Spiritual Inability.

Sinners Faultiness,

AND

SPIRITUAL INABILITY,

CONSIDERED

IN A

SERMON.

By *JACOB GREEN*, A. M.

Why will ye die.-------How often would I have gathered you and ye would not.------Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life.-------Ye are saved by Grace through Faith, and that not of yourselves, 'tis the Gift of GOD.-------Born not of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of GOD. -------Not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of GOD that sheweth Mercy.

NEW-YORK:
Printed by H. GAINE, at the *Bible* and *Crown*, in *Hanover-Square*, MDCCLXVII.

A

SERMON, &c.

ROMANS, IX. 19.

Why doth he yet find Fault, for who hath resisted his Will?

THE Apostle in this Chapter represents divine Sovereignty in the Disposal of fallen, sinful, Hell-deserving Creatures. Of such Creatures God has a Right to take some into Favour, redeem and save them, and to leave others to perish in their Sins. God had a Right to leave the apostate Angels to perish in their Rebellion, while he shewed Mercy to Mankind: And he has the same Right to leave some of the sinful Race of ADAM, to suffer the Punishment which their Sins deserve, while he shews Mercy to others of them. The Apostle illustrates divine Sovereignty respecting both temporal and eternal Favours. When God was about to take to himself a peculiar People, to be distinguished from the Rest of Mankind, he acted as a Sovereign. He rejected ISHMAEL and his Posterity, and chose ISSAC; and of ISAAC's Children he neglected ESAU and chose JACOB and his Posterity,

Verſes 10, 11, 12 and 13, of our Context. Then in the 14th Verſe, the Apoſtle mentions an Objection that ſome might make, "What ſhall we ſay then? Is there Unrighteouſneſs with God?" Some might ſay, is not this prefering one to another, unequitable Partiality? is there not ſomething unrighteous in it? No, anſwers the Apoſtle, with Abhorrence; God forbid. There is not the leaſt Reaſon for ſuch a Suggeſtion. And how does the Apoſtle prove this? Why, in ſhewing that it was pure free Grace in God to have Mercy on any. If all were ſo ſinful and loſt, as not in the leaſt Meaſure to deſerve any Help or Favour, then God's ſhewing Mercy to ſome, could not hurt thoſe who were left to juſt what they deſired. There is no Unrighteouſneſs in God's ſhewing Mercy to ſome and not to others, if there is nothing in the Creature, and out of himſelf, to induce him to it. This the Apoſtle ſhews, Verſe 15, *He hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and he hath Compaſſion on whom he will have Compaſſion.* 'Tis reſolved into his own good Will and Pleaſure. And when 'tis conſidered, that he hurts not thoſe he leaves, by his ſhewing Mercy to others, they have no Reaſon to find Fault. This our Saviour ſhews in another Caſe, *Mat.* xx. 12, 13, 14. *I do thee no wrong; is thine Eye evil becauſe I am good? Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?* The Favours thus conferred on Sinners, being altogether of the free Grace of God, the Apoſtle well infers that 'tis not of him that

that willeth, or of him that runneth, Verſe 16. The Bleſſing comes not by the Willing of the Sinner, while in his carnal unregenerate State; while in that State he is at Enmity with God, and in Oppoſition to him, and therefore wills nothing ſpiritually good. The Apoſtle here ſpeaks not of the Willing of a Perſon in a gracious State, or of gracious Willingneſs. Much depends upon, or is the Conſequence of a gracious Willing, as is evident from the Tenor of Scripture. But the Apoſtle ſpeaks here of a Willing before there is any Grace. Before Regeneration, the Soul ſets up Self in Oppoſition to God, and all it does is contrary to him. No Wonder then this is ſet aſide as not being that which brings into Favour with God, or procures his Mercy. If we conſider this Verſe, with Reſpect to ISAAC's willing ESAU ſhould have the Bleſſing, and his running to obtain Veniſon for that Purpoſe, it comes in effect to the ſame Thing. ISAAC's willing, or ESAU's running, did not diſpoſe of the Bleſſing, but God in Sovereignty diſpoſed of it, as he had before determined it ſhould be. The Apoſtle purſues this Subject of divine Sovereignty, by obſerving, Verſe 17, That God may, if he pleaſe, leave ſome to be hardned in Sin and Wickedneſs. He mentions PHARAOH for Inſtance. And there will be no Difficulty in our Minds, as to this, if we conſider that God might juſtly have left all in their Obſtinacy and Impenitency, without affording his ſpecial or even reſtraining Grace. But then 'tis here

aſked,

asked, how GOD hardens the Heart? As 'tis said *whom he will he hardneth*; and that *he hardned* PHARAOH's *Heart*. The Answer is, that God put no positive Hardness into the Heart; there is no Influence from God upon the Creatures that hardens them: But God is said to do it when he leaves them to their own wicked Heart, or gives them up to their own Hearts Lust, and does not withold them from Sin. God is often said to do that which he permits to be.

AND here we may observe, that those very Providences and Means that Sinners abuse to their greater hardning, are such, as in themselves tend to soften, and properly affect a rational Creature. The Miracles wrought in EGYPT, and God's Judgment on PHARAOH, and his People, tended to awaken, to strike with Awe and humble. God's strict Command, and solemn Charge to *Pharaoh*, attended with such Miracles and Judgments, seemed enough to abase the proudest Sinner; but he was the more hardned; and some of the most hardned Sinners under the Gospel, have had the clearest Light, most pungent Preaching, and faithful Warnings. God hardens only as he spares, and keeps them out of Hell while they grow harder, being left to their own Hearts Lusts.

