

THE NATURAL CULPABILITY, AND REMEDY,
OF MAN'S UNWILLINGNESS TO COME TO
CHRIST, FOR LIFE, STATED AND EXPLAIN-
ED, SO AS TO VINDICATE THE FREEDOM
OF HUMAN AGENCY, AND THE PREVA-
LENCE OF DIVINE GRACE.

A
M. O N,

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Published at the request of his hearers, in Orange County.

“How often would I have gathered thy children
“together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under
“her wings, and ye would not.” *Matth, xxiii. 37.*

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S E R M O N

John v. 40.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

ON last Lord's-day we discussed two doctrinal propositions from this text.

FIRST—Absent from Christ, life is alienated.

SECOND—Coming to Christ, life is regained.—

The THIRD—is the subject of this day's discourse. viz.

Man is nevertheless unwilling to come to Christ for life.

Were men disposed to receive, with candor, the doctrines of life, the gospel might be comprised in few words, and understood without much intricate research. But in the existing state of the human heart, and of surrounding society, the gospel must be preached, line upon line, and defended by all the skill of men who give themselves to reading, meditation and doctrine.

Ministers and professors must have their loins girt with truth, if they would keep pace with, and out run error, as well as by a godly conversation; like a burning lamp, direct the paths of others.

"The proper study of mankind is man," and doubtless next to Theology, the knowledge of the human mind is most dignifying and important.

According to the common maxim, however, all best things are worst when abused: Metaphysics have been very much abused, and so have become very pernicious to the truth. Still it would argue a pusillanimity unworthy of the christian cause, to relinquish the controversies about the liberty of man, and the sovereignty of God: even should the science of the mind, as stated by men of great literary fame, stand foremost and speak loudest in defying the armies of truth.

In further prosecution of the subject ~~we~~ ^{we} propose—
FIRST—To establish some principles concerning the will of man as opposed to the gospel of Christ.

SECOND—Shew how man is culpable for not complying with the offers of Life in Christ.

THIRD—How his natural unwillingness is overcome by supernatural influence, in a way consistent with liberty, and reflecting all the honor upon divine and prevailing grace.

The will is that faculty of the mind, by which we choose or refuse to act. We must not suppose that the will understanding &c. are distinct from the mind, and separable from it. It is the same one mind that thinks, judges, wills, and is free.

The will is influenced by motives, and naturally follows the last decision of the understanding or judgment. Motives are the reasons of the mind's willing in any particular manner.

It is evident therefore, that they slander the mind of man who say that it has a self determining power, and can act independently of motives: for if motives be the reasons of man's volitions, then for the mind to will and act without motives, would be to will and act without reasons.

This, if it be the case with some, is evidently by an imperfection, and so far as any do so, they are foolish and unreasonable.

Motives, therefore, being that which influences the rational mind, when there are many of these opposing each other, the strongest will of course prevail.

The strength, however, of motive, is not always according to propriety, but is regulated by the mind's judgment and propensity.

Thus motives of lure or gain preponderate with some: of pleasure or of honor with others. Different motives operate differently with the same person, at different times.

Pleasure in youth, profit and power in more advanced life. Knowing a man's disposition, we can calculate, with considerable certainty, how he will act, in any given case: which could never be done, were the mind possessed of power, and could act inde-

Things that are distant, indistinctly perceived, tho' really of greater moment will be less powerful than those of another description.

The mind, sometimes, seems to act without motives, in instinctive motions, in operations which are very complex, and the result of long practice; but it is to be observed that these complex operations require long habit to render them facile, and for a considerable time we are conscious of distinct volitions for every part. It is no more a proof that they do not continue so still, that we are not conscious of them, than it is that a wheel, whose different spokes we distinctly perceived, when turning slow, ceases to have them distinct, when turning fast.

There are motions so rapid, as to elude distant vision, and there are volitions so rapid, as to prevent distinct consciousness.

Some actions seem to be animal rather than rational; these may proceed from either original instinct or artificial appetites. These can form no objection against our principles of volition, for they seem to be done without any rational volition.

The mind notwithstanding the influence of motive is free. In every moral action, man is necessarily free. Destroy liberty * in its philosophical sense, and you destroy moral agency. Liberty however does not consist, in willing what you please, but in doing what you will.

