proclaimed in this awful manner as a testimony to all nations, and every age of the world : why, after being broken, the tables of the law were renewed, and deposited in the tabernacle and the ark ; why such importance was attached to them for its preservation ; and why such solemn prohibitions respecting them were added, backed by the sanction of instant death. This "fiery law," thus covered from the eye of man, was like the book sealed with seven seals, which no man in heaven nor on earth was found worthy to open, neither to look therein. The lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who alone could look upon that book, alone could fulfil that holy law. He only could magnify and make it honourable. He only could "bring in everlasting righteousness,"—a righteousness performed in time, but to endure throughout eternity,—consisting at once in suffering the penalty which man by transgression had incurred, and in the fulfilment of the precept, which he had failed to obey. His obedi-

ence in this double respect reaches infinitely beyond the power of all created beings, and furnishes of itself incontestible proof, were none besides to be found in the book of God, that Jesus Christ was "*God manifested in the flesh,*" "*Emmanuel, God with us,*" " *Jehovah our righteousness.*"

That there was no other way in which God's law could be fulfilled, after it had been broken, is certain, since God does nothing in vain. If in any other way this could have been accomplished, the highest of all means, as the incarnation of his Son must appear in the eye of every one who believes that he is "over all, God blessed for ever," would not have been employed. The language of our Lord himself was, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It did not pass from him, and this demonstrates that by no other *possible* means, could the law have been fulfilled, and the work of man's salvation accomplished. The truth and the faithfulness of God required that the honour of his violated law should be vindicated by the infliction of its penalty, according to his express declaration to the first man if it should be transgressed. Sin, therefore, must have been punished either in the person of the sinner or of a Surety in his place, and as it was impossible that any mere creature, even of the highest possible order, could be such a surety, either the incarnation of the Son of God, or the punishment of the transgressor, was inevitable. The fulfilment of the law, however, by his Son, did not leave it to be afterwards abrogated or trampled on by those who should receive the benefit of his vicarious obedience, while its nature forbade its being changed or relaxed in the smallest degree, which would render it neither holy nor

just, and consequently unworthy of God. There are many, notwithstanding, who maintain that, under the new covenant, the requirements of this holy law are modified or lowered, so as to be adapted to that degree of obedience which can be yielded by fallen man. This most destructive error, degrading to the character of God, utterly at variance with his holiness and justice, supposing the introduction of one evil to remedy another, gives an entirely false view of the plan of redemption. It is subversive of the law ; for not only, if it failed to require perfect holiness, would it cease to be a holy law ; but it would cease to be in any sense a law. Could that be called a law which did not demand obedience to its own requirements, and which would not be violated when they were disobeyed ? Did ever such a law exist ? Does not every law, whether divine or human, even respecting things of the least value, require implicit and perfect obedience ? Can any one show what are the requirements of that mitigated law, of which some so ignorantly speak, or where it is to be found ?

In the plan of salvation, it is true, provision is made for God's acceptance of the services of his children, although as coming from them they are imperfect, in other words, alloyed with sin, and so falling short of the divine requirements. But on what ground are they accepted ? Is it on their own account ? If so, it would indeed be at the expense of the perfection of the law. But it is far otherwise. As the high priest of Israel made atonement for the uncleanness of the people, so the services of believers are presented to God by their great High Priest, through whose atonement and intercession the sin that cleaves to them is entirely removed. " In those days, and in that time, saith the

‘ Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found ; for I will pardon those whom I reserve.’ Washed in that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, they are presented faultless by him who is their Surety, in other words, as entirely conformed to the perfect standard of God’s holy law. The duty of believers is to be perfect, even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect ; but as in all things and in every moment, they come short, their imperfections are not set aside by lowering the requirements of the law of God, or by expunging any part of it, but are altogether removed in a way that to the utmost honours that law, satisfying its highest demands by Him with whom they are one. God, then, is “ a just God and a Saviour ;” but this he could not be, if, in the plan of salvation, he either abrogated or lowered his law, or dispensed with the perfect obedience to it of those who are saved, or pardoned their sins without an atonement, or accepted their persons or services in any other way than that in which the law is “ fulfilled ” in them, Rom. viii. 4. Well might the Apostle say, “ Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law.”

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PROOF OF THE PERMANENCE OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT DERIVED FROM THE FOREGOING STATEMENTS.

It having been the purpose of God, that the dishonour done to his law in its violation should be repaired, in a way in which it is exhibited as more glorious and more highly valued by him than ever it had been before, ought not means to have been used forcibly to impress this on the minds of men, till that reparation

should take place? The precautions, therefore, employed for the preservation of the two tables of the law, after the first had been broken, which in any other view would, from their strictness and minuteness, be altogether unaccountable, were admirably adapted to the end for which they were appointed. Here, then, we have a demonstration of the permanent obligation of the fourth commandment of the decalogue, since it constitutes a part of that law which was so signally distinguished in its promulgation, and so carefully deposited for its preservation—of that law which the Redeemer fulfilled for the justification of his people; and that law by which they are justified, they must be bound in all its parts to obey. How, then, shall it ever be supposed that the ten commandments belonged only to Israel, and are not of everlasting and universal obligation? Or on what ground can it be affirmed, that the fourth commandment is to be separated from the rest, so that one is blotted out of their number, and that they are now reduced to nine?

Here let us for a moment pause, and consider how God, in the redemption of his people, and the forgiveness of their sins through the blood of Christ, has abounded towards them in all wisdom and prudence. The manner in which these blessings are provided, is at once most humbling and most consolatory. Their communion with their heavenly Father is secured; but the way in which it is obtained lays them low in the dust. All the glory redounds to God, while the richest benefits are conferred on man. Here, too, the conclusion to which the Apostle conducts his argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is strikingly applicable. There he had established the superiority of the new covenant

over that first covenant which made nothing perfect, and had vanished away—during which, “the way into ‘the holiest of all was not yet made manifest;” and he sums up the whole in the following consolatory exhortation:—“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 an High ‘Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with ‘a true heart, in full assurance of faith.”

On the whole, it is evident, that the ten commandments in no respect exclusively belonged, like the other laws, to the nation of Israel. These *laws*, written in a book, Deut. xxxi. 9, 24, 26, were *delivered to them for their keeping*, and placed at the *side* of the ark. But after the first tables on which the *ten commandments* had been inscribed were broken, the renewed tables, guarded by the most awful sanctions, were put *within* the ark, and *covered even from their sight*. They were deposited beneath the mercy-seat, in the tabernacle, the “habitation” of the Lord, and afterwards in the temple, and brought “into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place.” Nor was this holy sanctuary laid open, and exposed to view, until He who had fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law said *IT IS FINISHED*. The veil of the temple was then rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The mystery of the ark, and the ten commandments deposited in it, was unfolded, and the way into the holiest of all made manifest. These commandments are moral in their nature, requiring what is applicable to men in every age; and in the heart of this universal and eternal law the fourth commandment is embodied. We are thus taught that the Sabbath is not

a mere ceremonial institution ; that it is on the contrary a command of moral obligation, regulating by Divine authority the disposal of our time, teaching us how much we may devote to the world, and how much we are to reserve for God. Those who imagine that such a commandment is of a transient or ceremonial character, have very ill considered the words in which it is couched, the duty which it is designed to inculcate, or the sanction by which it is enforced.

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INTERNAL EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT IS OF UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION.

The fourth commandment contains in itself sufficient proof that it did not exclusively belong to the Mosaic dispensation, but that the duty it enjoins was at all times binding on man from the period of his creation. This is evident from the reason by which the duty of its observance is enforced. It contains not a word peculiar to the nation of Israel, but founds on the fact common to all mankind, that God rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, and blessed and sanctified it, repeating the very words of the original institution, and thus recognising and enforcing its universal and permanent authority. From this it is manifest that the duty to sanctify the Sabbath is not confined to any particular age or nation, but that, while God has given to man what are called by the prophet Ezekiel, xlvi. 1, “the ‘six working days,’” he has reserved the seventh for his own immediate service. It may likewise be remarked that Israel was called on in the fourth commandment to *remember* the Sabbath day. This supposes antecedent knowledge, and implies that it was no new institution delivered for them, but one of a former

period, of which they needed to be put in remembrance.

In the same way Nehemiah, ix. 13, speaks of the Sabbath as not newly appointed when promulgated to the Jews. "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments; and madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses, thy servant." Here we observe the difference of expression with regard to the Sabbath from that used respecting the judgments and precepts and statutes. These he *gave* and *commanded*, but his holy Sabbath he *made known* to them. This shows that the Sabbath, so remarkably distinguished as God's holy Sabbath, had been previously promulgated, and that God then restored the full knowledge of it.

The fourth commandment is closely connected with the other commandments; but so far from having any Jewish origin, it is the first and only commandment announced in the opening of the sacred record, and was imposed on our first parents in their state of uprightness and innocence. It thus stands in a peculiar manner at the head of all the commandments, and involves in its breach the abandonment equally of the first and second tables of the decalogue. It is placed at the end of the first table, as the tenth is at the end of the second, as the safeguard of all the rest. It stands between the two tables of our duty to God and our duty to man, as the great foundation and corner stone binding both together—its observance supporting and conducing to our obedience to the whole. It is placed as the guardian of the first and second



commandments, in which the Lord is asserted to be our God, and of the third, which prohibits the profanation of his holy name. This connexion with the first and second commandments is recognised, Lev. xxvi. 1, 2, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither ' rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up ' any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto ' it : for I am the Lord your God. Ye shall keep my ' Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary : I am the ' Lord." In like manner it is said, Ezek. xx. 18, "Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither ' observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols ; I am the Lord your God ; walk in my ' statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them ; and ' hallow my Sabbaths." The fourth commandment is likewise introduced to enforce the other commandments, both of the first and second table. In the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, which opens with this general exhortation to holiness, "Speak unto all the congregation ' of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall ' be holy : for I the Lord your God am holy," obedience to the fifth commandment is immediately after enjoined and enforced by the fourth. "Ye shall fear ' every man his mother and his father, and keep my ' Sabbaths." Other commandments, both of the first and second tables, are in the same chapter likewise specified. "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another ; and ye shall not swear by ' my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name ' of thy God," verses 11, 12. And after referring to various laws of the second table, and giving the summary of the whole of it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," verse 18, the fourth commandment,

as connected with them all, is again brought into view, "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary : I am the Lord," verse 30. In this chapter, as Archdeacon Stopford, in his Scripture account of the Sabbath, observes, "We find the Sabbath in connexion with the 1st, 2d, and 3d commandments of the first table, and with the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th of the second. The 10th is not mentioned, being itself a guard or fence round the other commandments of the second table."

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OBJECTIONS TO THE PERMANENT OBLIGATION OF THE  
SABBATH CONSIDERED.

In contending against the obligation of the Sabbath as a duty universally binding, it has been urged that the preface to the ten commandments shows that they were incumbent only on the Jews. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This is no proof that these commandments were intended exclusively for the Israelites ; but it shows a peculiar reason why they, above all men, should observe them, since God had given them deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. In addition, then, to the commemoration of the rest from the work of creation, there was to the Israelites this other reason, that they had obtained rest from slavery. And as their slavery in Egypt and deliverance from bondage, were typical of the slavery of sin, and deliverance by Christ, so the Sabbath to the Israelites, besides being binding on them according to the original and universal institution, was a type of the rest that was to come.

It has likewise been alleged in opposition to the universally binding obligation of the Sabbath, that its sanc-

tions prove that it was a Jewish institution. The Israelites were commanded to keep it by the sanction of death, Exod. xxxi. 14; Num. xv. 35, &c. This has no necessary connexion with the Sabbath. The Sabbath was incorporated with the Mosaic law, and in that situation it partook of the nature of that dispensation. The law was a yoke added because of transgressions. The sanction, then, of the Sabbath, when incorporated with the law, was agreeable to the nature of the law, and not a part of its original institution. The sanction of death, which, in the Mosaic law, was likewise added to some of the other commandments, on account of which no one pleads that they have become void,—was not originally annexed to the breach of the Sabbath, nor any other peculiarity that related to the Israelites, to whom, besides its institution in the general law, it was also “a sign” of their special relation to God; Exod. xxxi. 13–17; Ezek. xx. 12–20; and therefore this sanction belonging to their peculiar laws, is not to be identified with the originally instituted Sabbath. Marriage was an ordinance of God from the beginning, coeval with that of the sanctification of the seventh day; but marriage had some peculiarities among the Jews, such as the marrying the brother’s wife, which is done away. Shall we say, because these peculiarities are done away, that the ordinance of marriage which was established in the garden of Eden, is done away with the law of Moses?

Objections to the permanent obligation of the Sabbath have been drawn from certain expressions in the New Testament, as for example from what is said, Col. ii. 16. But in that place the Apostle is cautioning those whom he addresses, against returning to the

observance of Jewish ordinances, declaring that they were "a shadow of things to come." He guards them against these as "the rudiments of the world;" and directs them to Christ, in whom believers are "complete" without the addition of those ordinances which only prefigured him. After declaring that Christ had blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" he adds in the verse from which the objection is taken, "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come."\* Here he connects the days of which he speaks with abstinence from certain meats, just as he does in Rom. xiv. 5, 6; all the distinctions respecting which were done away. The word, too, rendered *Sabbaths*, is often applied to the days of the week. Besides the weekly Sabbath, it means also the Jewish Sabbaths which accompanied the feasts. The word rendered "holy day," signifies a feast day—one of the Jewish festivals. This word is in

\* The holidays, and new moons, and Sabbaths connected with these, which were enjoined to be observed, were among the number of those ordinances that were shadows of things to come, which the Apostle here shows were abolished. But the weekly Sabbath cannot come under this description. It is a part of the law of eternal obligation, which as we have seen was laid up in the ark with the other commandments to be fulfilled by the Redeemer for the justification of his people, and is written in their hearts. "Is the Sabbath," asks Mr Stopford, "a shadow! Is the spiritual delight of man—that which is holy of the Lord and honourable, Isa. lviii. 13,—is this a shadow? If the Sabbath be a shadow, or type or representation of any thing, it is of the *rest* signifying a *Sabbath keeping*, which remaineth to the people of God, and that perpetual Sabbath keeping is to be in heaven."

the singular, although sabbaths is plural, and the meaning is a feast day, with its accompanying sabbaths.\*

In the Epistle to the Galatians, iv. 10, Paul employs language respecting the observance of particular days, similar to that in Romans xiv., and Colossians ii., "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years;" and calls them the weak and beggarly elements, wherunto they desired again to be in bondage. But that among these "days," he did not include the weekly Sabbath, which never could be so characterised, we have the most unquestionable proof; for, in another epistle, 1. Cor. xvi. 1, he commands that the first day of the week should be particularly distinguished and observed, and intimates, that he had enjoined the same on the churches of the Galatians, whom, as we see, he had reprehended on account of their observance of particular days.

Those passages in the New Testament, then, which speak of setting aside the observance of certain days, or of all days being alike, refer to the Sabbaths that were observed by the Jews, distinct from the weekly Sabbath.

\* "In the passage in question, the word (sabbaths) is plural, without the article. It is sometimes used in the plural to signify the weekly Sabbath, but never without the article. Whenever given by the Evangelists, as contained in any saying of our Lord's, it is given in the singular, except where it means the Sabbaths in general; because our Lord intended to abolish, or rather, displace by fulfilling, the plural sabbaths attending the feasts, along with the feasts themselves, but to preserve the single weekly Sabbath. In John's gospel, who wrote after the cessation of the Jewish polity and laws, the word is never used except in the singular, for a like reason. . . . Our Lord corrected those errors alone which had disfigured the pure maxims of the law of universal obligation; we find no corrections made by him of temporary or national ordinances."—STOPFORD, pp. 132, 162.

These were a shadow, and when that which they pre-figured was accomplished, they were done away. But the observance of the Sabbath itself, is like all the other commandments, of moral and permanent obligation.

It has been objected to the permanent obligation of the fourth commandment, that the Lord Jesus Christ has relaxed or modified its requirements, but for this there is no foundation. He came, as he himself declares, not to destroy but fulfil the law and the prophets. All the types and shadows, and ritual observances, as well as the testimony of the prophets, found in him their accomplishment. But the grand object of his coming into the world, to which these were subservient, was to magnify and make honourable the law of everlasting obligation, and thus he was to be the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Accordingly he fulfilled that law, summed up in the ten commandments, promulgated by the voice of God and preserved in a manner so peculiar. Of that law, the sanctifying of one day in seven to the service of God is a part, and as we have seen not only a constituent but a very prominent part, and like all its other parts, was for ever to remain in force.