GOD may thus harden some, while he, by special Grace, softens and sanctifies others, *Therefore hath he Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardneth*, Verse 18. Then comes our Text as another Objection, *Thou wilt say*

ſay then unto me, why doth he yet find Fault, for who hath reſiſted his Will? q. d. If it is God's Will to leave ſome Perſons in their ſinful State, and ſpares and raiſes them up to ſuch an Height, and puts them in ſuch Circumſtances, that he knows they will abuſe to greater Wickedneſs and Hardneſs, and does not ſeize them by his ſpecial Grace, and change their Hearts, why does he yet find Fault with them, for whoever has or can eventually reſiſt his Will? What Sinner can do otherwiſe than he does, if God doth not help him, and why then does he find Fault? This is the Objection; and 'tis in Effect to caſt off Blame and Fault from ourſelves, and charge it upon God. To this Objection, the Apoſtle anſwers, Firſt, by reproving the Objector; and then reaſoning upon the Point. Firſt he reproves the Objector. *Nay, but O Man, who art thou that repliest againſt God.* There ought to be a Reproof for thus faulting God, who is eſſential Juſtice, Equity and Holineſs, who can do no Wrong. Whatever darkneſs and difficulty there may be in our Minds, with reſpect to the divine Being, we know that as there is a God, he is a Being of infinite Perfection, and therefore of infinite Juſtice and Goodneſs. 'Tis moſt abſurd to ſuppoſe, that we who were made by him, ſhould have better Notions of right and wrong, than he who made us, and gave us the Faculties we judge with. *Shall the Thing formed ſay unto him that formed it, why haſt thou made me thus?* We are to reſiſt and condemn

condemn all Thoughts that rise up against God, and endeavour to see the Reasonableness of his Conduct, Which the Apostle next proceeds to consider, and thus reasons on the Case. *Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay of the same Lump, to make one Vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. What if God willing to shew his Wrath and make his Power known, endured with much long Suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted to destruction? And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory?*

If of two Sinners, that both deserve to go to Hell, God make a Vessel of Mercy of the one, and a Vessel of Wrath of the other, he does no Wrong. Has not the Potter Power over the Clay of the same Lump?—Has not God Power over the same Mass of corrupt Nature, to save some and damn others? And what if *Pharaoh*, or any others, who deserved to have been sent to Hell in their Youth, are spared a while; where is the Wrong? What if God endures them with much long Suffering, and waits long doing them Good, is he to blame because they abuse Mercy, and render themselves more and more the Vessels of Wrath, so that in the End, God's Goodness, Justice and Holiness, shall Shine the Brighter? But the Objector may say, that God's Design was to display his Justice, in and upon them while they continued in Sin.

Answer, This is only a Design to order or over-rule

over-rule their Evil to ſome good Purpoſe. It was moſt worthy of God to over-rule Sin, to anſwer ſome wiſe and glorious Purpoſes. God's Deſign of bringing good out of evil does not hurt the Sinner; he is puniſhed no more than his Sin deſerves. The Objector may think, that if the Sinner by riſing in Rebellion againſt his Maker, had wholly fruſtrated the Deſign of his Creation, deſtroy'd the divine Scheme, and prevented God's getting any Glory by him; then the diſappointed Sovereign might juſtly have taken Vengeance, eternal Vengeance upon the perverſe Sinner. Now let ſuch conſider, that Sin is as much againſt God as it can be, ſtrikes at his Glory and very Being, as much as poſſible; and if the Sinner could, he would rob God of all Glory. Now God's being ſo infinitely wiſe and powerful, as to turn Sin to his Glory and the Good of other Creatures, no way hurts or wrongs the Sinner, while he is puniſhed no more than he juſtly deſerves. Nor is this any Reaſon God ſhould not find Fault. He may righteouſly find Fault where there is Fault, tho' he in infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs is continuing and ordering it to turn-out to his Glory and the Good of others. Who would ſay that God muſt ſend a non-elect Sinner to Hell the firſt Moment he deſerves it, without ſparing him any longer, or, if he does ſpare, he is obliged not to exerciſe his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to over-rule Sin to ſome valuable Purpoſe: Yea, or, that this may not be

one Design among others, why God does spare Sinners?

THUS much may suffice for clearing this Passage of Scripture, as to its general Scope and Connection. I return then to our Text. *Why doth he yet find Fault, for who hath resisted his Will?* Sinners often excuse themselves in Language like our Text. They have such Thoughts often in their Hearts, and sometimes they venture to speak out. They plead their Inability to that which is Good. They ask, what can we do? We cannot change or renew our Hearts. Faith is God's Gift; and without Faith 'tis impossible to please him. Wherein are we to blame? And how is it right for God to condemn us or even find Fault.

HERE then my Business is (in Answer to this Objection) to shew,

How it appears that Sinners are altogether faulty and condemnable for continuing in Sin and Unbelief, when there is in them a spiritual Inability to do otherways. Or, (to put the Point to be handled in other Words) thus.

WHETHER Sinners spiritual Inability does in any Measure free them from Blame?

Or thus:

WHETHER Sinners have any Reason to excuse themselves on account of their Inability to that which is spiritually Good †?

HERE

† This Sermon was wrote by Desire. The Subject of Inquiry or Point proposed to be discussed was, *Whether moral Inability does, or does not, in part or in*

HERE then as Sinners Faultineſs, and their moral Inability are the principal Things to be handled, my Method ſhall be,

I. To conſider what Faultineſs or Blameableneſs is; or when Perſons are really, truly and properly to blame.

II. CONSIDER what Want of Power there is in Sinners to that which is ſpiritually Good; or what is the Nature of moral or ſpiritual Inability. We ſhall then

III. SEE what Ground, Reaſon or Pretence there can be to plead any Excuſe, or freedom from Blame on account of ſpiritual Inability.

I SHALL then be prepared,

IV. To point out ſome of the wrong Notiéns People have of their Inability or Want of Power in ſpiritual Things.

I USE the Phraſe *ſpiritual Inability*, rather than *moral Inability*, becauſe 'tis leſs liable to be miſtaken by common People. Our,

I. *Head is to conſider, what Faultineſs or Blameableneſs is; or when Perſons are really and properly to blame.* In one View of the Caſe I might properly ſay, Blameableneſs is that which deſerves Puniſhment. Whoever is to blame deſerves to feel Pain or Uneaſineſs of Body or Mind,

in whole, free from blame, or excuſe Perſons. The Text of Scripture at the Head of my Diſcourſe, was thought proper to lead to the Subject. And when made Choice of for that Purpoſe, I thought it proper, a little to clear the Context. What is here ſaid might ſatisfy, if any ſhould think that the Subject is not moſt naturally deduced from the Text. The Diſcourſe was compoſed for the Sake of the Subject, and not for the Sake of clearing any one particular Text of Scripture.