If a man stronger than another, forces the other to do some action; in the eye of the law and common sense, moral agency and responsibility cease, where force begins. Thus if A puts into B's hand, a dagger, and force B's hand, so as to wound and kill C, B is considered as

* Liberty has three significations, a political, a legal and a philosophical or metaphysical. The first when we are allowed to act freely, as far as does not clash with the equal freedom and interest of others. The second, when we act without duress. The third, when we act according to our volitions, however these may have been influenced. A man forced to sign a bond would be in law released from that bond, because he acted by duress and threats. Still it was metaphysically an action, a free action.

passive and innocent as C; and A is by all accounted the assassin. It would be otherwise, however, if only allurements or threats were used. We must not consult our own safety so far as to perpetrate moral crime. Man, it appears therefore, if an agent, must be free.—What kind of freedom or liberty is necessary in order to moral agency, is an enquiry of importance. Some say liberty of indifference is necessary, if this were the case, it is very evident that God himself could not act freely, for no reverent mind can suppose that God is indifferent to good or evil. The thing is self contradictory, that the mind should will and choose one thing, and as much will and choose the contrary.

To choose is to prefer, to be indifferent is to be indifferent, and not to choose or will. If a liberty of indifference, therefore, be necessary to agency, none can be free agents but such as are in a state of suspense, and of course do not act at all; to act freely then is not to act; to be in a state of free agency, is to be in a state, in which it is not possible either to will or to act: that is, in a state of no agency.

A state of indifference would moreover, in any case, be very criminal. There is certainly a difference between good and evil, and could it but be a criminal disposition to have no preference for the one above the other? surely man was not so when made after the image of his Maker in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and yet was he not free? Holy angels are surely not so indifferent, and are they not free agents?

A liberty of independence and sovereignty cannot belong to any creature. The name creature carries in it the idea of dependence and subjection. Seeing therefore, liberty of indifference is inconsistent with itself, and liberty of independence incompatible with his character and state, I know of no liberty, which can belong to man, but that of spontaneity, that is, that his actions be regulated by his reason and will.

This is all the liberty courts of civil justice require, all the liberty conscience requires, and I think I may add, all the freedom consciousness knows. Innate propensities and moral motives are perfectly consistent with this freedom. It is not necessary that one should will right or wrong to maintain this freedom.

Man was in his pristine state free to good or evil,—His original bias was to good; temptation influenced him to that which, by positive and sovereign appointment, was evil. In his present state his bias and propensity are to evil, of course he exercises his freedom to evil, thither all the imaginations of his depraved heart tend. Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. It remains for a state of perfection in holiness to discover his freedom tending only to good. The liberty with which Christ makes his people free shall then be perfect. Now it is only partial. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would; the true liberty of creatures consists in their being delivered from the hands of all their enemies, and in being influenced to serve their Creator and best friend. Some talk of a sufficiency of grace being given to all, which if rightly improved would secure salvation. But where are they informed of this fact? does daily observation evince this, or its contrary? The hypothesis and result destroy the assumption, for nothing is sufficient for the end which it does not obtain. Are all saved? No. Then all have not sufficient grace for that end. If all had so much grace as would be thus sufficient, and some improved it and were saved, others misimproved it and were lost, those who improved it, would have something of which to glory before others, as having made themselves to differ; before God as having effected their own salvation. Then it would not be saving grace, for that would be common, and yet all are not saved; but saving improvement. But is this the scriptural view of the subject? What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received it, what hast thou to boast? We are all by nature children of wrath, even as others; you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Eph. ii, 8.

Some will say, all have natural powers to believe, or not to believe, to love God, or not to love God. But we would ask, does the scripture say so? does candid experience say so? are these natural acts? if not, why speak of natural power for moral or spiritual exercises? Were

this the fact, nothing more would be necessary in conversion, than moral persuasion ; and is this, all the words of scripture, on this subject, imply ? all that christian experience affirms ? But of this again. Moreover, do any by this natural power believe, love God &c. ? The Hopkinsian himself says, no, it is morally impossible. What is the use then of the natural power, of which, they say, all are possessed, any more than of the universal atonement ; the use of which they limit to the objects of particular redemption.* The truth is, that although we were endowed with powers for all these purposes originally, we have lost them ; so that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing ; we cannot even come to Christ for life, until grace makes us able ; We will not, until grace makes us willing in a day of power, do, or think or will any good thing. This brings us however to consider in the second place,

2 How we are culpable, seeing our inability and unwillingness are so insurmountable.

A man may be to blame, for not doing what he can, even should this not be all that wants to be done. This seems to be generally admitted, “ Put your shoulder to the wheel then call on Hercules.”

* Hopkinsians say the gospel offer cannot be general, unless the atonement be indefinite, and all be possessed of a natural power to believe.