The Lord Jesus honoured the Sabbath on all occasions, by attending the institutions of public worship, and on that day working many of his most distinguished miracles, while he vindicated it from unauthorised traditions contrary to its real design. When charged with breaking the Sabbath, he justified his conduct, not by speaking of it as a temporary observance, or one that was to be abolished or modified ; but in a way in which its permanency was assumed, and to show that its obligation was to remain unimpaired. His explanations

respecting it were entirely consistent with the requirements of the fourth commandment. If, in expounding these, and setting aside the false glosses annexed to them, he had intended to teach, that the Sabbath was not to be observed with such strictness in his kingdom as the law demanded, he would not have vindicated his conduct by proving that he was acting in conformity to its precepts from the beginning. When the Pharisees charged him with doing what was not lawful on the Sabbath day, instead of showing any disposition to set aside or relax its obligations, he referred them to their own practice of loosing their ox from the stall, and leading it away to watering ; and asked, whether if it had fallen into a pit, they would not straightway pull it out on the Sabbath day. He inquired, if they did not know what David did when he was an hungered ; and again, if they had not read in the law, that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath, and were blameless. By justifying his own conduct in this manner, and referring to what had all along been practised under the law, he showed that it was not his purpose to set aside the obligation of the Sabbath, or in any degree to change it, but to refer them to its true import ; according to which, those very acts of necessity and mercy were allowed on account of which the Jews upbraided him and his disciples. In doing, then, what had formerly been practised without any infraction of the law, he was not interfering with its ancient and acknowledged obligation.

That the Lord did not purpose to abolish the Sabbath day, is evident from his referring to the continuance of the Sabbath, when all obligation to observe it as a Jewish institution had ceased. In foretelling the

destruction of Jerusalem, and referring to the flight not of Jews but of his disciples, at a time when every thing peculiar to the Jewish dispensation would be abrogated ; he directs them to pray that it might not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, Matt. xxiv. 20, which, from the nature of the season and their sense of the obligation of the fourth commandment, would impede their flight. Henry, in his note on this passage, observes, " This intimates Christ's design, that a weekly Sabbath should be observed in his church, after the preaching of the gospel to all the world. We read not of any of the ordinances of the Jewish church, which were purely ceremonial, that Christ ever expressed any care about, because they were all to vanish ; but for the Sabbath he often showed a concern. It intimates, likewise, that the Sabbath is ordinarily to be observed as a day of rest from travel and worldly labour ; but that, according to his own explication of the fourth commandment, works of necessity were lawful on the Sabbath day, as that of fleeing from an enemy to save our lives. But it intimates, likewise, that it is very uneasy and uncomfortable to a good man to be taken off by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the Sabbath day. We should pray that we may have quiet and undisturbed Sabbaths, and may have no other work than Sabbath work to do on the Sabbath days, that we may attend upon the Lord without distraction. To flee in the winter is uncomfortable to the body ; but to flee on the Sabbath day is so to the soul, and the more so when it remembers former Sabbaths ; as Psal. xlii. 4."

While nothing in the discourses or conduct of our Lord tends to set aside or relax the duty of obedience



to the fourth commandment, he has confirmed its permanent obligation by frequently appealing to the authority of the decalogue, by which he established every part of it. When asked what was the first of all the commandments, Mark, xii. 28, he gave the substance of the first table as Moses had given it, Deut. vi. 5, and that of the second in the words which Moses had used when summing up various duties arising out of it, Lev. xix. 18. On another occasion, when he put the question to a certain lawyer, "What is written in the law? 'how readest thou?'" Luke, x. 26, the reply was the same as Jesus himself had given in the case just referred to, and was approved of by him. "And he 'answering, said, 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. And he said unto him, thou 'hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." From this it follows that, by adopting the same summaries of the law with Moses whom he quoted, and with the other Jews, our Lord referred to the same commandments, even the moral law contained in the ten commandments. And lest any one might suppose that he spoke only of the Mosaic dispensation, he added to the summary he had just given, Matt. xxii. 40, "On these two commandments hang all the law and 'the prophets:" that is, on these two commandments or summaries of the two tables, depend not only the Mosaic dispensation, but also the prophets, or that dispensation which was to come, which is the subject of the prophecies. When asked by the rich young man, what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the com-

‘mandments.’ He thus showed that it was not to any thing peculiar to the law of Moses, but to the *commandments*, he referred, by distinguishing them by that name, and specifying those of the second table, which, on the occasion above quoted, he had said was like unto the first.

As the Lord himself sanctioned the permanent obligation of the law of the decalogue, his Apostles likewise maintained its authority. The Apostle James, in quoting two of the commandments, refers to the whole law. Paul quotes the fifth, calling it the first commandment with promise, Eph. vi 2. In thus referring to one of these commandments as binding on Christians, and as known by them to be so, and thereby enforcing what he enjoins, he establishes the authority of the whole of them. It is also to be remarked, that by thus calling the attention of the Gentile Christians at Ephesus to the promised blessing, he shows that this promise was not designed to apply exclusively to the land of Canaan, or the children of Israel. In the same way, in the Epistle to the Romans, xiii. 9, he enjoins the duty of love to our neighbour, by quoting those commandments of the second table which relate to that duty. And in the Epistle to the Galatians, v. 14, he gives the same summary of the second table as Moses and our Lord had given: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” It is to the law contained in the ten commandments that Paul declares believers to be dead by the body of Christ, and to which he every where alludes as the rule of duty on which he and the other Apostles found their exhortations to the churches. To this law he refers, when expressly quoting one of its commandments, in saying, “except the law had

“said, Thou shalt not covet,” Rom. vii. 7, he declares that it was ordained to life. According, then, to our Lord’s answer to the lawyer regarding the law of the decalogue, “*This do* and thou shalt live,” and his answer to the rich young man, “If thou wilt enter into ‘life keep the *commandments*,” and to this declaration of the Apostle to the same effect that the commandment was *ordained to life*, it is for the keeping of the ten commandments, which contain in substance the whole law of God, that the blessing of eternal life is to be awarded. Jesus declared that one jot or tittle of the law should not pass till all was fulfilled. He did fulfil it ; and, being fulfilled by him, it is fulfilled by all who are in him, Rom. viii. 4, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” If, then, any man shall ever “enter into life” he will enter it by having thus fulfilled the *commandments* without the exception of one jot or tittle belonging to any one of the *ten*.

It is these ten commandments, well nigh effaced from the heart of man, that were republished with such solemnity at Mount Sinai, written on the tables of stone, and deposited in the ark. These commandments were connected with the everlasting covenant given to Abraham, and confirmed in Christ. They were proclaimed to Israel *before* the laws peculiar to that people were made ; and they equally belong to all nations. It is these commandments, which it is the gracious promise of the new covenant shall be written by God in the hearts of his people. “Behold, the days come, saith ‘the Lord, when 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 fa-

‘thers, in the day when I took them by the hand to  
 ‘lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they  
 ‘continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them  
 ‘not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I  
 ‘will make with the house of Israel, after those days,  
 ‘saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind,  
 ‘and write them in their hearts.” Now, this is not a  
 fact respecting those statutes and judgments peculiar to  
 Israel which are not thus written, but regarding only  
 the moral law of the commandments, and all that re-  
 sults from it. And to this writing of the command-  
 ments of the two tables of the law on the hearts of  
 God’s people, the Apostle particularly refers in the  
 third chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,  
 where he says, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly de-  
 ‘clared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us,  
 ‘written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living  
 ‘God; not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of  
 ‘the heart.” By this allusion, we learn that the com-  
 mandments, which had been written on the two tables  
 of stone, are now written on the heart of every Christian.  
 And what Christian is there who does not thank God,  
 that he has appointed for him the Sabbath day as a  
 day of rest? and who does not feel the benefit of it  
 when he is enabled to sanctify it as he ought?

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THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH UNDER THE CHRIS-  
 TIAN DISPENSATION IS FULLY RECOGNISED BY THE  
 PROPHETS.

In the prophecies referring to the times of the gospel,  
 the observance of a weekly Sabbath, so far from being  
 classed among those shadowy ordinances that were to  
 be abolished, is spoken of as a duty highly acceptable

to God. The prophet Isaiah, although he had said nothing respecting the observance of the Sabbath when denouncing threatenings against the Jews, and exhorting them to obedience, beautifully enlarges on it when he comes to speak of the kingdom of the Messiah. After predicting, in the forty-ninth and following chapters, the establishment of that kingdom, and the calling of the Gentiles, he proclaims, in the beginning of the fifty-sixth chapter, that the *righteousness of God*, which he there and in so many other places connects with *salvation*, was near to be revealed. “ Thus saith the Lord, ‘ Keep ye judgment, and do justice ; for my salvation ‘ is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. ‘ Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man ‘ that layeth hold on it ; that keepeth the Sabbath from ‘ polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any ‘ evil.” Immediately after which, speaking both of the Gentiles and the eunuchs, when the distinction respecting the former, and the exclusion of the latter from the congregation of the Lord, should by the gospel be abolished, the prophet adds, “ Neither let the son of the ‘ stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, ‘ saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his ‘ people : neither let the eunuchs say, Behold, I am a ‘ dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs, ‘ that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that ‘ please me, and take hold of my covenant ; even unto ‘ them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, ‘ a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters : I will give them an everlasting name, that shall ‘ not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that ‘ join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love ‘ the name of the Lord, to be his servant, every one

‘ that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh  
 ‘ hold of my covenant ; even them will I bring to my  
 ‘ holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house  
 ‘ of prayer : their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices  
 ‘ shall be accepted upon mine altar ; for mine house  
 ‘ shall be called, An house of prayer for all people.’”

In the above passages, the importance of keeping the Sabbath is introduced no fewer than three times, and in relation to each of the three characters there specified. And while, on the one hand, polluting it is conjoined with doing evil, on the other, its observance is connected with doing judgment and justice—all that we owe to God and our neighbour—with giving ourselves to the Lord, loving his name, and being his servants. It is also connected with taking hold of his covenant—the covenant of peace spoken of, Isa. liv. 10 ; Ezek. xxxiv. 25, that is the gospel—and with receiving the Gentiles into that covenant ; of whom it is said, Isa. lvi. 8, “ The  
 ‘ Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel,  
 ‘ saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those  
 ‘ that are gathered unto him.” The duty then of observing the Sabbath, and the blessings connected with it, are here represented as belonging to that period when the name of God shall be great among the Gentiles ; when Christ shall be God’s *salvation* unto the ends of the earth, Isaiah, xlix. 6, predicted to be near to come ; and when his *righteousness* shall be *revealed*, namely, in the gospel, Rom. i. 17 ; iii. 21 ; when the eunuchs and the sons of the stranger shall come to God’s holy mountain ; when his house shall be called an house of prayer for *all people*, in which they shall be joyful ; and when their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted

upon his altar. In this and in similar passages, the prophets, in speaking of the times of the gospel, employ expressions relating to the services of that dispensation, during the continuance of which they wrote.

At the conclusion of his book of prophecy, in the end of the sixty-sixth chapter, where Isaiah once more declares the bringing in of the Gentiles and the introduction of the gospel dispensation, he again announces the perpetuity and never ceasing solemnization of the Sabbath. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend ' peace to her (to Zion) like a river, and the glory of the ' Gentiles as a flowing stream," verse 12; " I will gather ' all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see ' my glory," verse 18. "For as the new heavens, and ' the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before ' me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name ' remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new ' moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, ' shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the ' Lord," verses 22, 23. In that period, then, during the reign of the Messiah, whose "name shall be continued as long as the sun, and shall endure for ever," the observance of the Sabbath shall be as constant and as regular as the revolutions of the moon in the heavens.

By the importance thus attached to the keeping of the Sabbath, so often brought into view, and so intimately connected with the service of God, we learn that, under the Christian dispensation, and as forming a part of that law which is holy and just, and good, the least commandment of which we are warned not to break, or to teach others to do so, the Sabbath was to be considered as the grand support of the worship and service of God. This is particularly marked in the

58th chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet, after exposing the hypocrisy of the Jews, urges them to act in a manner that would be acceptable to God, and then proceeds to enlarge on the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. Far from referring to it as a part of that yoke which was too heavy to be borne, or the handwriting of an ordinance that was to be blotted out, or taken out of the way, he represents it as God's "holy day, a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable," on which his people, when they observed it as he commands, should find their delight in the Lord, and should be highly rewarded by him. Can an institution like this, characterised in this manner by Jehovah, to the observance of which he annexes his choicest blessings, be classed among the shadows that were to be abolished—with the sacrifices, and offerings, and burnt-offerings, for sin, in which God declared that he had no pleasure, and with the meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation, all for ever to be done away with that covenant which made nothing perfect ?

We have thus accumulated and demonstrative proof that the institution of the weekly Sabbath, announced at the beginning, and embodied in the decalogue, has ever been and continues to be, equally binding with all the other parts of the law of everlasting obligation. In that law, the fourth commandment occupies a very distinguished place, essentially contributing to obedience to all the rest ; while no other commandment has been so frequently enforced in the Scriptures. It is the only one of the ten in which the duty it enjoins is expressed both positively, "Keep it holy,"—and negatively, "In it thou shalt not do any work ;" all the other com-



mandments being either solely prohibitory, or solely preceptive. It is the only one of them all whose original institution is declared in Scripture.\*

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THE CHANGE FROM THE LAST TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK HAS NOT INVALIDATED THE OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

Having now proved that the duty of the sanctification of the Sabbath has nothing in it peculiar to the

\* In proving the duty of the Sanctification of the Sabbath, I have not quoted, as is frequently done, what is said by the Apostle in the 4th chapter of the Hebrews, of entering into rest. The evidence of the obligation to observe the Lord's day is sufficiently strong, and it only injures it, as well as perverts the Scriptures, to assert that because in that chapter the present tense is used in verse 3rd, *do enter* into rest, the Apostle refers to the rest, or peace in believing, which immediately follows the belief of the truth. But the rest there spoken of is future, and not enjoyed in this world. The present time is often used with a future effect. The rest is future, because God is represented as swearing that the Israelites should not enter into it. It cannot therefore refer to a rest already enjoyed. Neither the rest instituted at the creation, which was then entered into, nor that in Canaan, is the true rest which believers seek. The Apostle denies that Joshua gave rest to the Israelites; but as he gave them the rest of Canaan, this must signify that it had a future meaning, and was to be fulfilled in the heavenly rest, otherwise God would not afterwards have spoken of another day. At the 9th verse the conclusion is drawn from all the preceding premises. The result is, that there is still a rest remaining into which believers are urged to enter. The rest of the Sabbath was for all men, and is a present rest; the rest of Canaan was for the Israelites, the typical people of God; but the rest that remaineth is the rest of heaven reserved for believers who are his true people. From the change of the word rest into sabbatism, in verse 9th, some infer that the rest spoken of is the Christian Sabbath. But this is not necessary from the change of the word, and would be entirely at variance with the whole of the Apostle's reasoning.

law of Moses, or to any former dispensation, it remains to be shown that the change from the last to the first day of the week has neither made void the primary institution nor the fourth commandment, whose binding and permanent authority, enjoining the consecration of a seventh part of our time to God, continues unalterably the same.

“The Sabbath,” said our Lord, “was made for man.” It was made for his good, a day of rest from worldly business, for the special acknowledgment of God, and for the enjoyment of peculiar communion with Him. If the Sabbath was made for man, it was not a Jewish burden. It was for the good of man, not merely for the Jew. Yet he who is the Lord of the Sabbath, may change the day of its observance. This, in fact, he has done ; and in this passage there is not an obscure intimation of such a purpose. Of this change, as every thing belonging to the new dispensation was shadowed forth under the old, we find, in the Old Testament, various typical and significant notices.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and when the foundations of the earth were laid, and the corner stone thereof, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. But God hath magnified his word above all his name, and a still more glorious display of his character and perfections has been given in the work of redemption, than in that of the first creation. In the 65th chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet is referring to the kingdom of Christ, and the New Testament dispensation, that work is spoken of in the 17th verse, as the creation of new heavens and a new earth, when Jerusalem—the church of God—should be a cause of rejoicing, and when in comparison

with that new creation, the glory of the former should not be remembered. "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." That God purposed to appoint the day of his resting from the work of this new creation, as the Sabbath which he was afterwards to bless and hallow in remembrance of it, in place of that day which he had formerly consecrated to the memory of his resting from the first creation, appears from his commanding the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. That deliverance was an eminent type of the redemption of his people by Christ from the bondage of Satan. But if the Israelites were commanded, in commemoration of this shadow, to sanctify one day in the week, which is the reason given for their doing so in the recapitulation of the fourth commandment, Deut. v. 15, instead of that formerly given to them at its first announcement respecting the creation, Gen. ii. 2; Exod. xx. 11, this was an intimation that the great and glorious work of which that deliverance was a shadow, was afterwards to be the object of weekly commemoration. "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. . . . And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

The 118th Psalm, ver. 19-24, clearly indicates the day in which the servants of God are by his appoint-

ment to enter into his sanctuary, to offer to him praise, and to rejoice in commemoration of the resurrection of their Lord from the dead. "Open to me the gates ' of righteousness : I will go into them, and I will praise ' the Lord ; this gate of the Lord into which the righte- ' ous shall enter. I will praise thee ; for thou hast ' heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone ' which the builders refused, is become the head stone ' of the corner. This is the Lord's doing ; it is marvel- ' lous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath ' made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it." These words are prophetic, and the 22d and 23d verses are again and again quoted in the New Testament, and applied by the Lord Jesus to himself. When he lay in the grave, he was as a stone which the builders had rejected, but when he arose from the dead, having vanquished all his enemies, he became the head stone of the spiritual temple of which his members are living stones, 1 Peter, ii. 4-8. At the period of the Old creation, God "rested on the seventh day from all his ' work which God created and made," and all "the ' sons of God shouted for joy." In the same way, at the finishing of the new creation, the sons of God are here said to rejoice. This the disciples did at the resurrection of our Lord, as his people have done on that day ever since. That day, therefore, in which he rested from his work, they are to regard as "the day ' which the Lord hath made," properly and emphatically "the Lord's day."