To lose the Esteem of others, or be thought Ill of is a Sort of Punishment, as it causes Uneasiness of Mind, or a less degree of Satisfaction. And this is necessarily connected with blame. If desert of Punishment did not belong to Blameableness, there would be no difference between being Blameable and being commendable; and Blameableness would be a mere Nothing ‡. But the Enquiry is, what is that in a Creature that is blameable, or that deserves Punishment? To which I directly Answer, *When a Person has no Desire, Inclination will or endeavour, to that which is reasonable, fit and proper to be done, which is attended with good Consequences when done, and to the doing of which, there is no insuperable Difficulty; then he is to blame.* The Thing to be done is reasonable and fit; 'tis his Duty to do it; he is under Obligation by the Command of God; the Person has Light and Knowledge as to the Duty; the Motives to it are many; but he wants an Heart and Inclination, he has no Desire or Disposition to it, and attempts it not. This is a Fault or Sin of Omission. So an idle Servant who through Sloth neglects his proper Business, is to blame. An ungrateful Son who has received innumerable Favours from an indulgent

‡ I need not spend Time to prove that there is or may be fault or blame in the Creature: Tho' I think the contrary is a natural Consequence from some fashionable Principles or Tenets. If there was no such Thing as Fault, there could be no Desert of Punishment. If there was no Desert of Punishment, there could be no Justice in punishing. And so God's punishing Sinners would not be just. And to suppose a God without infinite Justice, is inconsistent or destroys the Notion of a God. Therefore to suppose there is no Fault in Nature, is to deny the Existence of Punishment, or the Being of a God.

gent Parent, and refuses to make any suitable Returns is blameable. And he that has no Heart to love and serve God the best of Beings, is infinitely to blame. As this is a Fault of Omission, so on the other Hand, *When a Person has a Desire, Inclination, Heart and endeavour for that which is unreasonable, unfit and improper to be done, which he is commanded by God not to do, and the doing of which will be pernicious to himself and others; then he is to blame.* This is Sin of Commission. A mischievous Servant who wastes his Time and injures his Master is faulty. A Husband that abuses a kind obedient Wife is faulty. And he that exerts his Power in Opposition to his Maker is infinitely to blame. According to the common Sense of all Mankind, an ungrateful, perverse tempered, mischievous Person, is blameable. The inward perverse Temper is blameable in the Sight of God, and when this shews itself in bad Actions and Conduct, 'tis blameable in the Sight of Man. In order to know whether a Person is to blame, Mankind do not enter into the abstruse Enquiry, Whether he could help being of such a bad Inclination and Will, or how he came by it? But they reasonably conclude that such a perverse Temper and Practice is faulty. They know that if the Person had a Desire, Heart or Will, to do otherways he could do otherways; there is no Impediment, and therefore he is to blame. All Mankind allow that a stubborn Child or Servant, a

Man

Man that injures his Neighbour by lying, cheating or robbing, and one that profanes God's Name and oppoſes his Will, is to blame. And any one would be juſtly thought irrational, or an inſufferable Encourager of Vice, who ſhould hold ſuch Perſons are not to blame. Faultineſs then conſiſts in a Diſlike and Averſion to that which is reaſonable or good, and in a Propenſity and Endeavour to that which is unreaſonable or moral Evil.

II. *I come now to conſider what Want of Power there is in Sinners, to that which is ſpiritually Good: Or what is the Nature of ſpiritual Inability.* The moral or ſpiritual Inability of Sinners, is often by Divines expreſſed in very ſtrong Terms, and the Belief of this Doctrine thought to be of great Importance, and the denial of it very dangerous and pernicious. I deny not this Doctrine, but I would have it rightly underſtood. The Scripture uſes many ſignificative Expreſſions to repreſent ſpiritual Inability. Sinners are ſaid to be *deaf*, to be *blind*, to be *without underſtanding*, to be *dead*, and that they *cannot believe*, that they *cannot come to Chriſt unleſs the Father draws them*. By theſe ſtrong ſcripture Expreſſions, a very important, but ſorrowful Truth is held out to us, *viz.* the Depravity of human Nature ſince the Fall. But we ought to take Care not to miſunderſtand theſe Expreſſions. When Sinners are ſaid to be deaf, blind and dead, none underſtand theſe Words in the proper, common

common and natural Sense; but by Way of Similitude or Analogy. So when 'tis said they *cannot believe* and *cannot* come to *Christ*, the *cannot* is not to be understood in the natural common Sense, or of natural Inability, but in a Sense very different. Let us therefore proceed to enquire carefully into the Nature of spiritual Inability. Here let us well consider what is natural Inability, and what is spiritual. The Difference between these is great, and the Want of considering it well, has led many astray. Natural Inability, is the Want of Power or Faculty to do what Persons have a Will to do, what they choose and desire to do. A Man that has lost his Hands cannot do the Work that others do, tho' he might wish and desire to. A Man whose Sight has failed him, may have a good will and desire to read the Bible, but cannot. While a careless Sinner who has Sight neglects to read it for Want of Heart. A deaf Person may choose and desire to hear the Word preached but cannot, while a careless Sinner might hear but will not attend. The Man without Hands, the Blind and Deaf, are under a natural Inability. Natural Inability always supposes some Impediment or insurmountable Difficulty in the Way, where there is a Will and Heart to a Thing. Now let us consider what spiritual Inability is. And this consists in a bad Disposition, Temper and Bias of Heart or Soul. A Person is of such a very bad perverse Disposition of Heart, has such Backwardness