The Hopkinsian atonement also excludes, the transfer of sins or righteousness, and is nothing more than a general expression of the displeasure of God against sin, whereby he can consistently pardon penitent sinners. If this be the footing, however, upon which the gospel is to be generally offered I cannot see any reason why it is not to be preached to devils ; for if the atonement is an expression of wrath against sin generally, why not against the sin of fallen angels, as well as of fallen men. Coming to Christ, is commanded us, because we have natural power, but have we more natural power than devils.

The reason that satisfied old divines was, that they were commanded to preach the gospel to all nations ; perhaps this is still the best reason.

A man may read and study the scriptures, examine their evidence and claims ; their morality and divinity.

Considering the possibility, necessity, and presumptive veracity of the scriptures, every man is certainly to blame who does not give them the most close investigation. If he does so, he will be forced either to become an universal sceptic, or acknowledge their authenticity, if not divinity ; a libertine, or admit their superior morality ; an epicurean, or allow their unparalleled excellence ; If they are true, they must afford all believers the best founded comfort, and the highest hope of present support and future felicity. These things being so, are they not culpable who continue obstinately infidel ?

This appears still more evident, when we consider what absurdities they must credit, in order to discredit the Bible and the Christian religion.

That the mysteries of religion should be difficult to understand and believed, need not seem strange : but that those who object to them, on this account, and are so cautious of believing any thing, which can be doubted about religion, should yet be forward with their faith in things opposed to it, must seem strange. The scriptures have all the evidence and probability that they could have, or that can reasonably be required, or even ingenuously demanded and yet the infidel says, show me a sign or I will not believe.

To believe that the scriptures are not, would be no greater violence to sense, than to believe they have no author, would be to reason, or a bad author to natural religion. Still they are priestcraft and deception ! If priests had sagacity enough to gain influence, and being without them, which the hypothesis requires, what need had they of them, if they had not, how could they impose them. No matter, still we are unwilling, though every theory to account for the existence and character of the scriptures be absurd, but the one which makes them divine, still I say we are unwilling to come to Christ, concerning whom they testify : and is not this unwillingness criminal ? “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”

Besides this speculative faith, of which we have been speaking, men may without supernatural or saving grace,

have many feelings and do many things ; devils believe and tremble ; Herod did many things, and heard John gladly. Ahab and Judas repented, Jehu seemed very zealous for the Lord of hosts, and acted quite the reformer. All they can do without faith which is God's gift is sin, yet both in God and man's estimation they would be more culpable to neglect those things which are essentially right, though formally wrong. They will be deficient in their principle, motive, rule and end.

They ought to do them right ; if they have so destroyed themselves as not to be able to do them right, they ought still to do them. See how Christ loved the young man who was discreet and decent, so as to make us believe that in an outward way, he did observe, as he said, the commandments. He was not far from the kingdom of heaven, and yet it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for him to enter in. With God this was possible, not with men.

That man can attend to the external rights of religion is evident from many instances of pharisaical strictness, superstitious zeal. This bodily exercise profiteth little yet they act more laudably who observe, than those who neglect them. It is better to be near the pool of healing waters, although we cannot get into it without some person's aid, than securely or sullenly to stay at a distance. In such a predicament, prayer is very evidently indicated as the duty of poor helpless man. Against it also unbelief will forge many objections ; but true sense of want and misery will echo the divine directions. "God be merciful to me a sinner, save me else I perish." Simon, though in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity is commanded to pray God, if so be the iniquity, of his heart may be forgiven.

Again, we may be as culpable for not willing to do, what we cannot, as for not willing to do what we can. This will appear paradoxical to some ; a little attention however, will I trust, make it plain.

A man may think he can do what he cannot. In that case, it is plain, if he is commanded by undoubted authority, to do what he thinks he can do, and wilfully refuses, he is as culpable, as if he really had power. Suppose a servant detected in an attempt to poison his

master, is, for this crime, privately secured in his bed chamber, so that he cannot get out ; would he because of this, be any the less culpable, if on being called to rise and do his duty, he refused, not knowing what was done. Suppose on his being told, that he was detected in his designed murder, and is commanded to come and beg pardon, he still refuses and becomes more turbulent and wroth, would not all dutiful fellow servants blame him for not willing to do what he could not, till he was enabled as well as commanded ? Willing and trying would change both his case and ours.

Our heavenly Father, like earthly parents, wants the reverent affection of his children. If he, as a test of our obedience, and as an expression of his authority, require us to do any thing, no matter whether we can do it or not, we are very culpable if we do not will and try.

He commands us, in his law, to do nothing which we were not originally capable by common support to do ; if we have wantonly and rebelliously squandered the power to do, he certainly has not thereby lost the power to command.