The change of the day of weekly rest, from the last to the first day of the week, that is from the seventh to the EIGHTH day, is indicated in various places throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The work of crea-

tion was finished in six days, and on the seventh day God rested from his work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on this, the day of his resurrection, the Lord Jesus rested from the work of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signalised in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Jesus entered into his rest, and when in commemoration thereof, his people are to rest. Of this the following are examples :—

Circumcision was to be administered to children on the EIGHTH day, Gen. xvii. 12, and till the *eighth* day the mother was ceremonially unclean, Lev. xii. 2, 3. Circumcision was the token of the covenant which God made with Abraham. “ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised,” Rom. iv. 11. Circumcision was not a seal of Abraham’s faith, or that he possessed righteousness, or was justified, as it is almost constantly explained. It was a seal, pledge, or assurance, of the reality of that RIGHTEOUSNESS which is received by the faith which Abraham had, in virtue of which, though not then existing, except in the purpose of God, he was justified ; and that it should in its appointed time be introduced. This was the “ everlasting righteousness,” even the righteousness of God on account of which the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Circumcision, then, being such a seal to Abraham, from whom Christ was to spring, it was to be impressed on himself and his posterity, and to be performed on the EIGHTH DAY ; the day on which that righteousness was, by the resurrection of the Messiah, to be “ brought in.” As soon

as the pledge was thus redeemed, the rite of circumcision ceased. At that early period, then, we find a clear indication of the high distinction which, in a distant age, was to be conferred on the eighth day. The same intimation strikingly pervades the Jewish dispensation in its various typical and shadowy institutions.

Until the EIGHTH day of their age, the first-born of cattle, which belonged to the Lord, were not offered or received by him. "On the eighth day thou shalt give 'it me," Ex. xxii. 30.

On the EIGHTH day, but not before, animals were accepted in sacrifice. "When a bullock, or a sheep, or 'a goat is brought forth, then it shall be seven days 'under the dam; and from the eighth day, and thence- 'forth, it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire 'unto the Lord," Lev. xxii. 27.

On the EIGHTH day the consecration of Aaron, as High Priest, and his sons, after various ceremonies, was completed, Lev. ix. 1.

On the EIGHTH day the cleansing of the leprosy, which was typical of cleansing from sin, took place, Lev. xiv. 10.

On the EIGHTH day the cleansing from issues, emblematical also of sin, was effected, Lev. xv. 14, 29.

On the EIGHTH day atonement was made for the Nazarite who was defiled, Num. vi. 10.

The EIGHTH day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which, according to all these typical appointments, Jesus was *received* as the first-born from the dead, his sacrifice was *accepted*, and on which, as the great High Priest, he was "*consecrated* for ever- 'more," and when he made atonement for his people, by which they are *cleansed from sin*.

The EIGHTH day was sanctified when the dedication of the Temple,—that illustrious type of the body of the Redeemer,—was completed, and the ark of the covenant placed in it. “Solomon kept the feast seven days, ‘and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, ‘from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of ‘Egypt. And in the eighth day they made a solemn ‘assembly,” 2 Chron. vii. 8,—on that day, when the Lord was afterwards to create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

In sanctifying the Temple, in the time of Hezekiah, “they began on the first day of the first month to ‘sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came ‘they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the ‘house of the Lord in eight days; and in the six- ‘teenth day” (the second eighth day) “of the first ‘month they made an end,” when the whole was terminated by the offering of sacrifice, and the solemn worship of God, 2 Chron. xxix. 17, 20.

Ezekiel, in his vision of the City and Temple, which appears to give figuratively, and in Old Testament language, a description of the Redeemer’s kingdom and church, says, xliiii. 26, “Seven days shall they purge the ‘altar, and purify it; and they shall consecrate them- ‘selves. And when these days are expired, it shall ‘be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the ‘priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, ‘and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, ‘saith the Lord.”

The feast of tabernacles was to be celebrated on the *fifteenth*, which corresponds with the eighth day.

‘ Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fif-  
 ‘ tenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast  
 ‘ of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the  
 ‘ first day shall be an holy convocation ; ye shall do no  
 ‘ servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an  
 ‘ offering made by fire unto the Lord ; on the eighth  
 ‘ day shall be an holy convocation unto you, and ye  
 ‘ shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord : it  
 ‘ is a solemn assembly, and ye shall do no servile work  
 ‘ therein.” “ Also, in the fifteenth day of the seventh  
 ‘ month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the  
 ‘ land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days ;  
 ‘ on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth  
 ‘ day shall be a sabbath,” Lev. xxiii. 34, 39.

The feast of tabernacles which thus terminated on the EIGHTH day, furnishes a remarkable representation of the vanishing of the legal sacrifices, when their consummation took place by the offering of the one sacrifice. On the first day of this feast thirteen bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs, were offered. On the following six days, the number of bullocks was decreased by one each day, so that, on the seventh day, only seven were offered, and two rams and fourteen lambs. But on the *eighth* day, the number was reduced to one bullock, when these sacrifices were ended. “ On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly ; ye shall do no servile work therein : But ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord ; one bullock, one ram, seven lambs, of the first year, without blemish,” Num. xxix. 35. Thus the offering of only ONE bullock, ONE ram, and SEVEN lambs (the number denoting perfection) on the EIGHTH day, although many had been



offered on the preceding days, but gradually diminishing in number, was strikingly emblematical of the ONE offering by which Jesus Christ, on the eighth day, the first day of the week, made an end of sins, and by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified. At this feast, in the time of Ezra, when he read the book of the law to the people, a solemn assembly was held on the EIGHTH day. Neh. viii. 18, "Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God : and they kept the feast seven days ; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner,"—viz., the manner prescribed, Lev. xxiii. 39.

When the sheaf of the first fruits was to be brought to the priest, it was to be accepted on the EIGHTH day, "And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you : on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day, when ye wave the sheaf, an he-lamb without blemish, of the first year, for a burnt-offering unto the Lord," Lev. xxiii. 11. This was a distinguished type of the resurrection of Him who was "the first fruits of them that slept," who arose from the dead on the morrow after the Sabbath, that is, the eighth day, or the first day of the week.

Not only was the eighth day signalised in so remarkable a manner, in connexion with various typical appointments, the FIFTIETH day, the first day after seven times seven days, or seven weeks, corresponding with the eighth day after seven days, and both with the first day of the week, was in like manner distinguished.

At the reaping and gathering in of the harvest, two wave loaves were to be presented on the FIFTIETH day

after presenting the sheaf of the first fruits. “ And  
 ‘ ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the  
 ‘ Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of  
 ‘ the wave-offering ; seven Sabbaths shall be complete :  
 ‘ Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath  
 ‘ shall ye number fifty days ; and ye shall offer a new  
 ‘ meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of  
 ‘ your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals :  
 ‘ they shall be of fine flour ; they shall be baked with  
 ‘ leaven ; they are the first fruits unto the Lord. . . And  
 ‘ ye shall proclaim on the self-same day, that it may  
 ‘ be an holy convocation unto you : ye shall do no ser-  
 ‘ vile work therein,” Lev. xxiii. 15, 21.

The year of jubilee was the FIFTIETH year, and not the forty-ninth, which was the last of the sabbatical years. “ Thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years  
 ‘ unto thee, seven times seven years ; and the space of  
 ‘ the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty  
 ‘ and nine years. . . And ye shall hallow the fiftieth  
 ‘ year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto  
 ‘ all the inhabitants thereof ; it shall be a jubilee unto  
 ‘ you : and ye shall return every man into his posses-  
 ‘ sion,” Lev. xxv. 8, 10. This fiftieth year, the first  
 year after the sabbatical year of seven weeks, corres-  
 ponds with the *eighth* day, the first day of the week.

Can it be supposed that the eighth day, thus sig-  
 nalised from so early a period, before the legal dispen-  
 sation, and in so many ways during its continuance,  
 and by one of the latest of the prophets, comprising in  
 all more than thirteen hundred years—can it be ima-  
 gined that the EIGHTH, the FIFTEENTH, and the FIFTIETH  
 day, all of the same import, were thus distinguished  
 without a special purpose, and that in the wisdom of

God they were not expressly specified for some very important end ? Connected as they were with the most solemn services of God's ancient people, and in a manner so conspicuous with the most remarkable typical observances, they held forth a striking notification of the future change from that day which had been appointed to commemorate God's resting from the work of creation, to the day on which the Son of God rested from the work of redemption. This purpose is fully developed in the New Testament, where He who is the Lord of the Sabbath, without in the smallest degree impairing, relaxing, or changing the obligation to observe a *seventh* day's rest, appropriated to himself the eighth day—the first instead of the last day of the week, and by recording his name upon it, calling it *the Lord's day*, has blessed and sanctified it for the use of his people. It may here be remarked, that by the early Christians the Sabbath was also denominated the *eighth* day. Barnabas, the companion of the Apostle Paul, calls this the eighth day, in distinction from the seventh day Sabbath, which he says "is the beginning of another world ; and therefore we keep the eighth day joyfully, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and being manifested ascended into heaven." It was known, too, by the fathers, by the name of the eighth day, as by Ignatius, Irenæus, Origen, and others. "Every eighth day," says Tertullian, "is the Christian's festival."

The duty of sanctifying the first day of the week is taught in the New Testament, not by direct precept, but in the way of approved example or reference, in which several other institutions are there enjoined. Instruction as to any thing further respecting the duty, or the manner of discharging it, besides the change

from the last to the first day of the week, was unnecessary, since all things else remain the same as formerly, and are so solemnly enjoined and enforced in the Old Testament.\* Nothing more than this fact of the change of the day needed afterwards to be made known. This change we learn, first, by the honour conferred on that day by the Lord, in repeatedly appearing on it to his disciples after his resurrection; secondly, by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; thirdly, by the practice of the Apostles, to whom the keys of the kingdom were delivered, and also by that of the first churches under their immediate guidance; and, finally, we are taught this change by the distinctive appellation it received, of "The Lord's day," when our Lord appeared to his disciple John.

On the first day of the week, being the day on which the Lord rose from the dead, and rested from the work of the new creation, he appeared at different times to his disciples. "Then the same day at evening, being 'the first day of the week, when the doors were shut 'where the disciples were assembled for fear of the 'Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst," John, xx. 19. It is here proper to remark, that the literal translation of the original, rendered the first day of the week, is the first of the Sabbaths. The rendering, however, in this place is proper, as well as in other places in the New Testament where the same phrase occurs, as,

\* A re-enactment in the New Testament, it has been properly observed, would be a denial, by implication, of its previous institution and authority. Nothing is re-enacted in the gospel. The moral law, the essential duties of religion, the relations of man to his Maker, the necessity of a season for Divine worship, the proportion of time destined for it from the creation—all the precepts of the decalogue, remain unchanged.

Matt. xxviii. 1 ; Mark, xvi. 2, 9 ; Luke, xxiv. 1 ; John, xx. 1, 19 ; Acts, xx. 7 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 2, since the word in the original for Sabbath also signifies week.

On the same day, in the following week, when the disciples were again assembled, Jesus appeared in the midst of them, John, xx. 26. "And after eight days,\* 'again his disciples were within, and Thomas with 'them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and 'stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

The day of Pentecost, which signifies the *fiftieth* day, was eminently honoured. It was the first day of the week ; the day of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in his abundant and miraculous gifts ; the day of the promulgation of the gospel in the presence of men from all nations ; and of the conversion of "about three 'thousand souls." Here we have the explanation of the mystery in the Old Testament of the FIFTIETH day, connected as we have seen, with remarkable events and ordinances. On the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt, the law was delivered from Mount Sinai, which, corresponding with the first day of the week, was 1500 years afterwards fulfilled on that day. That law was delivered, accompanied with thunderings and lightnings, and now, on the corresponding day, came a 'sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind," and "cloven tongues, like as of fire" sat upon each of the disciples. The day of Pentecost, too, was the fiftieth day from the resurrection of Jesus Christ when he

\* After eight days, that is, on the next first day of the week, or after another week. The Jews used to express a week by eight days. The day on which Christ rose and appeared to Mary Magdalene and his disciples, and the day on which he now appeared to the disciples with Thomas, made eight days.—See Luke, ix. 23, compared with Matt. xvii. 1.

“ became the first fruits of them that slept,” and the day of the first fruits of the Christian Church. The fiftieth year of jubilee, when every man returned into his own possession, which he had sold or forfeited, also corresponded with that fiftieth day, the day of Pentecost, on which so remarkable a proof was given that the price of the redemption of Christ’s people had been paid, and that for them he had entered into the possession of his and their eternal inheritance. The giving of the Holy Ghost,—the coming of the promised Comforter, being thus vouchsafed on the first day of the week, confirmed the newly instituted season, which was henceforth to be the Christian Sabbath. And on this day not merely the Apostles, but all the disciples, Acts, i. 15, and ii. 1, were with one accord,—as being the day of their stated meeting,—in one place.

The first churches under the guidance of the Apostles assembled on the first day of the week. The Apostle Paul, and those who accompanied him, abode seven days at Troas. “ And, upon the first day of the week, ‘ when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul ‘ preached unto them,” Acts, xx. 7. Here we learn that it was their common custom to meet on this day for holding their religious assemblies, and observing the stated ordinances of worship. The time appointed, too, to collect the contributions for the poor was the first day of the week. “ Now, concerning the collection for ‘ the saints, as I have given order to the churches of ‘ Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the ‘ week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as ‘ God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings ‘ when I come,” 1 Cor. xvi. 2. It was not then on account of any thing peculiar to the church at Corinth

that Paul commanded that this duty should be performed on the first day of the week, since he had enjoined the same on the distant churches of Galatia, and the Apostle elsewhere declares that he taught the same things every where in all the churches, 1 Cor. iv. 17 ; vii. 17.

The first day of the week was further distinguished and honoured in a very remarkable manner, by the Lord himself, in his glorious appearance in the Isle of Patmos, and by the prophetic vision which he vouchsafed to his servant John, of all that was to take place respecting his church to the end of time.

In the relation of this vision, the Apostle, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, calls the day on which he was favoured with it, the LORD'S DAY. This term being here introduced without any remark or explanation, must have been well understood by all who read and heard the words of this prophecy, ch. i. 3,—that is by all Christians, as well as by the seven churches whom the Apostle specially addressed. This establishes beyond contradiction, that under the Christian dispensation there is a Lord's day. All days are his. If, then, one of them is called the Lord's day, in distinction from the rest, it must be his day in a peculiar sense. It must be devoted to his honour. It must be his as the Lord's Supper is his. As, then, the Lord's Supper distinguishes and separates the holy communion of the bread and wine from an ordinary social meal, so the Lord's day distinguishes and separates one day from the rest in the week. This was the day of his triumph over all the powers of darkness. It is the Lord's *day*, not a part of a day, but a whole day, and not our day, but his day, in the

same way as the Lord's Supper is his supper, and not our supper. It should likewise be observed, that the reason given in the fourth commandment for abstaining from work, and for hallowing the seventh day, is, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." And, therefore, the same obligation must follow as to the "Lord's day," because it is the day of the Lord. In the Lord's Supper, we have a symbolical representation of the death of Christ, and in the Lord's day we have a commemoration of his resurrection every week.