neſs to Good and Inclination to Evil, that the Reaſonableneſs and Propriety of a good Thing does not influence him. All the good Effects of doing right and the bad Effects of doing wrong, all the Commands, Promiſes and Threatnings do not influence him. He has a great Delight in and Bias to that which is wicked, and no liking but a Backwardneſs to that which is Good. The Motives to do good and avoid evil, have no conſiderable Weight with him. His wicked Diſpoſition overcomes the Motives to good. This bad Diſpoſition is his Inability. And why is this called Inability, but becauſe the Reaſonableneſs of Things, the Commands, Promiſes and Threatnings do not influence him, their Weight does not ſway him. And why do they not? Why truly becauſe he is of ſuch a very bad Diſpoſition: Has ſuch love to Sin, and ſo little liking to any Thing that is Good. If he was not of ſuch a very perverſe wicked Diſpoſition, he would regard and comply with what was reaſonable and fit. Here 'tis to be obſerved, there is none of the natural Inability or Want of Power that was before mentioned. The Sinner is not blind and deaf like him that is without ſight and hearing; the Sinner has Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear, and an underſtanding by which he may conſider, but he has no Heart to read, hear or conſider. All the Difficulty lies in his Want of a Taſte, an Inclination, or Heart to that which is moſt reaſonable for him

him to comply with||. The more wicked and bad any Person is, so much the more is he out of the Reach of those Motives that ought to influence him. So that the worse any are, the greater is their spiritual Inability. A very stubborn perverse Child will not comply with Encouragements, nor be influenced by Threatnings or Correction, as a pliable Child will. Now in this Case, we do not say the stubborn Child was unable to comply, but we say, it would not: Yet this Stubbornness is as properly Inability, as any Inability there is in Sinners; and is the very Thing that is meant by spiritual Inability. This shews us, with what Peculiarity, Limitation and Care, this Word *Inability*, ought to be used in spiritual Things.

We see then the Difference between natural and spiritual Inability. In the one Case, there is a Desire and Will for a Thing, but there is an insurmountable Difficulty in the Way. In the other Case, there is no outward Difficulty or Impediment, but there is Want of Will, Desire or Inclination to Good and a bent to Evil.

Neither the blind Man nor careless Sinner that has Eyes, read the Bible; neither the deaf Man nor careless Sinner hear the Word; but is there the same Inability in both Cases? Far

 otherways:

|| The Want of Heart to read, hear and consider, makes the Sinner not like a Man that wants Eyes, Ears and Understanding, and therefore he is called blind, deaf and senseless. The Want of Heart to exert himself in spiritual Things, leaves him like a dead Person, and therefore he is called dead. And this same Want of Heart, makes him appear like one every Way unable to do right; his Want of Heart puts him out of the Reach of Motives, and therefore 'tis said he cannot believe, cannot come to Christ. But all his Inability is Want of Heart or Will.

otherways: In one Case there is an insuperable Difficulty, in the other, there is no Impediment, but there is Want of Will. And this Want of Will is all the Inability there is. These two Inabilities are entirely different in their Natures. If any Person has a Will to love God or Holiness, there is then Nothing in the Way, he does the Thing; he loves God and Holiness. Whatsoever a Man wills or chooses to do, his Soul does. A Man may will or choose to do a Thing that his Body cannot do, and so may be under a natural Inability; but whatsoever he wills to do, that his Soul does. His Soul is as his Will is; and what God requires, is the Soul and Will in that which is spiritually Good. But some may say, that a perverse wicked Temper, a bad Inclination and Will, is not all that is meant by a spiritual Inability. They say they mean this, *viz. That Persons have not Power to alter their bad Will and Inclination; and that they cannot help being of such a bad Heart and Temper.* In Answer to this, let it be well considered, what can be the Meaning of the words, Power or Ability to alter the Will.

If there is any Propriety in the Phrase of having a Power to alter the Will, I grant what is supposed, that Sinners Inability implies their not having a Power to alter their bad Inclination, Will or Heart. Yet after all, there is no more in their spiritual Inability, than Want of Will; there is Want of no other Power than Will and Inclination.

Inclination. The Will is the Fountain of Power in the Soul, and to ſuppoſe a Power in the Soul over this Power, is an Abſurdity. Can there be any Thing like two Wills in the Soul, one as a diſtinct Power to controul and alter the other? This is to make a Soul within a Soul: But ſuppoſe there could be ſomething like two ſuch Powers, and then ſuppoſe the higheſt Power or Will in the Soul was not diſpoſed to that which is Good: There would ſtill need another Power to alter or controul that, and ſo on. There can therefore be no Want of Power in the Soul, but a Want of Will and Inclination. Some ſeem to propoſe, that Sinners ſhould will and chooſe a Thing, before their Will and Choice be for it, which is impoſſible and a Contradiction. I may well aſk, what Power there can poſſibly be in a Perſon to alter * a bad Diſpoſition and Heart, while there is no Will and Inclination to it. They have all the Power that can be conceived in the Nature of Things for a Sinner to have, while there is no Will or Inclination. They can deſire, if they have a Deſire, can will and chooſe what they have a Will and Choice for, and there is no ſuch Thing poſſible as having a Will and Choice to a Thing that they do not chooſe. What Power therefore can there be in the Soul to alter and controul the Will, unleſs it be the Underſtanding? But in the Caſe propoſed, there is Light in the

* I know there is Power without the Perſon. God has Power to alter the human Will.

Underſtanding. They ſee the Reaſonableneſs and Fitneſs of Things, and the Obligations they are under. They know what are the Conſequences of doing Right and doing Wrong. Theſe Views ought to influence and are adapted to influence rational Creatures. But you may ſay, they will not influence thoſe that are ſo very bad. True; therefore their Badneſs is their Inability: The Point I am proving, that their Inability is nothing but their Perverſeneſs and Wickedneſs.