If his authority were to be measured by our ability, and his law always to be necessarily modified according to our power, there could be no sin, no moral debt—whenever we lost power to pay, he lost the right to exact. Of course all penalty would be cruel, all failure of duty, would be impossible.

The great Dr. Reid of Glasgow, who has done so much for true learning, by removing the rubbish of ideal philosophers, and vindicating the testimony of our senses against sceptics, and human liberty, against the advocates of atheistic fatality ; has also, we are sorry, by going too far upon the last subject, much confirmed the heresies of arminians and corrupted the venerated and beloved Church of Scotland, by erecting the idol of free will against the throne of divine grace. To prop up this tottering statue against which so many valiant reformers have shot their well directed arrows, and against which, the orthodox of his own connection, were still disposed to hurl with brawny arm, their heaviest javelins : He calls in this simile to his aid, in order no doubt to excite their pity, and so paralyze their arm.

“ Suppose, says he, a sailor in the navy of his country, and longing for the ease of a hospital, as an invalid, to cut off his finger, so as to disable him from doing the duty of a sailor, he is guilty of a great crime ; but after he has been punished according to the demerit of his crime, will his captain insist that he shall still do the duty of a sailor ? Will he command him to go aloft when it is impossible for him to do it, and punish him as guilty of disobedience ? Surely if there be any such thing as justice and injustice, this would be unjust and wantonly cruel. vol. iv. page 265, Am. ed.

This however plausible is not applicable. It enlists the feelings, but does very little towards influencing the understanding, and will avail very little, if tried by cool judgment and calm reason.

Suppose the captain should, in order to make his punishment, a more effectual antidote against the contagion of the crime ; lash him with the rope's end, and command him to mount the shrouds, it would be nothing like so cruel, as many thousand deeds these marine furies have committed ; yes, ten to one, if Dr. Reid and many others of the same fraternity, would not have justified it as an appropriate and judicious penalty.— But let it be in that case considered cruel, is this the state in which the advocates of human liberty, and divine sovereignty consider man to be ? No. Suppose then he should refuse to do what he yet retained in his power to do, with his eyes, tongue and other hand, and insist, when they were correcting him, for disqualifying himself for his duty, that he had not done so, this would certainly alter very essentially the case, and at the same time make it more applicable to the case in hand. But does Dr. Reid really think what he is saying when he talks of having received punishment according to the demerit of his crime ? Have any of the rebellious family suffered this, even of those spirits now in prison, to whom Noah preached ? I know the Dr. would not say so. Why then if not to deceive, state the simile so ? and yet if not so stated, it loses almost all its effects ; his great lever then wherewith he thought to move a world wants a fulcrum, his massy chain has broken links and cannot bear itself. His maimed sailor may go to the hospital and his

master with him—they can do nothing. Experience and scripture tell us we are unable invalids. God and conscience, in perfect unison, declare we are to blame. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” John, vi. 44. “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”

Finally, we may be, if not culpable, at any rate great losers, for not being able to do what we would.

A father has mortgaged an inheritance; the son would fondly redeem it, but cannot: This may be to him a very great loss.

Suppose that he imitate the profligate conduct of his father, having imbibed and inherited his voluptuous disposition; would he not, for all the results of this entailed profligacy, be to blame, as well as be a loser for the father’s personal profligacy? Moreover, whatever the speculative might argue in such a case, the very fact of the father being such a character would render the son less respectable. We may say, that others should not despise the children of base parents; but we generally do it in some degree ourselves. It is done, and that under the Judge of all the earth, who would not surely, but for some just end, let innocence suffer.

But so it is; none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. We are begotten in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, and yet this establishment of things does not excuse, much less justify us, so that we might lay the blame on God, because it was the father’s fault, who eat the sour grapes. No, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;” but mark, “so death has passed upon all, for that all have sinned.” Even from Adam to Moses the infants, who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, died. What countless millions of this description, did the waters of the deluge overwhelm? For they were marrying and multiplying until Noah entered the ark, and the descending torrents swept away the generations of these ungodly men. What mercy did for the infants we do not say; but if they had not been sinners, nor death nor mercy had with them ought to do. That we are exposed to bad example in early life is a very great calamity. Although the

fathers are laid in the grave, like carrion before the eyes of their sons, yet the sons imitate the fathers, in fond calculations about life's perpetuity, and the long train of names. From such evils who can redeem his brother? Yet such are great vanities and great sins.—The application of these facts and principles to the case in hand is easy. There are many things we can do, which we do not. There are many things we cannot do, which yet we flatter ourselves we can do, and do not, nor try; though God and good men for good reasons urge us. There are many things of the most lasting importance, and unspeakable interest, which altho' we were willing, like other impotent men, we cannot; and yet when a Saviour comes, we are unwilling to receive his aid.