If any one hesitates to admit, that the observance of the first day of the week, is commanded in the New Testament, because not enjoined by direct precept, he has not attended to the manner in which the various parts of our duty are there taught; and he should ask himself on what ground he observes the first day of the week. Is it because all Christians agree in doing so? In this there is nothing valid. The consent or practice of all the Christians and of all the churches on earth, cannot add to, or take from, or change one iota of the law of God. What that law is, must be learned from the Scriptures, either by direct precept, or from the approved practice recorded in them of Christians or churches under the guidance of the Apostles, and thus stamped with their authority. *To the Apostles alone were the keys of the kingdom of heaven delivered by their divine Master, first to Peter, Matt. xvi. 19, and afterwards to all the rest, xviii. 18; who, in order that they might be his witnesses, had all seen him after his resurrection; who all had "the signs of an Apostle;" who have no successors in office, and whose doc-*



trine, being infallible, binds in heaven and on earth. Christians have nothing to do but to repeat and to obey the laws, in whatever manner enjoined by our Lord and his Apostles. Why are churches formed? why do they assemble on the first day of the week? why are they to consist of persons only of a certain character? For none of these, and certain other things that are practised by Christians, is there any direct precept. But all of them, of which we have approved example in the word of God, are, notwithstanding, equally binding, as if in direct terms they had been commanded. To the practice of the first churches under his direction, and to his own practice, the Apostle Paul appeals, as of equal authority with his express injunctions. "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God," 1 Cor. xi. 16. The approved customs of the first churches were fixed by the Apostles, and are therefore equally binding as their commands; and their commands, as speaking by the Holy Ghost, are equally obligatory as those of the Lord. "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me," Luke, x. 16. By the words which he hath spoken, and those of his Apostles, whose words bind and loose in heaven and on earth, all shall be judged at the last day. If any man shall add to these words or take from them, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.

Although the first day of the week was appointed to be observed as the Sabbath under the Christian dispensation, yet the observance of the last day, that had been sanctified from the beginning, was likewise permitted during the continuance of the Jewish state.

This was analogous to allowing the temple service and the sacrifices, although rendered inefficacious by the offering of the one great sacrifice, to continue till the whole of them was put an end to by the destruction of Jerusalem. Giving unnecessary offence to the Jews was thus avoided, while an opportunity was furnished, during all that period, of preaching the gospel in the synagogues where they assembled every Sabbath-day, of which the Apostles regularly availed themselves. But in the book of Revelation, as we have now seen, written after the Jewish state and polity were finally overthrown, the first day of the week, as that which the Son of God had appropriated for his peculiar service, of which from the first sufficient intimation had been given, so that his disciples had observed it all along after his resurrection, was, in a manner still more marked, exclusively designated in his word as the *Lord's day*—the name by which it has been known and recognised by all Christians ever since.

The day of rest enjoined to be observed by Christians, although now transferred from the last to the first day of the week, or the eighth day from the creation, is still the *seventh day*, “after the six working days,” as was the Sabbath of the first institution, and of the fourth commandment. Thus, all the change is only a change of the beginning and the ending of the days of labour, the number of which continue as before. The words, therefore, of the fourth commandment, “Six ‘days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work : but the ‘seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” form no objection to the Christian Sabbath, as if it changed or discontinued the duty enjoined in that commandment, since these words retain the same force as be-

fore. Neither can any objection be drawn from the words that follow: "For in six days the Lord made ' heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, ' and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord ' blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." These words have not become insignificant by the establishment of the first-day Sabbath; they remain, as to their principal object, in full force. Their object was to present a motive to rest on the seventh day after labouring six days following; because of this God had given the example. And on this account, as well as from the examples of the sanctification of the first day of the week, Christians are to rest, not on every eighth, or ninth, or tenth day, but on every *seventh* day. God wrought six days and rested on the seventh day, and called it the Sabbath, or rest of the Lord. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, in like manner rested from the work of the new Creation on the first day of the week, and has now appropriated it as His day. And not only was it appointed to commemorate the great event of his resurrection, but as it is to be observed on one day in seven, it is so instituted as likewise to commemorate that first Creation, when after the work of six days God rested on the seventh. Without reference to this no reason can be given why the resurrection should be celebrated once in seven days, and not at any other fixed period. The fourth commandment, then, in every thing essential, remains unchanged. In substance it continues precisely as before, commanding us to sanctify the *seventh* day; and the reason of enjoining this continues the same, with the difference only of God's having rested from the work of the new, as he formerly did from that of the old, Creation; on which account man is

still to rest on the seventh day, after six days of labour. It is a part of that law which cannot be broken. Strict obedience to it continues to be the duty of every Christian ; and in order to understand its proper and spiritual import, the inspired commentary of the prophet, Isaiah, lviii. 13, on the obligation and observance of the Sabbath, referring to the times of the gospel, should be attentively considered. Some have scrupled to denominate the first day of the week the Sabbath day. But it should be remembered, that this is the name by which it is so often designated in the New Testament, according to the literal rendering of the passage quoted in p. 50.

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The Sabbath, instituted for man, both in a state of innocence and of sin, displays in a remarkable manner the goodness of God, and forms a distinguished part of that law which is the law of love. It was appointed before the curse was pronounced, that in the sweat of his face man should eat bread ; yet after he had sinned, it was not abolished, but continued as a permanent mitigation of that sentence. The fourth commandment is not a burden, like those institutions that were peculiar to the Jews. They were a yoke, Acts, xv. 10, but this is a blessing. And man does not suffer by it, but is benefited. By our fall in Adam we became slaves to Satan, and God might have condemned us to labour all the days of the week. But he has given us a reprieve for one day. His providence so orders it, that men in all conditions shall participate in the curse, and eat the fruit of the earth in the sweat of their face. Is it not then a blessing, when he gives us one day of rest ? Had he required us to labour the whole seven

days, there would not have been more food than there is now. There is not more in those countries where the Sabbath is not observed, than where it is observed. Nor is any country benefited by its neglect. On the contrary, it would be political wisdom to give the full benefit of the Sabbath in every country to man and to beast. We see that, if the Israelites did not gather the manna on the seventh day, they gathered as much on the day preceding as supplied them on the Sabbath ; and in allowing, in the sabbatical year, the land to rest, it produced for them as much in the sixth, as sufficed them both in that year and in the seventh.

This respite from toil ought, then, to be thankfully acknowledged as a high privilege bestowed on man, doomed to labour on account of sin. But the institution of the Sabbath confers on him a nobler privilege. It is set apart for our use, to be the means of calling our attention from interests merely temporal, to those that are spiritual and eternal. It is a day appointed for special communion with God ; and the bodily rest is chiefly to be prized as subservient to this end. Bodily rest is necessary on that day for its spiritual improvement ; and its spiritual improvement is necessary, in order that we may not abuse it by indulging in sloth and idleness, and thus exposing ourselves to the seductions of Satan. The Sabbath, then, is a day to be devoted to the service of the Lord, and to our own spiritual edification in all those exercises connected with and contributing to these ends. It is a day of the greatest enjoyment that Christians have on earth ; and God, in its institution, has shown his love for his Church. A great part of the vigour of the spiritual life, and of aptitude for the duty of growing in grace,

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, depends on our sanctifying this day, as well as our enjoyment of the manifestations of his love, exciting our longing and ardent desires for a better, that is an heavenly country.

Thanks be to God for the institution of the Sabbath, of binding obligation in every period of the world since its creation, and on all men, although so often and so much neglected. In the Old Testament, we see by its being so frequently and solemnly enjoined, as well as by the gracious promises annexed to its observance, the fearful threatenings pronounced, and the punishments inflicted in case of its infraction, how great was the importance which God attached to the Sabbath. Nehemiah imputes all the calamities which befell the Jews to their profanation of that day, and represents this as one of the principal causes which had brought on them the wrath of God. "In those days saw I in Judah some ' treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in ' sheaves and lading asses ; as also wine, grapes, and ' figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought ' into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day ; and I testified ' against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. ' There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought ' fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath ' unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then ' I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto ' them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and pro- ' fane the Sabbath day ? Did not your fathers thus, ' and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and ' upon this city ? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Is- ' rael, by profaning the Sabbath," Neh. xiii. 15. The observance of the sabbatical years having been neglected

by the Jews, their captivity in Babylon endured seventy years, to "fulfil," it is said, "the word of the Lord by 'the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed 'her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she 'kept Sabbath, to fulfil three score and ten years," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21; Lev. xxvi. 32, 43. In the prophecies of Jeremiah, chap. xvii., we observe on the one hand the signal blessings annexed to the sanctification of the Sabbath, while on the other, the following awful threatenings in case of its desecration are subjoined. "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the 'Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering 'in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: 'then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it 'shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall 'not be quenched." We find, too, as stated in the preceding pages, that the observance of the holy Sabbath stands connected with, and is the grand support of our obedience to all the other commandments, both of the first and second table of the law, which enjoin our duty to God and man.

Works of necessity that cannot be done on the day before, nor left undone till the day following, as well as works of mercy, are permitted on the Sabbath. But for a man on that day to employ himself in his ordinary labours, to speak of them, or even to allow them to occupy his thoughts, is to oppose the beneficent purpose of the Lawgiver in appointing it, and to contemn his authority; and if the business of the world, which on other days of the week is not only permitted, but enjoined as a duty, be on this day criminal, how much must it be profaned by those frivolous amusements and recreations which are often resorted to on this sacred

day, or by spending it in sloth and idleness. "He that 'sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul."

The day of rest is a weekly and solemn recognition of the authority of God. It ought to be employed in religious exercises, both public and private, for which it is set apart; and these exercises should be accounted the repose and refreshment of the soul. That which should occupy us on the Sabbath is the grand concern of our life. To serve and honour God is the end for which we were created; and with joy we should dedicate the seventh part of our time to his immediate and uninterrupted service, and so rest on "the Sabbath day, 'according to the commandment."

As the day of rest is peculiarly destined to religious services, so it is the day in which they who seek God may expect his peculiar benediction, and the Divine communications of his grace. The ordinances of God are the means of grace, and in the observance of these ordinances he has promised his special blessing. This is the LORD'S DAY which bears his name, and he has said, "In all places where I record my name I will 'come unto thee, and I will bless thee." If on this day God has specially commanded us to seek him, we may with confidence conclude that in a special manner on this day he will be found of us. The purpose of God to vouchsafe his blessings to those who observe the day of rest, is included in the declaration that, "the 'Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Not only, then, hath he sanctified that day, but he has blessed it. God has from the beginning given it his blessing, which he will bestow on all who consecrate it to his service. But if on account of finishing the work of the creation of the world the seventh day was blessed, how much



more is it blessed, because of the completion of the work of redemption? On that day the Lord Jesus ceased from his work and entered into his rest. It was the day on which he was delivered from the chains of death, when he was declared to be the Son of God, in which the promises to him of his Father were accomplished, and all power was given to him in heaven and in earth. How much, then, may God be expected to honour this day, and to bless his people in the observance of it with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Sabbath, then, the day of rest, the forerunner of the eternal rest, ought to be gratefully recognised, and fondly cherished; and the manner in which it should be observed is fully declared in the Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah, lviii. 13, referring to gospel times, and instructing the servants of God to act so that their light may break forth as the morning, and their righteousness go before them, and the glory of the Lord be their re-reward, adds, "If thou turn away thy foot from ' the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, ' and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, ' honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine ' own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speak- ' ing thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself ' in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the ' high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heri- ' tage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord ' hath spoken it."

The Sabbath is a day which beautifully sets forth the long-suffering, goodness, and enduring mercy of JEHOVAH. Most of the Divine institutions under the law, and some of the ordinances of the gospel, are peculiarly intended to bring to our remembrance the

guilt, or the consequences of sin. The Sabbath, on the contrary, traces its origin to a time when man walked in innocence, and to a place which was hallowed by the immediate presence of the Lord. The children of Israel were not commanded to observe a day which neither they nor their fathers had known, but rather to "remember" an institution which they had forgotten in the cruel bondage of Egypt, and to keep holy a day which their God still continued to claim as his inalienable property. Jesus Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets; and having himself declared the Sabbath to be *his own*, so by his inspired apostles he has left the impress of his name upon one day of seven.

Amidst the joys of Eden man delighted to walk with God, and hailed the privilege of communion with his Creator. Amidst the cares and trials of a troubled and sinful world, the Christian too delights to hallow the Lord's day, and thus to participate in its present benefits, and its emblematic happiness. He sees in it the loving kindness of his Lord, at once providing for him a retreat from labour, and a fountain at which to refresh his weary soul. He feels it to be in itself a comfort, and in its enjoyment he descries by faith the rest which remains to the people of God.

## CONCLUSION.

WE are now arrived at the conclusion of this most instructive Epistle, in which our attention is so forcibly drawn to the consideration of "the deep things of God." On the one hand, the unbending justice of the infinitely holy God, is awfully displayed, appearing, like the flaming cherubim which guarded the way to the tree of life, and barred every avenue of hope to man as a transgressor. On the other hand, we behold the Divine compassion abounding in all wisdom and prudence, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, providing the glorious plan of redemption, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. "The righteousness of God, like the rainbow that was round about the throne, reveals all the glorious attributes of Jehovah, blended, but not confounded, in one harmonious exhibition of unrivalled majesty.

The doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, is established by the Apostle in the former part of his Epistle. But it is a doctrine which has, in all ages, been offensive to the carnal heart. It is equally obnoxious to the profligate and the virtuous, to the fanatic and the rationalist, to the devotee and the philosopher. It lays the pride of man in the dust, pouring contempt upon his boasted strength, and casting down all the lofty imaginations of

his own excellence and good works. Therefore it is, that with one voice they all cry out, "This doctrine leads to licentiousness, and makes no sufficient provision for the security of morality and practical religion." Far different from this was the judgment of the Apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, whose language he uttered. In this Epistle, the grace of the gospel is reckoned the only safe and sure foundation for every practical virtue,—and from a view of the love of God in the gift of his Son, and of the work of Christ in redemption, believers are urged to every duty. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," is the language of Paul, at the beginning of the 12th chapter, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Here he does not for a moment entertain the idea, that the mercies of God, displayed in the grand doctrines of the gospel which he had been exhibiting and unfolding, could in any way tend to encourage a continuance in sin. On the contrary, they are the very grounds on which he urges the believing Romans to surrender themselves wholly to the Lord. Paul is often ignorantly accused of teaching principles subversive of morality, but in the latter part of this Epistle, he is as fervent in establishing the necessity of holiness of life and conduct, as he had previously been earnest in establishing the great doctrine of justification by faith.

The attributes of God, especially his holiness and justice, when viewed through any other medium than that of the gospel, strike terror into the heart of man, and lead him, like Adam, to hide himself among the trees of the garden. But these attributes, in themselves so terrible to the guilty, are, through the merciful

appointment of the mediation of our heavenly Surety, pledged for the deliverance of the Christian, and for his eternal salvation.

According to the acknowledged constitution of man, love and gratitude are much more effective principles of obedience than the servile spirit of self-righteousness, craving the wages of merit. It consequently happens, that all who receive the grace of God in truth, are found careful to maintain good works, while the advocates of salvation by works notoriously fail in practice, and frequently indulge the lusts of the flesh. They boast much of practical as opposed to doctrinal religion, and talk of morality and virtue; but their conduct and pursuits, for the most part, declare them to be men of this world, living to themselves and not to Christ, delighting in the follies of the world, and actuated by its motives. But, the grace of God that bringeth salvation teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Even among the people of God, many are prejudiced against some of the doctrines exhibited in the preceding part of this Epistle. But their prejudices are to be traced to the remains of ignorance and alienation from God, which, through the power of indwelling sin and the busy suggestions of the prince of darkness, still continue to obscure the views of those in whose heart the Spirit of truth has begun to shine. If, however, we appeal to the experience of believers in every age and

in every country, it will be found, that the more unreservedly and the more simply the Apostle's doctrines are received in all their fulness, the more will they produce of self-abasement, of trust in God, and resignation to his will. What can be more calculated to humble the believer under a sense of his own unworthiness, than the awful picture of the depravity and ruined condition of man presented in the first three chapters; and what more productive of joy and peace, than the way of recovery disclosed in the fourth, and the contrast presented in the fifth, between the entrance of sin, condemnation, and death, and the free gifts of righteousness, justification, and life. What more suited to allay fear and distrust, as well as to kindle the liveliest gratitude to God, than the assurance held out in the sixth chapter, that the believer, by union with Christ, is "dead to sin,"—for ever freed from *guilt*, by the death of his Saviour, and with him made partaker of a new and immortal life, and that sin shall not have dominion over him. The same encouragement he derives from the seventh chapter. There the grand truth taught in the sixth, of his being *dead to sin*, is illustrated and enforced by the declaration, that by the sacrifice of Christ he has "become dead to the law." By the law, consequently, he can no longer be condemned; and the period will shortly arrive, when from the *pollution* of sin, under which he still groans, the Lord will deliver him.