If any ſhould ſay, that by ſpiritual Inability, they mean that the Sinner is ſo out of the Reach of rational Motives, that God's omnipotent Power is neceſſary to change the Will and Heart, and that he never will have an Inclination to Holineſs without it; I freely grant this divine Power is neceſſary, and that till God changes the Heart and Will, the Sinner will never ceaſe to love Sin, and have an Averſion to Holineſs. But this is nothing againſt what has been aſerted, *viz.* That Sinners Wickedneſs is their Inability, but confirms it. Sinners are ſo corrupt and depraved, ſo perverſe and ſet on Evil, that nothing but omnipotent Power will bring them to hate Sin and love Holineſs. Thus we ſee, that Sinners Inability is the ſame as the Depravity of the Nature, which is an important, but ſad and awful Truth, the Belief and realiſing Senſe of which is very neceſſary, and the Denial of which is very pernicious, as it builds Men up in Pride and Self-confidence. Having thus ſhewn what muſt be underſtood

derſtood by ſpiritual Inability, I am prepared for the

III. *Head, which is to conſider, what Ground, what Reaſon or Pretence, there can be to plead any Excuſe, or freedom from Blame on account of ſpiritual Inability.*

'Tis moſt evident, on the View of Things that we have had, that ſpiritual Inability does in no Sort, excuſe or free from Blame. 'Tis ſo far from it, that 'tis the very Thing that is faulty or blameable; 'tis that, for which Sinners are condemnable. We have before ſeen that Faultineſs or Blameableneſs, conſiſts in having no Inclination, Will or Endeavour, to that which is good, or on the other Hand, willing and endeavouring that which is bad. And we have alſo ſeen, that this ſame bad Temper, Inclination or Will, is their ſpiritual Inability. They have no other Want of Power, than Want of Deſire, Heart and Will to that which is good. Therefore their ſpiritual Inability and their Blameableneſs, are in exact Proportion one to the other; or rather, I might ſay, they are exactly the ſame Thing. Now would it not be ſtrange for a Perſon to plead that he was free from Blame, becauſe he was very oppoſite to that which is Good, and has a very wicked Heart, Bent and Inclination, to ſin. Or for him to ſay he muſt be excuſed, becauſe he was faulty and condemnable. Natural Inability does excuſe. All the World grants, that if a Perſon has a proper Will and Diſpoſi-

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tion to a Thing, and cannot do it by Reason of some insurmountable Difficulty, then he is justly excusable, and free from blame in that Thing. The Inability that frees from Blame, always supposes a Will for a Thing that cannot be done. But the Sinners spiritual Inability, is Want of Will; therefore this has no Right to excuse as natural Inability has.

The Confusion of our Ideas, and the Abuse or misuse of Words, causes all the Difficulty there is in this Matter. Common People have a Notion (and very properly) that Inability or Want of proper Power excuses. Moral Writers or Preachers apply this Word Inability or Want of Power, to Sinners perverse Disposition or the Depravity of their Nature; And common People not considering, or not keeping in Mind, how much this Inability differs from Want of natural Power, seem to conclude that 'tis an excuse, because Inability excuses. And 'tis well if the frequent Use of the Words *unable*, *cannot*, *impossible*, and the like, does not sometimes lead Men of Learning to conclude, that moral Inability is an Excuse. We often hear some such Expressions as these, *If 'tis utterly impossible, and Sinners cannot do otherways, how are they to blame.* Great hurt has been done, by not exhibiting clear and distinct Views or Ideas of spiritual Inability, by not shewing in what an uncommon or improper Sense 'tis called Inability; or how much it differs from that which is properly called

Inability

Inability or want of natural Power. If, notwithſtanding, any ſhould ſeem to think, that a Sinner is in ſome Meaſure excuſable becauſe he has ſuch a ſtrong Propenſity to the Evil he does, and is carried on by a ſtrong Bias of his corrupt Nature; that 'tis not ſo criminal as 'tis for a Perſon to do Evil without ſuch a Propenſity. I ſay, Perſons that talk or think in this Manner, ſhould conſider that this Propenſity or Inclination to evil, is Wickedneſs it ſelf, and the very Eſſence of Sin and Fault. How ſtrange would it be to maintain, that a Perſon is leſs to blame, the more Wicked is his Heart and the more perverſe his Nature! Or that a Perſon is ſome Way excuſable, becauſe he is exceedingly malicious and revengeful, delighting in Miſchief, and injuring his fellow Creatures. Or, becauſe he is in his Diſpoſition, exceeding proud, deceitful and the like. If Want of Love to God and our Neighbour is not Sin, then 'tis no Sin to break the firſt and great Command of the Law. But to be without this Love, is the Breach of the greateſt Command, and therefore is the greateſt Sin. If Sinners are not to blame for a bad Will and Diſpoſition of Heart, there is no ſuch Thing as blame in the World. Yes, ſome may ſay, in order to be to blame, Perſons muſt be without this Propenſity to Evil; they muſt be in a Sort of Equilibrium or Poiſe; the Motive and Influence one Way, muſt be near or quite as ſtrong as the other, that they may freely do which they will,

will, without a Bias either way. On which I would briefly obſerve, that if this is the Caſe, then the more a Perſon is habituated to Vice, and the more prone he is to it by Cuſtom and Practice, the leſs Faulty is he in his future Practice of Vice, becauſe he is not in a State of Equilibrium or Poiſe. And ſo the more Perſons are given to Drunkenneſs, Uncleanneſs, Malice, Injuſtice, Pride and Ingratitude, the leſs are they to blame, the leſs do they deſerve to be thought Evil of, and the leſs do they deſerve to be puniſhed. If this is the Caſe, the World muſt have new Notions of Right and Wrong, new Laws, and a new Bible.

Under this Head of Excuſe, it may be proper to obſerve, that for Sinners to plead their Inability is to proclaim their own Badneſs. When a Sinner ſays he cannot love God nor believe in Chriſt, if it means any Thing, it means that he has ſuch a wicked Heart, and is ſo in Love with Sin, that he has no Inclination, Will or Love to God and Chriſt.