What can be more fitted to beget confidence in God than the accumulated and ineffable mercies to his people, exhibited in the eighth chapter, in the opening of which, as a corollary from all that had gone before, is announced the assurance that there is "now *no condemnation*

to them which are in Christ Jesus," that *in them* the righteousness which the law demands has been, by the Son of God himself, *fulfilled*; that they are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in them: and that, although their bodies, because of sin, of which they have been the instruments, must *die*, their souls, because of the righteousness of their Saviour, now made theirs, are *life*,—not merely alive, but secured in immortal life, to which even their now mortal bodies shall be raised. The spirit of bondage they have exchanged for the spirit of adoption, calling God their Father, while the Spirit himself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. If they now suffer with him they shall also be glorified together, while the sufferings they are called to endure, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them. They groan, indeed, at present, waiting for the redemption of their bodies, for as yet they are only saved in hope; but they wait with patience for the full enjoyment of their salvation, the Holy Spirit himself helping their infirmities, and making intercession in their hearts which, being conformable to the will of God, must always prevail. Having been called according to God's purpose, all things are working together for their good. By him they were foreknown as the objects of his everlasting love, and predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son; and being thus predestinated, they were called by him and justified, and finally shall be glorified. For them God spared not his own Son, having delivered him up for them all; and with him he will also freely give them all things. Who, then, shall lay any thing to the charge of those

who are God's elect ? If it is God that justifies, who shall condemn ? If Christ *died*, if he be *risen* again, if he is *seated* at the right hand of God, and if he makes *intercession* for them, no power in heaven, or earth, or hell, shall ever separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

The unspeakable value of these mercies, are, in the ninth chapter, enhanced by a solemn and practical view of the sovereignty of God in bestowing them, connected with uncontrovertible proof that his promises to his people had never failed in their accomplishment. The Divine sovereignty in the choice of the subjects of salvation, is strikingly illustrated in the case of Jacob, whom God loved before he was born. And, on the other hand, his just judgment in punishing those whom he leaves in that sinful state into which all men have fallen, is with equal clearness displayed in his hating Esau before his birth. God, it is asserted, hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. All men are in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter, and while he endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, he makes known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. The conduct of Israel, and God's particular dealings with his ancient people, are in the tenth chapter next described, while the freeness of salvation by Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, together with God's purpose, that the gospel shall be preached to the Gentiles, is fully brought into view. In the eleventh chapter, it is proved in consistency with what had been said in the ninth, that a remnant of Israel, according to the election of



grace, were saved, while the rest were blinded. But still, as a nation, Israel is not cast off. As the root was holy, so are the branches, although some were broken off; and the time is approaching when all Israel with the fulness of the Gentiles shall together abundantly experience the mercy of God.

In what prominence and strength of expression is the sovereignty of God exhibited in the above ninth chapter? Is the Apostle ashamed of this view of God? Does he cover it with a veil in treating of the rejection of the Jews? No, in the strongest terms that could be selected, he conspicuously displays it, while both there, and in the eleventh chapter, he represents the glory of God as the principal object in all things that exist, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." The wisdom of this world finds the chief end of the existence of all created beings to be the benevolent design of communicating happiness. But the Apostle gives another view of the subject. He declares the glory of God, that is the manifestation of his perfections, to be the end of creation. Let Christians, then, not be ashamed of this display of the divine character. Let them rather be ashamed of modifying their views of God, by the systems of human science. Let them return to the strong and Scriptural statements of the Reformers on the subject, and as little children believe God's account of himself.

The attentive reader of the preceding part of this Epistle, who is willing to submit to receive in all things the true and obvious meaning of Scripture, cannot fail to perceive that all the doctrines which are there brought before us ascribe the whole glory of every thing

to God. Jehovah is seen to be glorified in his judgments as well as in his grace, in his wrath as well as in his mercy, in those who are lost as well as in those who are saved. However disagreeable this may be to the natural mind of man, it is truly reasonable. Can there be a higher end than the glory of the divine character? And can man, who is a fallen and lost creature, share with his offended sovereign in the glory of his recovery? Such a thought is as incongruous as it is palpably unscriptural. If there be hope for the guilty, if there be recovery to any from the ruins of the fall, it is the voice of reason properly exercised, as well as of the divine word, that it must come from God himself.

How astonishing, then, is it that men should be so averse to the doctrines of the Scripture which hold forth this view. So offensive are they to the mind of man that every effort of ingenuity has been employed by those who understand not the gospel to eject them from the Scriptures, and many even of the people of God themselves labour to modify and bring them to a nearer conformity to the wisdom of the world, or, at least, to make them less offensive to human prejudices. This wisdom is foolishness, and is highly dishonourable to God, as well as pernicious to themselves. When God has brought salvation nigh as entirely his gift, and has exhibited Christ as a Saviour, through faith, to the Chief of Sinners, how injurious is it to the honour of his truth, and to the interests of sinners, to put the salvation of the gospel at a distance, and as it were in defiance of the Apostle to send men to heaven to bring Christ down from above, or to the deep to bring him up from the grave! What folly appears in

that wisdom that sees greater security for the believer's final happiness in making him the author of his own destiny, than in resting the security of his salvation on the power and love of his Almighty Saviour! How vain is that wisdom which considers the performance of good works to be better secured by resting them on the resolutions and faithfulness of the believer himself, than on the fact of his *oneness* with Christ in his death and resurrection.

All who acknowledge regeneration by the Spirit of God virtually concede the things which they are unwilling to confess in plain and direct statement. If men are by nature dead in sin, surely their new life is not in any sense produced by themselves. If their change from sin to holiness be a new birth, how contradictory to suppose that they have any share in this great change. Yet how many will acknowledge that every thing good in us is of God, who will yet labour to show that still there is some remaining moral ability in man to turn himself to God. Is not this to sacrifice to their own wisdom? Will they proudly refuse submission to the declarations of God's word till they are able to fathom the depths of the divine counsels?

Many Christians, who admit the truth of all those doctrines which are most offensive to the world, act on the principle, that it is wise to conceal their views on these points, or at least to keep them as much as possible in the back-ground. They think in this way to be more useful to the world. But is it wisdom, is it duty, is it consistent with our allegiance to Christ, to keep in abeyance doctrines which so much glorify God, and are so prominently held forth in the Scriptures? Christians should recollect, that although the avoiding of

certain offensive doctrines may lessen the prejudice of the world against the professors of Christianity, yet that to turn a sinner to God is, in all cases, the work of God himself. How can we then expect a blessing on our efforts, if we seek to conceal what he exhibits in a blaze of light? Better, much better in all things, to exhibit the truths of the Divine word just as that word itself exhibits them, and leave the success of our efforts to him who alone can make them effectual. We cannot by all we can do bring one soul to Christ. We cannot make one sinner alive by the gospel, more than we can raise the dead out of their graves. Let us then renounce our own wisdom, and our own plans, and let us teach Divine truth as it is taught in the Scriptures.

All religions, but that of the Bible, divide the glory of recovering men to happiness between God and the sinner. All false views of the gospel do the same. The Bible alone makes the salvation of guilty men to originate solely with God, and to terminate in his glory as its chief end. This doctrine is peculiar to right views of the Christian religion. Can there, then, be more convincing evidence that the Bible is from God? If such a feature is peculiar to the Christian religion, yet offensive to most who bear the Christian name, it is the most demonstrative evidence that this revelation is not from man. How solid, then, are the foundations of the Christian religion, when the very things belonging to it most offensive to the world afford the most satisfactory evidence that it is from God!

If it be objected, that the doctrines which are taught in the first part of this Epistle, while they display God's mercies in those who are saved, also exhibit his severity in condemning those who perish, this, it must be

affirmed, cannot derogate from the mercy extended to those on whom he will have mercy. On the contrary, it is enhanced by the consideration of the just punishment which all men would have suffered, but for the intervention of that mercy. Thus, in the 136th Psalm, where the mercy of God is so highly celebrated, it is held forth in striking contrast with the destruction of the objects of God's displeasure. "God delighteth in mercy." "His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation." "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." And, when these ineffable blessings, freely bestowed on believers, are surveyed by them, in connexion with Jehovah's awful displeasure against sin, as manifested in his unalterable determination to punish with everlasting destruction from his presence those who were not more guilty than themselves, but to whom, in his unsearchable counsels, he never purposed to extend that sovereign grace which has snatched them like brands from the burning, what a foundation do they lay for their love and gratitude to God? They demonstrate, too, their entire dependence upon God, and constrain them, in the utter abandonment of self-confidence, to embrace him as their covenant God. But, if it be inquired, why has such a distinction been made involving consequences of such unspeakable and eternal moment, the only proper answer that can be given is that of our Lord himself,—“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Believers, then, are called in the contemplation of the goodness and severity of God, humbly and thankfully to acknowledge his goodness to themselves. As to others, the answer given to Peter when he asked, what shall this man

do? is to them equally apposite; “ *What is that to thee, follow thou me;*” Let them be content with the assurance that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

On the mercies of God to his people, displayed in the doctrines taught in the preceding part of the Epistle, the Apostle grounds his exhortations to holiness in the remaining chapters. The intense and burning zeal which Paul there exhibits for the manifestation of holiness in the character and conduct of believers, when viewed in connexion with his great doctrine of justification by faith in the atonement of the Son of God, furnishes the strongest evidence of the truth of revelation. No man ever forged this Epistle. It carries its own credentials on the face of it, and shows the broad seal of heaven stamped upon it, as clearly as the heavens and the earth declare that creation is the work of God, and not of an impostor. Who could have forged such a work as this Epistle? For what end could it have been forged? If Antinomians could be supposed to forge the doctrine of justification through the sacrifice of Christ, who was then to forge the precepts which so urgently inculcate all good works? No man could be suspected of writing this Epistle, with a view to please the bulk of mankind, or indeed any one considerable class of men. It is as much opposed to the spirit of the multitude, as it is to the pride of the enlightened few. It pleases nobody, and therefore can never be justly suspected of having been originally written in order to please, or in order to effect any sinister purpose.

It is peremptory in its doctrine of obedience to the civil magistrates, and enjoins submission to the higher

powers on a footing to which the world was previously a stranger. Yet this cannot be suspected of being a contrivance of magistrates. For, while it urges subjection in civil matters to those authorities whom God in his providence has appointed, it condemns as without excuse that idolatry which the existing rulers, at the time when it was written, professed, and for the support of which they persecuted Christians to the death. This can no more be a forgery of the rulers than of the subjects.

There is another peculiarity in the latter part of this Epistle, which evinces admirable wisdom, but a wisdom far removed from the wisdom of man. It contains, in the short compass of a few chapters, an amazing variety of precepts, expressed perspicuously, yet briefly, respecting conduct in domestic life, in society, and in church fellowship. Had uninspired men been discoursing on these various subjects, they would have produced a series of distinct treatises, formally handled, and largely illustrated. In the writings of the Apostle, a single sentence embraces a volume, while this peculiarity differs so widely from any procedure of human wisdom, that it proclaims itself to be the wisdom of God. It is thus that the Scriptures are contained in a comparatively short book, which is addressed to the great body of mankind, and whose contents are inexhaustible.

Yet, amidst such careful parsimony of words, amidst such a condensation of matter, the Apostle closes the Epistle with what might seem a most prodigal waste, by sending so many salutations, and expressing, in such a variety of terms, ceremonious attentions to his fellow Christians at Rome. Here, however, as in other cases,

wisdom is justified of her children ; for this, also, is one of those characteristics by which God stamps his image on all his productions. The Christian will be at no loss to discover, on reflection, that this part of the Epistle is not without its use, and, in the exposition of the last chapter, it has been a peculiar object to point out how we may reap instruction, from what human wisdom in its folly, will scarcely admit to be reckoned as a part of that Book, which is nothing less than THE WORD OF GOD.

The doctrines unfolded in this Epistle reveal to us the mighty plan of redemption, by which our powerful spiritual enemies are overcome, and all the strong and deeply-rooted evils lodged within our bosoms shall finally be subdued. The whole leads believers to exclaim :—“ The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let  
 ‘ the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and  
 ‘ darkness are round about him : Righteousness and  
 ‘ Judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth  
 ‘ before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.  
 ‘ The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the peo-  
 ‘ ple see his glory. Ye that love the Lord, hate evil :  
 ‘ he preserveth the souls of his saints ; he delivereth them  
 ‘ out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the  
 ‘ righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Re-  
 ‘ joice in the Lord, ye righteous ; and give thanks at the  
 ‘ remembrance of his holiness.” These emphatic words of the Psalmist, though recorded more than a thousand years before the age of the apostle, most graphically delineate the leading features of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, and portray in vivid colours those emotions in the minds of believers which the consideration of



them is so well fitted to produce. And those who have never perused this astonishing portion of the divine word with a holy relish, and have not entered into its meaning, have never experienced the fulness of that joy and peace which it is calculated to produce in the heart of every true worshipper of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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APPENDIX.



## A P P E N D I X.

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LETTER TO THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,  
REFERRED TO VOL. III. 108.

*Auchingray, Sept. 4, 1839.*

DEAR SIR,—Among the valuable books with which you kindly presented me during your late visit to Edinburgh, I turned with interest to the work you have published under the title of *A Voice from the Alps*. I rejoice to find that, in the midst of your other useful labours in the missionary cause, you have not been unmindful of Continental Europe, and that you are desirous of stimulating the zeal which has of late years been kindled in the breasts of British Christians, in behalf of those countries where the candle of the Lord had been well nigh extinguished.

In the *Voice from the Alps* I found an address to a clerical meeting by the Rev. R. Burgess of Chelsea, which contains an account of my own proceedings at Geneva altogether erroneous. Mr Burgess has doubtless been misinformed on the subject; but his mistakes have been shared or adopted by Mr Meston, in his recent *Observations on the Present State of Religion in France*. To prevent the further currency of these misstatements, which, if uncontradicted, will be repeated by others, I shall first notice the errors into which these gentlemen have fallen, and then briefly relate the leading circumstances connected with my residence on the Continent, in which the hand of the Lord may be clearly seen, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

The narratives of Mr Burgess and Mr Meston alike confound dates and circumstances. It was not in 1818, as stated by both of these gentlemen, but in 1816, that I went to Geneva. Mr Drummond and I did not labour there together, as it would

appear by their accounts. Mr Drummond did not arrive at Geneva till two days before I left the place. I was not "armed with religious tracts and addresses," as Mr Burgess affirms, but with the word of God. The distribution of tracts is in general highly to be commended, but, in the circumstances in which I was placed at that period in Geneva, I should have considered such weapons but ill fitted to assault the strongholds of Satan. Far from finding "but few voices to respond to my appeal," as Mr Burgess and Mr Meston both intimate, by the blessing of God I found many. And, instead of not appearing "to have met with success," during my stay, according to Mr Meston, the success with which the Lord was graciously pleased to accompany the testimony borne to his truth was very remarkable; and, perhaps the more so, because it was, so far as I know, the first, after the termination of the war, systematically and publicly borne on the Continent, by any one from Britain, to the grand distinctive doctrines of the gospel. Dr Malan "raised his voice in behalf of the truth," not, as they assert, "after," but before I left Geneva. The following brief narrative of my proceedings on the Continent may illustrate the gracious providence of God, and prove an encouragement to others to speak out boldly and fully, as they may have opportunity of declaring the whole counsel of God.

For many years I had cherished the idea of going to France, with the view of doing something to promote the knowledge of the gospel in a country in which I had been three times before as a traveller. Accordingly, when the return of peace rendered my design practicable, I went to the Continent. Being, however, unacquainted with a single individual there, and therefore unable to arrange any particular plan of action, I feared that my object might prove abortive; and, in consequence, when asked, before I left Scotland, how long I expected to be absent? I replied, "Possibly only six weeks." The Lord, however, was pleased to open a wide and effectual door, leading me in a way that I knew not, and my residence abroad continued about three years.

On arriving at Paris, involved, as it appeared, in Egyptian darkness, I soon perceived that I had no means of furthering the object of my journey in that great metropolis. Unexpectedly, however, I met with Mr Hillhouse, a gentleman from America, of whom I had not before heard. He had landed at Bourdeaux, and travelling through the South of France, had gone to Geneva, and thence to Paris. Having passed through Montauban, where

the French Theological Protestant Faculty was founded by Napoleon, he had there, and in other places, inquired respecting the Protestant ministers, and he communicated to me all his information on the subject. He told me that at Geneva there were only two individuals, to whom I could have access; the one, a pastor in advanced years; the other, not a pastor, but what is termed a minister; and that nearly the whole of the other pastors were Arians or Socinians.

Finding no opening at Paris, I immediately set out for Geneva, hoping that something might be done through the two individuals referred to by Mr Hillhouse. On my arrival I called on the pastor alluded to, the late M. Moulinié, and conversed with him on the gospel. He was very kind, but appearing to acquiesce in all that I advanced, discussion on any point was out of the question, and no progress was made. Being, therefore, unable to discover means of usefulness at Geneva, and finding on inquiry that the young man also spoken of by Mr Hillhouse had some time before removed to Berne, I repaired to that city, where I found he had been ordained a pastor. He was not an Arian or Socinian, but, although very ignorant respecting the gospel, he was willing to inquire and hear concerning the great truths which it reveals. I remained at Berne about eight days, during which he came to me every morning at ten o'clock, and continued till ten at night—in fact, as late as it was possible for him, the gates of the city, beyond which he lodged, being shut at that hour. During the whole day I endeavoured to set before him, as far as I was enabled, every thing relating to the gospel, and have good reason to believe that the word spoken was accompanied with the blessing of the Lord. I was afterwards informed, that subsequently to my departure he conversed with his colleague, the other pastor of the church, on the subject of our discussions, and that, in considering what had been advanced, they arrived at the conclusion that it must be the true doctrine of salvation.

I hesitated whether I should return to Geneva, but at last resolved to do so, having heard of two Prussian clergymen, who had recently been in England, and were passing through that town, with whom it was supposed I might have an opportunity of conversing on the gospel,—and also of a pastor, at a little distance in the country, who my new acquaintance at Berne informed me would listen to my statements, but would “draw himself up, and not answer a word.” To Geneva I accordingly returned. With the Prussian clergymen I found no satisfaction

in conversing ; and although I subsequently did not experience the reserve I anticipated in the pastor just referred to, yet I had not the gratification of meeting him till after the lapse of some time.

I, however, again visited M. Moulinié, with whom I had before conversed, who, as formerly, was very kind, but with whom I could make no progress. From all I could learn from him, Geneva was involved in the most deplorable darkness. It was, as Mr Burgess observes, "an unbroken field of labour," with a "fallen Church." Calvin, once its chiefest boast and ornament, with his doctrines and works, had been set aside and forgotten, while the pastors and professors were in general Arians or Socinians. Some exceptions among them there were, including M. Moulinié, who held the divinity of our Lord Jesus, and I believe loved and served him according to their light ; but that light was so obscure—they were on the whole so ignorant, so incapable of rightly dividing the word of truth, that their preaching was without fruit. They preached neither Law nor Gospel fully, and their doctrine did not seem to affect the consciences of their hearers. A small prayer-meeting had for some time been held, in consequence, I believe, of a visit of Madame Krudner to Geneva ; and, by one belonging to it, I was afterwards told, that sensible of their want of knowledge, they had prayed that an instructor should be sent to them, and that their prayer, they now believed, was answered.

Being unable to meet with any other person with whom I might converse on the gospel, I resolved to quit Geneva without delay, and proceed to Montauban. The Lord, however, is often pleased to overrule our purposes by occurrences which in themselves appear trifling, and thus to bring about results that could not have been anticipated. M. Moulinié had politely offered to conduct Mrs Haldane to see the model of the mountains, a little way out of town, and with this object he promised to call on us the day following. In the morning, however, we received a note from him, saying, that having suffered from a severe headache during the night, he was himself unable to come, but had sent a young man, a student of divinity, who would be our conductor. On this providential circumstance depended my continuance at Geneva, which I had been on the point of leaving. With this student I immediately entered into conversation respecting the gospel, of which I found him profoundly ignorant, although in a state of mind that showed he was willing to receive information. He returned with me to the inn, and remained till late at night.



Next morning he came with another student, equally in darkness with himself. I questioned them respecting their personal hope of salvation, and the foundation of that hope. Had they been trained in the schools of Socrates or Plato, and enjoyed no other means of instruction, they could scarcely have been more ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel. They had, in fact, learned much more of the opinions of the heathen philosophers than of the doctrines of the Saviour and his Apostles. To the Bible and its contents their studies had never been directed. After some conversation, they became convinced of their ignorance of the Scriptures, and of the way of salvation, and exceedingly desirous of information. I therefore postponed my intended departure from Geneva.

The two students with whom I first conversed brought six others in the same state of mind with themselves, with whom I had many and long conversations. Their visits became so frequent, and at such different hours, that I proposed they should come all together; and it was arranged that they should do so three times a-week, from six to eight o'clock in the evening. This gave me time to converse with others, who, from the report of the students, began to visit me, as well as leisure to prepare what might be profitable for their instruction. I took the Epistle to the Romans as my subject; and this portion of Scripture I continued to expound to them during the winter, and to dilate on the great doctrines which it unfolds.

After having proceeded in this manner about a fortnight with these eight students, I was earnestly solicited, in the name of the other students, to begin anew, in which case I was assured that the rest of them would attend. I accordingly complied with this request, and, during the whole of the winter of 1816-17, and until the termination of their studies in the following summer, almost all the students in theology regularly attended. And God was graciously pleased to accompany his own word with power. In addition to the general knowledge which all of them acquired, a goodly number soon appeared to be turned to the Lord. Some of them have now finished their course with joy, and, like MM. Rieu, Gonthier, and Henri Pyt, have left behind them the blessed assurance that they are now in the presence of God and the Lamb; while others have, in like manner, evinced the reality of the work of grace by the steadfastness of their faith, and the abundance of their ministrations.

Besides those who attended regularly, some who did not wish to appear with the students came at different hours, and in con-

versing with them, at those times, or after finishing the public course at eight o'clock, I was often engaged till near midnight. Others of the inhabitants of Geneva, unconnected with the schools of learning, and of both sexes, occasionally visited me in the afternoon to receive instructions respecting the gospel.

The impression produced at Geneva was, by the blessing of God, so great, that discussions became frequent on the great truths connected with salvation. The pastors and professors in the Faculty heard of the doctrines I was inculcating, and the manner in which I spoke of their false doctrine. They began to preach openly against what I taught, and I as plainly controverted what they taught, collecting their arguments, setting them before the students and others to whom I had access, comparing them with Scripture, and labouring to refute their destructive heresies. They insisted that men were born pure, and spoke of the Saviour as the first of created beings, and I opposed and refuted such errors and blasphemies. They taught that the gospel was useful, but not indispensable to salvation, and adduced the case of Cornelius, as an example of a man accepted of God without the knowledge of the gospel. I proved that this was an egregious misrepresentation of the fact, and that the history of Cornelius formed no exception to the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that there is no other way of salvation but by faith in the Saviour. It was not, then, by avoiding controverted subjects, and simply dwelling on truths common to professing Christians, as some good men have recommended as the proper course to be pursued on the Continent, that I laboured to raise up the fallen standard of the gospel at Geneva. It was, on the contrary, by not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as I was enabled to do so; it was by dwelling on every doctrine of the Bible, whether it was controverted or not, or however repulsive to the carnal mind, and by confronting and bringing to the test of Scripture every argument levelled at my instructions by both pastors and professors.

In this manner matters proceeded at Geneva, till the middle of the summer of 1817, the period which terminated the studies of the theological students. The pastors attempted to instigate the government to banish me from their canton; and when this proved unsuccessful, it was proposed in the "Venerable Company" that I should be cited to appear before them, to answer for the doctrines I was inculcating on the students. On this it was observed by one of them. "Vous ne gagnerez pas grand chose par cela!" (You will not gain much by that!) and the matter

dropped. At the same time, they did all in their power to prevent the attendance of the Students. I have since that period conversed in this country with Mr Gausson, and, in answer to my inquiry, How it was that the pastors failed in this attempt? he replied, That this was the first blow that had seriously affected them, and although they were anxious to adopt every means in their power to prevent the students from coming to me, yet they found it impossible, because, if strong measures had been resorted to as the penalty of disobeying the prohibition, the students had resolved to leave their professors. The pastors, however, did not cease to labour to counteract the effects of the change that had taken place in the minds of so many of the students, and particularly by framing the "Reglemens" of May 3d, 1817, consisting of certain articles which every student was ordered to sign before he should be "consecrated," and which were intended to exclude from the pulpits of Geneva the doctrines which they so violently opposed, and particularly the doctrines of the Godhead of the Saviour—of original sin—of grace and effectual calling—and of predestination. In spite of all their endeavours, the light was diffused to a very remarkable degree in Geneva, which, through the ministration of these Socinian, Arian, and Arminian teachers, had fallen from the glory which once belonged to it, and, instead of being the centre of illumination to Protestant Europe, had become a synagogue of Satan, and a citadel of ignorance and darkness.

In my *Letter to M. Cheneviere, Professor of Theology at Geneva*, which I published both in English and in French in the year 1824, which he never attempted to answer, you will find other details connected with the foregoing subjects. But before I conclude, I may notice the course I was led to adopt at the close of the academical session at Geneva in 1817. After the departure of the students, at the termination of their course at that period, I resumed my design of going to Montauban, in the south of France, where the Faculty for the education of French Protestants is established, and which is considered the centre of all the French Protestant churches. Through the kindness of the late excellent M. Bonnard, then Professor of Hebrew, but afterwards Dean, or Principal of the Faculty, I was introduced to such of the French pastors as occasionally visited Montauban, and by his means, and in consequence of the extensive correspondence he maintained with all the pastors in France, I was enabled to obtain much valuable information, as well as general circulation for the books I published there, in every part of the

kingdom, and to enter into full discussions with many of them on the subject of the gospel. From my valued friend, the present President of the Consistory, M. Marzials, to whom I was also under peculiar obligations for the assistance he afforded me among the students and others, I sometime ago received a letter, in which he says, "Many of our pastors are now proclaiming the gospel, who, but for your abode among us, would have been preaching Neology." By another letter from him, dated July 13, 1839, I am informed that every student, on finishing his studies, and leaving Montauban, is furnished with a copy of my *Evidences*, which were translated into French, and of the French *Commentary on the Romans*, which I prepared and published at that place.

The late M. Pictet, of Geneva, whose name is so well known among the savans of Europe, and who had been appointed by Buonaparte one of the inspectors of the Protestant Churches—who has asserted in one of his publications, that "The Methodism," meaning the Christianity "of England, threatens to conduct the world back to barbarism"—officially visited Montauban some years after I left it. On that occasion, M. Pradel, then Dean of the Faculty, and a man equally opposed to the gospel as M. Pictet, told him, with tears in his eyes, that "Since the appearance at Montauban of that disastrous meteor (*meteore desastreux*), Mr Haldane, all had been poisoned with his doctrine. M. Pradel publicly used the same expressions on another occasion in addressing the students, and thus unintentionally bore witness to the blessing with which the Lord was pleased to accompany the declaration of his gospel.

I state these things, my dear Sir, because, as I have already intimated, the account which has appeared under the sanction of your name would, if uncontradicted, be henceforth considered as authentic, and because it may advance the objects which both of us have at heart, for the good of the Continent, to publish this short record. Placed before the world as Mr Burgess's narrative now is, it requires to be rectified; and I also trust that a memorial of the Lord's goodness, in prospering an attempt to revive the knowledge of his truth in Continental Europe, may stimulate the zeal of others, and redound to the glory of God whom you serve in the gospel of his Son, and to whom, in whatever capacity we are placed, it is our bounden duty to consecrate every talent with which we are intrusted.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

ROBERT HALDANE.

## MR STUART.

IN the preceding Exposition several references have been made to Professor Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, with a view to counteract the danger arising from the circulation of that work in this country. The baneful effects of his system, there is reason to fear, will be very extensive. Is it strange that speculations which teach men to deny, or receive with hesitation, or modify with fanciful limitations, the doctrine of their connexion with the first man in his sin, should lead to every error that pleases the carnal mind? Wrong views of Divine truth among the people of God are always the immediate forerunners of a total departure from the gospel on the part of the great body of the professors of religion.

In the preface to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Professor Stuart informs his readers that they are not to expect from him a sermonizing commentary; and that his design does not coincide with that of several English commentators, to whose practical works he refers with approbation. But this is not the only difference between him and the generality of the writers alluded to. He does not hold the same doctrines with them. He has not only a different object, but he has a widely different system. It may further be remarked, that many of these "sermonizing commentators" have exhibited the meaning of the inspired language with greater correctness than he has done by his criticisms. There is no complaint with respect to the propriety of his confining himself to the work of a critic and translator; the complaint is, that by false criticism he has misrepresented the Divine testimony in some of the most momentous points in the scheme of Christianity.

Mr Stuart's explanations of the contents of the first five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans are calculated not to enlighten but to perplex and mislead his readers, and overthrow their faith. He commences, in the first chapter, by denying that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, in support of which he asks if the resurrection of Lazarus and others was a proof that they were the sons of God. After this what can be expected? The words cited from the prophet, contained in the 17th verse, are, according to him, an example of quotation by *accommodation*. This is highly derogatory to the word of God, and proves that he is unacquainted with the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The meaning of the

leading expression, *the righteousness of God*, in the same verse, which lies at the foundation of the whole of the Apostle's reasonings, he has altogether misapprehended.

In expounding the second chapter, he errs at its commencement, asserting that the Apostle does not directly address the Jews; but that, although he has them "constantly in mind, he still advances only general propositions, applicable in common to them and to others;" the meaning and force of the reasoning, in the first part of that chapter, are thus misconceived and made void. The propositions in the first five verses are not general; neither are they applicable to others, but exclusively to the Jews, to whom they are *directly* addressed. In the third chapter, he removes the foundation of the Apostle's proof, taken from the Old Testament Scriptures, that all men are under sin, by denying that the passages quoted have "a *direct* bearing on the *universal* depravity of the human race." And after again misrepresenting the signification of the leading term in the Epistle—the righteousness of God—to which the Apostle there recurs, he entirely sets aside the meaning of the last verse of that chapter, which contains the important affirmation, that the justification of sinners by faith without works, so far from making void the law, establishes it. This assertion, indeed, must, according to Mr Stuart's account of justification, be explicitly contradicted, for the view he gives of it does make void the Law. The great doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, as illustrated in the fourth chapter, and that of the imputation of Adam's sin, as exhibited in the fifth, are entirely perverted by Mr Stuart. The above are not mistakes respecting the signification of particular expressions, but respecting great leading points in these five chapters. In the same most erroneous and perverted manner he proceeds through the remaining parts of the Epistle.

Mr Stuart has totally subverted the doctrine of justification. According to him a man is not justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which, in contradiction to the Apostle, who affirms that it is imputed, he holds to be *impossible*. Instead of this, he maintains that faith is "*counted as complete obedience*," p. 177. And this statement, so derogatory to the character of God, is made, in order to shew that justification is gratuitous. Justification is, indeed, gratuitous, but not in this manner of man's devising, according to which God would regard a fiction as a reality, counting to a man as complete obedience that which in no respect whatever answers the demands of his law. Mr Stuart may speak of gratuitous justification; but let no one be misled

by this. Such language may be used, while the gospel of the true grace of God is rejected.

After declaring that faith is counted as "*complete obedience*," Mr Stuart himself appears not quite satisfied with this statement. Accordingly, he afterwards asks, p. 506 : " But where has Paul taught, that a man is justified by faith *alone* ; and that evangelical good works are not an essential condition of his justification before God ? " From this it appears that complete obedience ALONE will not do. Evangelical good works must come in to complete what was before complete ! And shall Christians give up the doctrine of the Apostles to give place to such absurdities ? Lest, however, any one should mistake his meaning, Mr Stuart hastens to add, "*good works*, in the gospel sense of these words, ' are an essential condition of our acceptance with God : " Is this assertion less heretical than the doctrine promulgated by the false teachers who troubled the churches of Galatia—those teachers whom Paul wished to be cut off, and of whom he affirmed that they should bear their own judgment ? It is a perversion of the gospel of Christ. It is another gospel, as that of which Paul declared, that if an angel from heaven preached it, he should be accursed ; and that, if any man received it, Christ should profit him nothing.

If, however, Mr Stuart, in this manner, contradicts the whole testimony of Scripture respecting the doctrine of justification and acceptance with God, in doing so he does not stand alone. Whether or not he has borrowed it from them, his system here is precisely that of Arminius and Socinus. In proof of this assertion I give the following extracts from Witsius, on the economy of the Covenants, from the chapter on justification, where he is animadverting on the sentiments of some learned man whom he does not name. After asserting that the " thing for which we are justified, and which some call the *matter* of our justification, ' is the perfect righteousness of Christ alone," and after supporting this position by suitable quotations from Scripture, Witsius observes ; "*Arminius*, by his subtlety, frames vain empty quibbles, ' when he contends that the righteousness of Christ cannot be ' imputed to us for righteousness, because it is his very righteousness ; laying this down as a foundation, that which is imputed ' to us for righteousness is not properly our righteousness. ' Which none will admit, who has considered that every judgment of God is according to truth : whence it follows, that ' nothing can be imputed to any one for righteousness which is ' not really righteousness." And again, " It is well known that

‘ the reformed churches condemned Arminius and his followers, for saying that faith comes to be considered in the matter of justification as a work or act of ours ; whereas the Dutch confession speaks far more accurately ; namely, that faith is here instead of an instrument : whereby we are joined together with Christ in a partnership or communion of all his benefits.” We thus learn the perfect coincidence of the views of Professor Stuart with those of *Arminius*, both as to the denial of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and respecting the office of faith in justification, only Arminius does not, according to these quotations at least, assert with Mr Stuart, that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is *impossible*, nor propound the monstrous absurdity, that faith is “ *counted as complete obedience.*” Let us now turn to Socinius.