But ſome Sinners will excuſe themſelves for Want of Knowledge. They ſay they are blind and ignorant, have not a realizing Senſe of Things: If they could but ſee divine Things in a clear Light and realize their Importance, they would act better than they do: But they cannot realize Things, they are in Darkneſs and Ignorance, and Ignorance is really an Excuſe. Now if this Matter be rightly view'd, there is no Weight in

in this Plea. For consider, that Light is come into the World; Light shines around these Sinners, they are acquainted with their Duty. They know what is Right and what is Wrong; they know the dreadful Consequences of Sin, and the happy Effects of Holiness. Heaven and Hell are set before them, in a Manner that properly tends to influence rational Creatures. Further consider, Sinners have as much Knowledge of spiritual Things as they desire to have. Nothing prevents their having more Light if they really desire it, delight in, and seek after it. *Light is come into the World, but they chuse Darkness rather than Light because their Deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. If they say, that notwithstanding they have speculative Knowledge enough, yet they have not a realizing Sense of divine Things. I ask why have they not a realizing Sense? 'Tis owing to nothing but their bad Temper, and want of a Taste for divine Things. Why do they not realize, but because they do not love to realize? Indeed there is nothing they have a much greater Aversion to. A clear Sight and Sense of divine Things is what they most dislike; they will not attend to it; shun the Means for it, and try to exclude it. In vain do they excuse themselves by the Want of Light. Our Saviour has determined the Matter. They have no Cloak or Excuse for their Sin, since he has come and spoken such Things, and brought such Light into the World. I come now under a

IV. *Head, to point out ſome of the wrong Notions People have reſpecting their Inability or Want of Power in ſpiritual Things.* One wrong Notion is, that *while unregenerate, they ſuppoſe they have a real Deſire for divine and ſpiritual Things.* They ſuppoſe they have ſuch a Deſire as implies a Choice of, and Will to thoſe Things. They think they really and properly deſire and chooſe to have a new Heart, to repent of their Sins, to love God, to accept of Chriſt, but yet cannot. Now this is a great and very dangerous Miſtake: It prevents their thinking themſelves ſo bad as they are, prevents their Viewing themſelves in their proper Light, as Enemies to God and Haters of Holineſs.

HERE then conſider,

1. THAT *'tis impoſſible that the Deſire and Choice ſhould be to any Thing, and yet the Heart and Soul not be for that Thing.* 'Tis impoſſible to chooſe a new Heart, without having a new Heart. For the Deſire and Choice are always as the Heart and Soul are. Deſire and Choice cannot properly be contrary Ways at the ſame Time. 'Tis contrary to the Nature of Things, to ſuppoſe that the Choice and Will are one Way, and the Soul another; for conſider, that Choice is the Soul itſelf, prefering, or preponderating, or going over to that particular Thing, rather than any Thing elſe. God requires the Inclination, Choice and Will, to that which is Good; and the Sinner that has the Inclination and Will,

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to repent, believe in Christ, and love God, always does those Things. A Person that does not really accept of God for a Portion, and Christ for a Saviour, cannot be said to choose to have them. If the Soul chooses it chooses, and the Soul always is as the Will is. But,

2. This Matter may be made clearer, *by considering in what Manner Sinners desire and choose to have new Hearts, accept of Christ, and the like.* They do not desire a new Heart, for the Sake of a new Heart, nor do they desire Christ for what he is in himself, but for some other End. Their Desire is to escape Hell, or the Punishment that their Sins deserve; and they think they had rather have a new Heart than go to Hell. They would be glad to have Christ to save them from Punishment, tho' they do not like all his Offices nor all his Terms. If they desire and choose him on all his Terms, they are certainly new Creatures; their Hearts are right. God requires all to love him for himself and to love Holiness as Holiness, but Sinners do not thus desire and choose God and Holiness; for Holiness is the Thing they most dislike, which denominates them Wicked or Unregenerate. This partial selfish Desire of Sinners may be illustrated by Example. A Man may in some Respects desire and choose to marry a particular Woman, yet considering her Circumstances, being much in Debt, or encumbered with a large Family, he may not on the Whole choose to marry, but de-

termine the contrary. Now a Person cannot be said properly to choose a Thing, unless he chooses it with all the Circumstances that are unavoidably connected with it. He may desire to separate some Circumstances that it may be more agreeable, but this is not choosing the Thing as it is. Sinners desire Christ in some Respects, but in others Dislike him, and on the Whole, reject him. And their desire to have Things separated, and different from what God has ordered, is so far from being a good Desire, or having any Virtue in it, that on the contrary, 'tis something very bad.

I WOULD put the Example a little differently to illustrate this Point, because I would if possible, have People convinced that these partial selfish Desires of Sinners have no Virtue in them. A Man may have a Sort of Desire and Choice to marry a Woman for the Sake of her Money or large Estate, while he has a Distaste and real Aversion to her Person. Now while the Woman insists that the Man that marries her, shall do it out of Love to her Person; this Man cannot be said to desire and choose to marry her on her Terms. 'Tis thus with Sinners, they desire and choose some Benefits by Christ, but they dislike his Person, and therefore do not choose him on his Terms. And now what Goodness is there in the partial selfish Desires of Sinners? And what Ground for their pleading them as an Excuse for their Unbelief. No better Desires than those above-mentioned

oned have any unregenerate Sinners. And do not these Desires discover their great Wickedness? This mercenary selfish Desire, shews their Opposition to God and the Methods of his Grace. They would separate what God has joined. They would set aside the Glory of God and his moral Government; they Want to be saved without submitting to God in the Manner he requires. These Desires of Sinners, are in Effect to desire God to give up his Law, and not vindicate and illustrate his Justice and Holiness.

LET not Sinners therefore flatter and delude themselves with their good Desires, Dispositions and Endeavours, while they are yet unregenerate, and their Hearts have not fallen in with the Methods of God's Grace.

2. ANOTHER wrong Notion is this, *That they are not to blame, or not so much to blame for this spiritual Inability, because they came into the World with it; and that 'tis not by any Act or Choice of their own.* They say, 'tis not a State that they would choose to be in, and would be glad if it was otherways. Thus instead of blameing and condemning themselves for original Sin, the Fountain of Abominations, they plead it as an Excuse. This is in Effect to cast the Blame upon God. For Sin is Sin, and corrupt Nature is something very bad, wicked and blameable, and for the Creature to say 'tis not his, is in Effect to charge it upon his Maker. But all know, Sin does not belong to God, and therefore they might

might be convinced that it belongs to the Creature in which 'tis found. Time will not allow me to ſay what might be neceſſary, to ſet the Doctrine of original Sin in its proper Light; nor is it needful here, for 'tis ſuppoſed that thoſe who offer this Excuſe, believe the Corruption and Depravity of human Nature, and plead it, to extenuate their Fault. But here it ſhould be conſidered, what is the Nature of Faultineſs. This we have ſhewn, conſiſts in a perverſe Diſpoſition of Heart, and the Exertions of it. Wherever there is a bad Diſpoſition of Heart and perverſe Nature, there is Faultineſs and Deſert of Puniſhment. And Perſons never have a right View of Things, till they ſee that a bad Temper and Diſpoſition is Sin, is a wicked condemnable Thing, let them come by it how they would. This is the View of convinced awakened Sinners. As ſoon as a Sinner has proper Illumination and Conviction, he condemns himſelf, his wicked Heart and perverſe Nature; ſees that he is guilty and Hell-deſerving; and juſtifies God in all Things.

But further in Anſwer to this Excuſe, I might obſerve, that Sinners do always approve the Sin of their Nature, while they live in it, and comply with its Dictates. 'Tis falſe to ſay they would properly be glad to be free from this Depravity. They have no proper deſire for an holy Heart, as we have ſhewn. 'Tis wrong to ſay, they would not chooſe to be in their ſinful State, for none do, or can, live in Sin any longer than they

chooſe

choose it. Take Choice from the Soul, and it cannot be charged with sinful Conduct.

3. *I might say, 'tis a very wrong Notion for any to think, their spiritual Inability is an Excuse.* What I have said under the third Head, makes this in a Sort a Repetition, and would render it needless, were not People exceeding apt to deceive themselves in this Matter. They often excuse themselves by their spiritual Inability, when, yet they will not allow that they do. They will barely acknowledge that their spiritual Inability, is their own Fault, when yet they will speak of it, in a Manner that plainly shews, they mean it as an Excuse. Those who have often talked with Sinners about the Concerns of their Souls, hear them mention their Want of Power, in a Manner very different from a Design of expressing their own Badness. When they mention their Want of Power, they do not mean to say, they are so wicked and strongly attached to their Sins and Lusts, so opposite to God and spiritual Things, that they have no Inclination or Heart to Holiness, which yet is really all that prevents their complying with that which is Good. If they would properly represent their Want of Power to that which is Good, they should say, they have such Love to Sin, that they are determined to pursue it, and such Opposition to God and Holiness, that they have no Heart or Inclination to it, for this is the Fountain of their Inability. But Ministers often find People mentioning their Want

Want of Power, in their own Vindication; and will not blame themſelves as Perſons will, who have their Eyes properly opened. Convinced Sinners condemn themſelves with the greateſt Freedom, in a flow of Language, becauſe they begin to ſee Things as they are. They freely acknowledge that their bad Temper and wicked Hearts, deſerve Hell. They ſee and ſay, that their Want of Love to God and Holineſs is infinite Evil, and juſtly deſerves eternal Puniſhment.

We ſee then on the Whole, how right and fit it is for God to find Fault, *viz.* becauſe there is Fault, proper real Fault. 'Tis fit he ſhould treat Things as they are, and we have ſeen that Sinners are altogether faulty, blameable and condemnable. Their ſpiritual Inability istheir Fault and 'tis no Excuſe.

God is infinitely juſt and equitable, but Sinners, unregenerate Sinners, will find fault with him. Their carnal Minds are at Enmity with him, and they diſpute his Authority. Nothing but a proper View of God's Sovereignty, and a Submiſſion to it will overcome and ſilence, in the Hearts of Sinners, that Objection made in our Text. When Perſons are properly enlightened and brought to a right Temper, they ceaſe murmuring, and lay themſelves at the Feet of a ſovereign God, ſenſible that they are guilty hell-deſerving Creatures. The moſt enlightned and beſt Saints have the greateſt Acquieſence in divine Sovereignty, the Perfections, Laws and Government

ment of God. The holy Angels are highly delighted in the divine Will, and most cordially praise him for all his Works. Wicked Men and Devils are full of Murmurings against God, casting off blame from themselves, and disputing the Equity and Sovereignty of God.

Now when we find that all who are holy, acquiesce in God and his Ways, and the Wicked only murmur and find Fault, it may serve to convince us, that those Murmurings are altogether groundless and unreasonable. All hard Thoughts of God, proceed from Ignorance and a bad Temper; when once the Wicked perverse Temper is removed, Murmurings cease.

To draw towards a Conclusion. We may infer the Importance of Ministers taking Pains to enlighten People, and teach them the Nature of spiritual Inability; To shew them what it is, and what it is not. They should exhibit the Blameableness and Inexcusableness of Sinners, so that they may be led to proper Remorse of Conscience, and Sense of Guilt. When People view their spiritual Inability in a proper Light, 'tis so far from quieting their Minds, that it gives them a Sense of their exceeding Wickedness, and the horribly vile ungrateful Nature they have in them. It lays them open to the Lashes of Conscience, cuts off their Excuses, and pulls away some of their principal Refuges of Lies. A Representation of such Truths that tends to such an Issue, is most important and useful. This

Miniſters ſhould aim at *. May it not be queried, whether ſome Authors and pious Preachers, have not repreſented ſpiritual Inability in ſuch a Manner as expoſed People to miſunderſtand it. People conſider it ſomething like natural Inability, as ſome Impediment different from the meer Want of Will, or a right Temper of Heart. 'Tis Difficult for any Perſons to uſe the Phraſes, *Want of Power*, *Inability*, *Impoſſibility*, and the like, with Propriety, when applied to the Will and nothing elſe; much more are unlearned People liable to miſtake ſuch Words, and think ſomething elſe is meant beſide Wickedneſs and Want of Will, to that which is Good †.