‘ Some time ago,’ says Witsius, ‘ *I read in Socinus*, before the sentiments of this celebrated person came to hand, the same exception which he makes, that by the works which Paul excludes from justification is understood the perfect observance of the law, such as the legal Covenant requires. For thus, he says, *de Servat*, p. iv. c. ii., ‘ The works to which faith is opposed are not every kind of works, nor taken and considered in every light, but, as we have observed elsewhere, these works denote an absolute and perpetual observance and performance of the Divine law, through the whole course of life.’ But our divines openly declared against this exposition ; who contend that all works, however considered, are opposed to faith.’ And again, ‘ But we are farther to enquire, how faith justifies. Not certainly in that sense, as if God graciously accepts the act of faith, and new gospel obedience flowing therefrom in the room of the perfect obedience, which, from the rigour of the law, we are bound to perform in order to justification : as the *Socinians*, and Curcellæus, who imitates them in this respect, explain it ; understanding by the faith *the observance of the precepts of the gospel*, which God has prescribed by Christ. For this is to make void the whole gospel. The gospel has not substituted our faith, but Christ’s obedience, by which the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, in the room of that perfect obedience, which the law required in order to justification.” Witsius afterwards adds, that the *Socinians* and Remonstrants say, ‘ that in the room of perfect obedience, which the law prescribed as the condition of justification, the gospel now requireth faith, as the condition of the same justification.’ Such is the complete agreement of Professor Stuart, on points



of the most essential importance, with the worst of the heretics who have perverted the truth as it is in Jesus.

‘The doctrine of justification,’ says Witsius, ‘diffuseth itself through the whole body of divinity, and if the foundation here is well laid, the whole building will be the more solid and grand; whereas a bad foundation or superstructure threatens a dreadful ruin.’

The doctrine of the imputation of the sin of the first man, Mr Stuart positively rejects. In the exposition of the 5th chapter, I have called the attention of the reader to the manner in which he has there wrested the testimony of the Apostle, especially in the 19th verse. “*For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one sha’l many be made righteous.*” And is there here any darkness? Is there any one not able to discern the meaning of the Apostle? Could it be said more expressly that we were made sinners by Adam, and that we are in the same sense made righteous by Christ? What phrase, what word in this sentence is ambiguous? Yet, in the face of this explicit testimony of the word of God, Mr Stuart asserts, ‘We may just as well say, that we can appropriate to ourselves, and make our own, the righteousness of another, as his unrighteousness.’ He lays it down as an axiom, that the imputation of sin or righteousness is impossible. ‘A transfer,’ he says, ‘of moral turpitude is just as impossible as a transference of souls,’ and by criticism the most violent he perverts the clear and strong language of inspiration. Is it not then palpably evident that his criticism has been made to subserve his opinion; and that his opinion is not the result of his criticism? He disowns all regard to human systems; but there is an authority as deceitful and dangerous as any other from which he cannot boast exemption. This is a regard, in explaining Scripture, to the prepossessions of the human mind. To these he has evidently listened. If he looks on it as a self-evident truth that certain doctrines are false, is this conviction less likely to influence his interpretation of the words of the Apostle that express the contrary, than names and systems to act upon the minds of others?

If we cannot be one with Adam, neither can we be one with Christ; and if the imputation of Adam’s sin be impossible, so likewise is the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. But this does not startle Mr Stuart. He scruples not to deny the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as well as the imputation of Adam’s sin. Surely Christians should pause before they listen

to these destructive heresies. Since the Scriptures explicitly attest that we are guilty in Adam's sin, is it not awful hardihood to wrest on this point the Divine testimony; and if we cannot be saved but by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, what shall we say of him who declares it to be impossible to have either sin or righteousness transferred? Where is the Christian who will attempt even to palliate such heresies? Can any man be called a Christian who will affirm that in the day when the heavens and the earth shall flee away from the presence of Him that sitteth on the throne, he shall be able to stand, except by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ? All refuges of lies, such as those which Mr Stuart has substituted in its place, will then be swept away.

If a right view be taken of the fifth chapter, from the 12th to the 19th verse, all is consistent and easy to the Christian. If the obvious testimony of the Spirit be rejected in order to suit human theories, or indulge the pride of the carnal heart; no scheme will ever reconcile its various parts. Mr Stuart finds many difficulties, which it costs him a great deal of trouble to remove. He is ever fighting with the Scriptures and contradicting himself. From first to last he is explaining, and defining, and guarding, and straining; but all his ingenuity has not enabled him to produce a scheme that is either self-consistent, or consistent with the language of inspiration.

In the American "Biblical Repertory," in which Professor Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans is reviewed, and a multitude of his errors pointed out, the reviewer, although he very inconsistently begins by speaking in his praise, observes, "It is in these discussions" (viz. theological discussions), "the writer has most signally failed; misapprehended the subject in debate; misconceived the meaning of the authors whom he quotes; contradicted himself; done violence to his own theoretical rules of interpretation, and gratuitously denounced doctrines, which have not only always been regarded as part of the common faith of Protestant Christendom, but which he himself over and over either asserts or implies." And again in the same review it is said, "We think that no man can fail to observe that Professor Stuart's rejection of certain doctrines, is the result of a mere prejudice awakened in his mind, and strengthened into an antipathy. That he was never led to it by the process of interpretation is clear, in the first place, from the evident labour which it has cost him to force even his own mind to accede to his interpretations; and in the second, that

‘ he admits propositions which involve every one of the offensive  
 ‘ principles involved in the doctrines which he rejects. Here  
 ‘ then is precisely the point where Professor Stuart is most de-  
 ‘ ceived. Just when he thinks himself most independent be-  
 ‘ cause he differs from his former self and his present friends, he  
 ‘ is most obviously led by other writers, and his own prejudices.”  
 Such is the view given in America of Mr Stuart’s interpretations,  
 in a commentary which has been strongly recommended to  
 Christians in this country.

Since the publication of that commentary, Mr Stuart has inserted a paper in the American Biblical Repository of July 1836, in which his system, so directly opposed to the Word of God, is still more fully developed. He there explicitly denies that, in the execution of the plan of salvation, the claims of justice are maintained. “The law,” he says, “enjoins fully and simply our  
 ‘ own *personal* obedience, and pronounces a curse on us solely,  
 ‘ when we disobey it. But in every government, in heaven and  
 ‘ on earth, there is reserved to the supreme power which made  
 ‘ the law, a right of *dispensing* with its demands, when the general  
 ‘ good admits of such a dispensation.” “Of what real use, then,”  
 he adds, “can it be, to retain a mere fiction of law in the process  
 ‘ of our final justification and acceptance? Salvation by *pure*  
 ‘ *grace*, is salvation purely gratuitous and of mere mercy, and not  
 ‘ at all on any *legal* ground. The very fact of its bestowment, is  
 ‘ a superseding of the claims of law, and acting on grounds of a  
 ‘ different nature.” Here is an open avowal of that part of the Socinian heresy which denies that justice is an essential attribute of God, since its exercise may be suspended. Thus Mr Stuart misrepresents the character of God, and makes void the law. He overturns the gospel, the glory of which is, that grace reigns *through righteousness*, while he sets aside the necessity of the sacrifice for sin. If God can consistently with his character remit the claims of law and justice, to what purpose, beyond what Socinians admit, were the incarnation and death of Christ? According to Mr Stuart, the imputation of his righteousness is “a mere fiction of law in the process of our final justification and  
 ‘ acceptance.” Could an Arian or an infidel exhibit greater opposition to the gospel than Mr Stuart? all this explains the reason why Mr Stuart so often substitutes the word justification for righteousness, in his translation and Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. When this author overthrows in these ways the doctrine of Scripture, asserts in plain language that obedience *leads* to and *ends* in justification—when

he explodes the imputation of sin and righteousness, and advances statements that impugn the justice of the divine administration,—when by glaring mistranslations and perverted reasonings, he removes the foundation of a sinner's hope before God, it is incumbent to shew that his statements are utterly false, derogatory in the highest degree to the character of God, and if received, irretrievably ruinous to the souls of men.

Let those who know the truth, as it is in Jesus, consider what they have been doing in recommending Mr Stuart's work. He has been extolled as an *able Biblical critic*. In Dr Carson's work, entitled "*Examination of the principles of Biblical interpretation of Ernesti, Ammon, Stuart, and other Philologists,*" it may be seen how unfounded are Mr Stuart's pretensions to such a character. Dr Carson intends, in another publication, to go forward with the consideration of Mr Stuart's defects as a critic, and also to develop the false principles of criticism on which Mr Tholuck, like Mr Stuart, has proceeded in his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. Let the reader observe the manner in which Mr Stuart has misrepresented the type of Melchisedec, as pointed out by Dr Carson, in the above-quoted work. Of the German writers, whose books he criticises, Dr Carson asks—"What is it that entitles those men to the exalted seat to which common opinion has raised them? They are learned men, I admit; but they are not critics; they are universally acquainted with books, but not with the philosophy of language. Their interpretation is as destitute of science, as their theology is of truth." By the aid of false criticism, many modern interpreters have contrived to corrupt the gospel, and darken the word of God with a plausibility that deceives the generality of readers, and with a show of learning that overawes them. It is thus that Mr Stuart's work on the Epistle to the Romans has commanded the admiration of those who would be thought learned, or averted the opposition of others who may have suspected his orthodoxy. But if the word of God be true, if Paul was really an ambassador of Christ, Mr Stuart has grossly corrupted the gospel. How deplorable must be the state of those churches, that, after he has promulgated such doctrines in an elaborate work, retain him as an instructor in their theological academy.

Professor Stuart appears to be well acquainted with the writings of German Neologians, and he has not read them in vain. From him we have abundance of Neology at second hand. And is there no danger of its spreading in this country? Many suppose that fears about Neology are visionary, and that whatever

influence that baneful system might have had hitherto, it is happily now entirely without effect. The grossness of the system is, it may be admitted, too monstrous to be received. But while the system itself is reprobated, the spirit of it may nevertheless insinuate itself into the minds of many who have a respect for the names of those who have embraced it. It is a spirit in direct opposition to the gospel, subversive of the truth and authority of Divine revelation.

Influence among religious bodies is a talent of immense importance, and one of the most serious responsibility. It is a great privilege to be fellow-helpers with the truth by contributing to bring before the public every work that is suited to illustrate the word of God. But how sinful must it be when this influence is employed in circulating what is calculated to lower or overthrow its fundamental doctrines!

The recommendation of Professor Stuart's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, cannot be excused, by the allegation that the errors are trivial, and that its patrons do not pledge themselves for its entire accuracy. The departures from the truth are so gross, that they overturn the gospel. Whoever knows any thing of human nature, is aware that it is prone to receive the evil rather than the good, and that even Christians are liable to be perverted by the sleight of men. What a melancholy reflection must it be to a man of God, if this impious rejection of God's testimony as to the imputation of sin and righteousness, should spread among students and religious bodies in this country, in consequence of Professor Stuart's book having been recommended by names they have been accustomed to respect.

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#### DR MACKNIGHT.

In adverting in the foregoing Exposition to the fundamental heresies of Mr Stuart, I have also pointed out in various places the deeply heretical character of Dr Macknight's Commentary, and have stated enough to draw the attention of the reader to the errors of that very dangerous and unsound Commentator. Dr Macknight's work on the Epistles has probably done more extensive mischief in this country than any other that can be named. Like Mr Stuart, he proves his ignorance of the gospel, by denying the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and at the same time makes void the law. His "AUDACIOUS HETERO-DOXY," as it is termed in the Presbyterian Review of May 1836,

and daring perversions of the word of God, have been most pernicious, yet his work unaccountably stands high in the estimation of many. Several years ago, after publishing strictures on that work, I received a letter from Mr Burder, the late excellent secretary of the London Missionary Society, requesting me to send him some copies of my remarks, saying how seasonable they were, and stating that his reason for wishing to distribute them was, that none of the missionaries went out from the Society without being furnished with Macknight's Commentary. This he deeply regretted; and assuredly a worse book—one more calculated to mislead and pervert them, could not have been put into their hands.

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#### MR THOLUCK.

I have likewise introduced several remarks on the Commentary of Mr Tholuck on the Epistle to the Romans, which, like Mr Stuart's, was ushered into public notice with high commendation, as if the study of it would tend greatly to enlighten the minds of Christians in this country. On the contrary, the whole work is of a most erroneous and Neological character, of which it may be truly affirmed, as has been asserted of Mr Stuart's book, "The technicalities of his discussions are a very inadequate compensation for the errors he has broached; and the truth he has illustrated may be put in a nut-shell. The useful illustrations in his work on the Romans bear no proportion to his pernicious errors." The errors and false doctrine that abound in every part of it, are of the gravest and most mischievous description.

Having published two pamphlets, entitled "For the Consideration of the Ministers of the Church of Scotland," and "Further Considerations," &c., which contain a very full exposure of the heresies of Mr Tholuck's Commentary, it was unnecessary to be very particular in pointing them out in the preceding Exposition, though in various places they are there brought into view; nor considering how particular these pamphlets are on the subject, is it necessary here. I may, however, in this place, make a few remarks, as the subject is of so much importance.

Every where Mr Tholuck discovers a most revolting want of reverence for the Scriptures, arising from his deplorably defective views of their inspiration, or rather from his setting it altogether aside. For instance, he charges the Apostle Paul

with various errors, arising "from forgetfulness;" with "making a false construction," while he excuses him by saying, "we may imagine that Paul was here called away, and that upon resuming his pen, he supposed that he had begun a new sentence,"—that he probably used words "without attaching to them any definite idea;" that he "had forgotten what ought to have followed;" "the question which Paul proposes is not framed with sufficient precision." Mr Tholuck then states what he ought properly to have appended. Here he acts not as the expositor, but as the corrector of the words of the Holy Ghost. In his exposition of the Lord's sermon on the mount, we are told by Mr Tholuck that another inspired writer, the evangelist Luke, had certain parabolical dicta in his mind, *but did not well know what was their proper place*. And according to another author whom he quotes, that we find in Luke traces of his having *merely quoted from memory, and with little fidelity*, what is found in its original form in Matthew. And again, we are told that Luke appears to have had a *less favourable position for hearing*, and hence not to have caught all that was said, and here and there to have *lost the thread of his discourse*; and that he might also *have been longer of noting it down, when much had already escaped him*. From all this we learn, that so far from being an inspired writer, the evangelist Luke was a confused and unfaithful reporter, very inferior to many, both in fidelity and accuracy, with whom we meet in modern times. In referring in the same place to the Gospel of Matthew, and to the account given by that evangelist of our Lord's discourse, Mr Tholuck says, "For 'supposing that really to be, what it must needs appear to any 'one who reads and acquiesces in the work of Siefert, so *confused and adulterated, and in original delineation, so contemptible a 'gospel*, how comes it to pass that the unknown author from 'whom it proceeds, who is in every particular *worse informed 'than Luke*, and who elsewhere is *incapable of stating a fact either 'in its proper place, or without perplexity*, has yet communicated 'a discourse of such considerable length, with so much greater 'fidelity, order, and propriety; and delivered the detached 'sentences, scattered up and down in the gospels of Luke and 'Mark, in a connexion so ingenious, and so accordant with the 'spirit of Christ?" Is it possible to read the above audacious remarks without a feeling of indignation, and of astonishment that the writings of an author who was capable of making them should have been imported into this country? In these ways every idea of the inspiration of the Scriptures is exploded by Mr

Tholuck. Here is Neology in its very root. What more have Neologians to desire to overturn the whole Bible? No words can sufficiently express the abhorrence that ought to be felt at the liberties which he has taken with the word of God.

But it is not merely in the highly important doctrine of the inspiration of the holy Scriptures, and in his want of due reverence for them, that Mr Tholuck discovers how deeply he is infected with the spirit of Neology,—it appears in a way still more revolting, in the irreverent manner in which, in different parts of his work, as I have shown in the above-quoted pamphlets, he introduces the name of God. In proof how little he is impressed with a sense of the omnipotence of God, or rather that he discards it altogether, we find him characterising the following as “*a fine passage.*” “At the beginning God wished to create the world solely by the rule of justice; he saw, however, that thus it would not be able to subsist, and he added the rule of love.” Here is an open denial of the omnipotence of God. Yet this impious Neologian passage, representing God as *wishing* to do what he was *unable* to do, is commended by Mr Tholuck. Mr Tholuck also tells us that the Apostle “shows how the intentions of the divine love may be *hindered by resistance on the part of man.*” Again he says, “Alas! for the poor reprobate! how God mocks them, stretching out his hand, and yet refusing to draw them to himself.” Thus writes Mr Tholuck, in a manner, too, so irreverent, in the face of the plainest declarations of the Old Testament and the New. At the conclusion of the 10th chapter of the Romans, the Apostle quotes from the Prophet Isaiah these words of God himself, “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” God, however, did not convert them; and according to Mr Tholuck, he *could not* convert them, for they were disobedient and gainsaying, “and so *hindered the intentions of divine love!*”

In his exposition of the 9th chapter, Mr Tholuck not only manifests the most decided abhorrence of the doctrines there unfolded, but in labouring to oppose them, has employed every resource of evasive sophistry and false criticism. Let any unprejudiced person, having the fear of God, read that chapter, and Mr Tholuck’s perversions of its various statements, and judge whether there were ever two representations more at variance with each other, than that of the Apostle Paul and Mr Tholuck. The doctrine of predestination, so fully and clearly there taught, he employs every effort to oppose and utterly to explode. Who-



ever understands and believes the Scriptures on this point, knows that doctrine to be one of very high importance, connected with every link in the chain of salvation, the whole of which is deranged by its rejection. The Character of God, his Omnipotence, his eternal Purposes which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, his Sovereignty, the nature of his Grace which was given to all whom he gave to his Son before the world began, and the promise of Life from eternity to God's elect, Eph. iii. 11 ; 2 Tim. i. 9 ; Titus i. 1, 2 ; the ruined and helpless State of fallen man, the Agency of the Holy Spirit, the doctrines of Effectual calling, of Regeneration, of Justification, of Adoption, of Sanctification, of the Perseverance of the Saints, and of the final and eternal Conditions of the Righteous and the Wicked, are all involved in the doctrine of Predestination, and when it is rejected, all of them must be more or less affected and misunderstood. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, "God's eternal decree"—the decretum absolutum, which Mr Tholuck has dared to pronounce "baseless"—is in the enumeration of the doctrines of the gospel, placed next to the declaration concerning God in Trinity. And every Christian who is skilful in the word of righteousness, and has his "senses exercised to discern both good and evil," knows that it is thus placed in its prominent and proper situation. All the other doctrines follow in their order, and in the explanation of these, given in the subsequent chapters, the doctrine of Predestination is either expressly introduced as laid at their foundation, or clearly referred to.

Not only has Mr Tholuck opposed with ridicule and violence, the truth contained in this ninth chapter, but by his own confession, he has, in a certain part of it, knowingly and deliberately perverted its meaning, giving, what he confesses he *knew at the time*, to be a false rendering of the original. Mr Tholuck had just been engaged in a piece of special pleading in a whole page and a half, and as if to overwhelm his reader with a more than ordinary parade of ostentatious learning, he is told of Arabian and Syrian versions, all tending to prove that the usual translation of ἐξήγειρα, used by Paul in regard to Pharaoh, is incorrect. Instead of meaning "I have raised thee up," we are to understand that it means, "Let thee stand." This, we are solemnly assured, is the most accurate rendering. But after all, this audacious attempt to misrepresent the meaning of the passage was too gross to pass current. Accordingly, after the lapse of several years since the original was written, we are furnished at page 238, vol. ii., with the following

note:—"I consider it as decided," says Dr Tholuck, "that the 'ἐξήγεια must not be interpreted according to the διητηρήθης of the LXX., as I have done in my commentary, conscious at the time that it was not natural, and solely because I believed I could, in that way, better refute the Calvinistic view. Beyond all doubt, the correct exposition is, 'I have set thee up'—'brought thee forward (in history).'"

Here Mr Tholuck acknowledges that he has falsified a passage of the word of God which did not suit his theory. He admits that he wilfully tortured the word, so as to make it express a meaning which does not belong to it. It is also admitted that all his parade of learning, all his appeal to the Greek Septuagint, to the Hebrew, to the Arabic, to the Syriac, were all made with the wilful intention of answering a dishonest purpose; "*solely*" with the design of better refuting the Calvinistic view, while all the time he was "conscious" that his interpretation was "not natural," and that the other was, "beyond all doubt," the correct exposition."

Can any crime be greater than that of *knowingly* altering in a translation the meaning of a word in the Bible? What comparison is there between the guilt of the vitiation of a bond between man and man, with a view to defraud, and the vitiation, for the purpose to *deceive*, of the word of God? In the above note Mr Tholuck admits that he took away from that word, what he knew it contains, and added what he knew it does not contain. He admits that in this instance he committed a fraud, and sacrificed his honesty, yet not one expression of contrition escapes him. No intimation of repentant sorrow steals into the note; but on the contrary, the confession is made with the most perfect coolness. He confesses that he has purposely tampered with the testimony of God, thus acknowledging a fact by which we are enabled to judge of his honesty as a commentator, and of the confidence we ought to place in himself and his criticisms.

Mr Tholuck's explanation, if explanation it may be called, of that expression, "the righteousness of God," in Romans, i. 17, - proves how little qualified he was to give an exposition of this Epistle. And not only has he failed to furnish any distinct explanation of that expression which has so properly been denominated the "key-note" of the Epistle, he has besides entirely mistaken the meaning of that other leading expression, ch. vi. 2, "dead to sin." The former of these terms is laid as the foundation of the doctrine of justification, the latter of sanctification. After such interpretations of the grand subjects of

discussion, is it surprising that he should so often mistake the meaning of the Apostle, and the train of his argument, or in matters of high importance directly contradict him? His exposition of the great and important doctrine of justification, in Rom. iv. 3, as in that place I have shown, is completely erroneous. No sentiment can be more subversive of the gospel than the view which he attempts to establish of the way in which Abraham was justified. What he has there advanced is another gospel, altogether different from the gospel of Christ, and entirely subversive of the perfection of the law of God. In many other places he shews how lamentably deficient he is in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and how strongly prejudiced against it in various most important particulars. His explanation of the seventh chapter is, as might be expected, contrary to its true import, while he adds at its conclusion, as I have noticed in the foregoing exposition, what is not only disrespectful to the Apostle Paul, but in itself ludicrous and absurd. If any one wishes to see how far Mr Tholuck has departed from the truth of Scripture, in his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, he may satisfy himself by a perusal of my two pamphlets above referred to—the last of them especially—both of which contain references and facts on the subject that cannot be disputed. I need not, however, refer to them alone, but may also appeal to a faithful and able exposure of several of his errors in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor of August 1837, in which the danger of his Neological opinions being imported into this country is forcibly pointed out, and where, after speaking of some of his sentiments, as “impious and untrue,” and of others, as “arrant nonsense,” the writer adds, “We are clearly satisfied that all his erroneous views of the import of the characters described in chapter seven, as well as of the whole doctrine of the Epistle, arise mainly from gross and fatal ignorance of man’s spiritual state as a fallen and depraved being. We think we have brought sufficient evidence to convict this work of Mr Tholuck of something beyond Neological leanings. Erroneous as were the views of Irvingites and Rowites, we are now in danger of being inundated with heresies of a still more insidious and deadly character.”

The circulation of Mr Tholuck’s books in this country is an evil that concerns all Christians. By all of them its baneful and contaminating influence ought to be guarded against, and his misrepresentations of divine truth firmly opposed. His works are calculated to diminish their reverence for the word of God, to divest it of its sacredness, and to lower its authority. Yet

have they been introduced with the highest commendations, while it has been affirmed that in Germany he stands foremost among the defenders of ancient orthodoxy, and in the revival of religious truth. Were this a fact, it would present a most melancholy view of the character of that revival. But so far is Mr Tholuck from being looked upon as an authority by evangelical ministers in Germany, that he is on the contrary regarded by them as *very unsound*, and his heresies are considered by the most eminent Christians in that country, as going far to neutralize his labours in combating the grosser Neologians.

Some who hold in abhorrence the statements contained in Mr Tholuck's works, are, I believe, of opinion that it would be better for the cause of truth to allow them to pass unnoticed, that in this way as little attention might be drawn to them as possible. But it is not by silence or yielding that erroneous doctrine is to be put down. Such was not the manner of the Apostles when false prophets introduced pernicious heresies endangering the faith of the churches. Such writings then as those of Mr Stuart and Mr Tholuck, ought to be most strenuously opposed. Every thing reminds us of the shortness of life, and the approach of eternity; and in the prospect of that hour when an account is to be rendered to God, it becomes more evident that the Holy volume of inspiration, and the truths which it contains, are far too solemn and too sacred to be used as materials for the display of scholarship, and the exercise of metaphysical ingenuity. I bless God for the opportunity he has given me of testifying for his truth in the face of the laborious efforts of these writers to obscure it with error. How little are any services they have rendered to be estimated in comparison of the disastrous influence of their unhallowed perversions of some of the fundamental principles of the gospel. Of what account are all their industrious compilations, and ingenious conjectures, when weighed against their determined and persevering assaults on those great doctrines in the faith of which Apostles, evangelists, and martyrs, have lived and died.

What I have written concerning Mr Tholuck proceeds from a strong conviction that the introduction of his works into this country is calculated to produce the most calamitous results, especially among young and inexperienced theological students, to whose attention they have been specially directed. This danger is moreover augmented at the present period in consequence of the popularity of German literature in general, and the inclination that is shown to overrate the learning, and exaggerate

the attainments of German writers. Nor is the peril diminished by the fact that happily there are some symptoms of a revival of true religion in Germany. When that country was covered with the dark night of error; when the voice of truth was silenced, so that scarcely a whisper was heard to disturb the "deathlike silence, the dread repose" of infidelity, there was comparatively little danger to be apprehended from the productions of men who scoffed at revelation, and explained away every scripture doctrine, till they had hardly left any trace of Christianity among them excepting its caricature. I trust that, by the blessing of God, the promise of a brighter day will receive a glorious accomplishment in the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon the darkness of Germany. But sure I am that result will not be brought about by extolling such crude and heretical works as those of Mr Tholuck. At best he is in the condition of him who saw "men as trees walking," and his erroneous perceptions of truth are more to be dreaded than the positive infidelities of Semler and Paulus.

Speaking of the flippancy and irreverence with respect to Scripture language manifested by Mr Tholuck, Dr Carson says, "Does he not censure and amend the style of Scripture, as freely as any reviewer would the writing of a human author? Not only does he take the liberty of questioning the propriety of the language of Scripture, he makes equally free with the matter. As far as I have examined any of his writings, there is a lamentable deficiency in his knowledge of Divine truth, and a disgusting remainder of Neology. It is not as a commentator that I think Mr Tholuck is ever likely to be a benefit to the church of God. Independently of his errors, I do not at all agree with the general opinion that he is a great critic. Had I any object in the assertion, I would not scruple to say that his criticism is as faulty as his sentiments. I can find no light in him; and I have met several ministers of the gospel, who, looking upon him as an eminently learned man and profound critic, confess that they can receive little instruction from his works. He is very willing to give his help to the Apostles in correcting their style; but his own style is as dark as that of an oracle. He is a mere book manufacturer. He feasts us continually with the Fathers, with a desert from the Apocrypha, the Talmud, and the Koran. But whatever may be thought with respect to his learning and talents, it is utterly impossible to free him from the charge of treating the Scriptures with a profane boldness. I cannot read Mr Tholuck's work on the Epistle to the Romans with-

out unmingled abhorrence of the manner in which he has treated the words of the Spirit of God."

Mr Tholuck is said to be a Christian, one who has tasted the good word of life. This I have no desire to question. It was with pleasure that I first heard of his making head against the grossness of that infidelity with which he was surrounded. I then corresponded with him, and sent to him such books as I thought might be beneficial, and did what I could to strengthen his hands, by pressing on his particular attention the doctrines which he seemed to misunderstand. But it is not in his personal character that I now consider Mr Tholuck. It is as a professed teacher of Divine truth, and a disseminator of error in his writings. And viewing him in this aspect, and feeling the incumbent duty of "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" I would for the sake of Christians of all denominations in this country, strenuously oppose, so far as I have it in my power, the dissemination among ourselves, of writings contaminated with that Neology in which he was once immersed, and from which it is plain he has not yet entirely escaped. If any thing were wanted to render this duty more imperative it would be the lofty panegyrics which have been bestowed on a writer so lamentably unsound. And many, through my strictures, I have reason to believe, are now sensible of the dangerous and pernicious character of both Mr Tholuck's and Mr Stuart's works, which on a superficial view of them they had not before observed. In acting in this manner I conceive that I have been following the example of the Apostles, who in the exercise of the most genuine charity, never ceased to warn those to whom they wrote of the danger of listening to false teachers, and to the instruction that causeth to err.

Many religious persons have a dread of controversy, and wish truth to be stated without any reference to those who hold the opposite errors. Controversy and a bad spirit are in their estimation synonymous terms, and strenuously to oppose what is wrong is considered as contrary to christian meekness. Those who hold this opinion seem to overlook what every page of the New Testament lays before us. In all the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, we never find him out of controversy. From the moment he entered on the discharge of his office in the synagogue of Nazareth till he expired on the cross, it was an uninterrupted scene of controversy. Nor did he with all the heavenly meekness, which in him shone so brightly, treat truth and error without a reference to those who held them, or study to avoid giving

its proper appellation to those corruptions in doctrine or practice that endangered the interests of immortal souls. His censures were not confined to doctrines, but included the abettors of false principles themselves.

And as to the Apostles, their epistles are generally controversial. Most of them were directly written for the express purpose of vindicating truth and opposing error, and the authors of heresies do not escape with an abstract condemnation of their false doctrine. Paul again and again most indignantly denounces the conduct of the opposers of the gospel, and by name points out those against whom he cautions his brethren. When Hymeneus and Alexander erred concerning the faith, and when he delivered them unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme, he did not compliment them as amiable and learned persons. Even that Apostle who treats most of love, and who possessed so much of that spirit which was so eminently manifested in his Divine Master, does not avoid controversy; nor in controversy does he study to avoid severity of censure on the opposers of the truth.

In the examples of opposing error, left on record for our imitation, we perceive nothing of that frigid spirit of indifference which smiles on the corruptors of the word of God, and shuns to call heresy by its proper name. With what holy indignation do the Apostles denounce the subtle machinations of the enemies of the gospel! In vain shall we look among those faithful servants of the Lord for any thing to justify that trembling reserve which fears to say decidedly that truth is truth, or that error is error. In what style, indeed, should perversions of the truth of God be censured? Ought they to be treated as mere matters of opinion on which we may innocently and safely differ? Or ought they to be met in a tone of solemn, strong, and decided disapprobation? Paul warned Christians against men who arose from among themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them, and instead of complimenting false teachers in his day, denounced an angel from heaven on the supposition of his preaching another gospel. And if an Apostle was withstood to the face, when he was to be blamed, are the writings of those who subvert the gospel to be passed without rebuke?

The style which I have adopted in my remarks on the destructive errors of Dr Macknight, Mr Stuart, and Mr Tholuck, is the style which I believe the Lord enjoins, and which his servants throughout the Scriptures exemplify, in opposition to those who prophesied smooth things, who called evil good, who put darkness for light, and bitter for sweet. Such a style would be appli-

cable to all the angels of heaven were they to teach their heresies. I feel that it is proper to speak of them as authors who have wandered from the right way, who have wrested the Scriptures in a manner the most dangerous,—as blind guides, the tendency of whose writings is entirely to mislead their followers, and to cause them to stumble on the dark mountains of error.

When the canker of the principles of German Neology, derived from the Continent and from America, is perverting the faith of many, and seducing them into the paths of error ; while a spirit, of lukewarmness, and indifference to truth is advancing under the mask of charity and liberality, there is a loud call on all Christians to “ stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together ‘ for the faith of the gospel,” to present a firm and united phalanx of opposition to error under every name, from whatever quarter it may approach, and not to “ stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up, to make their ‘ land desolate,” Jer. xviii. 15. “ Thus saith the Lord, stand ye ‘ in the ways and see ; and ask for the old paths, where is the ‘ good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your ‘ souls.” Should believers become unfaithful to their trust, and be seduced to abandon their protest against false doctrines, they may gain the approbation of the world, but what will this avail when compared with the favour of God ? But if with prayer to God, in the use of the appointed means, they contend earnestly for the truth, then they may expect the gracious fulfilment of that blessed promise, “ When the enemy shall come in like a ‘ flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against ‘ him.”

FINIS.





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