And it may be queried, whether it would not be proper for Miniſters when ſpeaking on this Head, generally to change the Words *Inability*, and

* A Miniſter expoſtulates with a Sinner, ſhews him the Folly and Abſurdity of living in a careleſs prayerleſs Life, without God and Chriſt, and without the proper Uſe of Means, or endeavouring to ſecure the one Thing needful; it may be he can and does charge the Sinner with vicious Practice, and ſcandalous Behaviour. The Sinner hears him thro', and in reply ſays, I can do nothing of myſelf: I cannot change my Heart, and the like. By this the Sinner is ſupported, and feels eaſy; his Conſcience is not galled, and he does not feel himſelf ſo ſelf condemned, as if he was charged with ſomething very Faulty, and had nothing to ſay for himſelf by Way of Excuſe. Now the important Inquiry is, how a Miniſter ſhall ſtrip Sinners of theſe Excuſes, and leave them open to Conviction and the Reproofs of their own Conſcience, without this vain Refuge. I think it muſt be by ſhewing them, they have wrong Notions of ſpiritual Inability, which they certainly have, while they think this Inability is any Excuſe. To remove or prevent Miſtakes, ſet People right in this Matter, and lay Sinners more open to Conviction, has been the principal Deſign of this Diſcourſe, however imperfectly it may be executed.

† 'Tis well known that the *Arminians* will miſunderſtand, or miſrepreſent the *Calviniſtic* Notion of Sinners moral Inability, and 'tis poſſible that the uncautious, ſtrong and undiſtinguiſhed Way of expreſſing it by many *Calviniſtic* Divines, may have been one Means of ſetting the others more vehemently against it, and of denying the Depravity of human Nature. If ſo, 'tis a further Reaſon why the Doctrine ſhould be well explained and delivered with proper Diſtinctions, ſo as to cut off Occaſion of Stumbling.

and *Want of Power*, for some other that express the Wicked perverse Temper of the Mind, and Want of Inclination and Will to that which is Good ‡? Might not this leave Persons more open to Conviction? As Sinners are altogether Blameable and Hell-deserving, and nothing in their Way to Holiness and Happiness, but their wicked Heart and perverse Will, if they saw this sad Truth it might make them submit to an holy God. If they saw that their Helplessness was nothing but their Wickedness, instead of pretending to wait for God's Help (as some presumptuously do) they might immediately submit to God, and cry for Mercy.

From the Whole of what has been said concerning the Depravity and moral Inability of Sinners, we have the clearest Evidence of the absolute Necessity of the Almighty Power of God, to change the Wills and Hearts of Sinners. Fallen Sinners have a Wicked perverse Nature; they are bent to Sin; they have no Heart, Will or Inclination, to that which is spiritually Good. They have such a corrupt Taste and vicious Heart that Light and Reason do not influence them to Holiness. The Motives of eternal

‡ If any by Way of Objection should insist, that the Scripture says Men *cannot believe*, nor *come to Christ without drawing*. I answer, these are Figurative, and in a Sort catachrestical Expressions, and 'tis the Duty of Ministers to explain the Scripture, and give a plain easy View of it's Meaning. And further I observe, that tho' two or three such Expressions can be found in Scripture, yet for one such there may be a Thousand produced, that attribute Sinners Unbelief and Distance from God to their Unwillingness and Wickedness, to a bad Heart and a perverse condemnable Temper.

Happineſs and Miſery, do not influence them to avoid Sin and purſue Virtue. How certainly will they go on to Deſtruction, if God does not touch and renew their Hearts? There is nothing good in them to make a Beginning to turn about. They have no ſpiritually good Principle to begin to exert itſelf. And they have no proper Deſire for any, as we have proved. They like their own wicked Courſe better than any other. They love not God nor Chriſt. They will not hearken to his Voice. Much Light and many Motives are afforded them, but they make Light of the Motives, reject God's Call, ſtifle Conſcience, turn a deaf Ear, ſay to the Almighty, Depart from us, we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways; of Chriſt they ſay, he has no Form nor Comelineſs, there is nothing in him why they ſhould deſire him. They know the Conſequence of continuing in Sin, but they ruſh on in their evil Way, going with the Stream of their corrupt Nature, they are haſting on in the broad Way to Hell. What will turn them? What will give them a new Taſte? What will cauſe ſuch ſinful perverſe Creatures to have an holy Principle? Sure nothing but the Omnipotent creating Power of God. The Power of God is glorioſly ſufficient, but nothing elſe ||. To this the Scripture attributes the Change of their Hearts. If ever any became Holy and Spiritual

|| In this View our Saviour ſays, no Man can come to him, except the Father draw him.

tual, 'tis by the Power and Grace of God giving them a new Taſte, a new Principle.

How ſenſible then ſhould we all be, that we lie wholly at the Mercy and free Grace of God. We ſhould realize, that we are in his Hand as a corrupt Maſs, which may fitly and deſervingly be caſt into Hell, and if 'tis otherways with us, 'tis becauſe he helps and ſaves, and exerts his creating Power in our Renovation, and Reſtoration. How proper and ſuitable is it for us all to ſubmit to the Sovereignty of God, reſign our Wills to his Will, which is always Good, ceaſe our Enmity and Oppoſition, which is ſo unreaſonable, condemn ourſelves and fly to his Mercy thro' Jeſus Chriſt! How thankful ſhould we be, that tho' we have deſtroyed ourſelves, yet there is help for us in God! How ſhould we admire the wonderful Way of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, and fall in with it, as every Way ſuited to ſave us, and glorify God.

F I N I S.