We give a kind of credit to his testimony, and yet act as if it were all imposture.

We acknowledge that we need some common assistance, but will not receive salvation itself, if it must be all grace. To the terms of the gospel we are opposed, because they oppose every high thought, and would bring them all into the obedience of faith, and under the feet of Christ. Thus, unless we can have some share of the honor, we will not come to Christ, that we might have life. And is this to us no loss, no crime? Ah me! what logic!

We give credit to any thing sooner, and more easily than to facts attested by divine miracles, and stamped by divine truth. We trust more readily upon the brittle arm of human aid, which in our case can afford no succour, than in the omnipotent arm of Jehovah made bare for our relief; and is this no crime? Although with kindred affections in our nature, which he assumed, he entreats us, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," and yet still we will not, till by his divine agency inwardly exerted, he enables us. He cries, "My head is wet with the dew," but we cannot rise, till he put in his hand by the hole of the door, and move the bowels. Is not this state of man most clear demonstration of human guilt? for surely such folly of intellect, such depravity of heart, had never been entailed, and allowed so universally to prevail upon the unhappy descendants

of Adam, had we not all sinned in him, and so of right shared in his guilt. Still the gospel offer is not needless, even with respect to them who do not receive it. It tends to demonstrate man's sin, whilst it declares God's claims, and men's duty. The Spirit convinces the world of sin, "because they believe not in me." It tends to demonstrate the inveteracy of our hatred, and enmity against God, when the gospel so inviting is rejected.—Surely those, to whom such light is hid, must be blind; those, whom such love cannot melt, must be enmity; yet such, it appears, is the case and character of all unregenerate men. Even such as read the bible are not excepted. They search the scriptures, in which they think they have eternal life. These scriptures testify, if we examine even in the most superficial manner, their predictions and accomplishments, that it is in Christ that eternal life is hid, and yet we will not come to him that we might have life. We want life, but will not have it in him; sure this is strange. Is he not the chief of ten thousand; a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; adorned with all the glories of divinity, set in the foil of our humanity; all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily? and yet we see nothing in him wherefore he should be desired. Ah, poor, perverse man! It can be no pleasure for a brother in the same predicament, to declare your sins and faults, and yet would not be the part of a friend to conceal them. Surely, if I should learn to give flattering titles to men, my Maker would soon take me, if not from life, from usefulness. Whatever else be the result, man must be humbled, God glorified; and surely, the gospel, which offers salvation to such poor, miserable and helpless sinners, must be a theme of eternal rejoicing, its Author of eternal praise to all pious minds, as well as a savour of righteousness to God; although it will, by man's depravity and fault, be a savour of death to all but such as are supernaturally assisted. And this brings us to the

Third general division of our discourse, viz. to speak of the operations of grace conquering our unwillingness, in a way consistent with human liberty, and reflecting all the glory upon divine grace.

Our text, and discussion, the general tenor of sacred scripture clearly evince, that man is not of the character, nor in the condition, in which he was originally made. He was originally made for sublime contemplation on the works and character of God, for supreme felicity in the fellowship of God. For such dignified exercise, and high felicity, he is now, alas ! disqualified, until some change be made in his state and disposition. Accordingly, we read of a translation from the kingdom of sin and satan, into the kingdom of his own Son. The translation here is not local. Place makes little for happiness. The translation affects the subject. The subjects are not mere emigrants and citizens ; no, they are naturalized fellow-citizens. In such cases as this, a man may be accounted, by himself and others, as free in both states. Suppose a subject of the Dey of Algiers, upon being made acquainted with the nature of the United States' government, should choose to become a member of the American republic, would he, by this change, lose his freedom ? Had he even been taken in the first instance, in the act of piracy, yet as soon as he submits, in his will and heart, to the laws of a free and honest commonwealth, he is as free as he was before. Suppose him a thorough Algerine, while under the Dey, and a true-hearted American, when a member of our community, he might, in a certain sense, be said to be free in both states ; because freedom very much consists in a correspondence between character and condition. So the Apostle seems to speak, Rom. vi, 20. " For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." Ver. 18. " Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Man must serve ; his dignity and felicity depend upon the hand of a master. " Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Ver. 16.

As in the case before adduced, the whole political nature of the Algerine must be changed, in order to make him submit to the diligence and industry requisite to secure success and respectability, in our honest and enterprising commonwealth ; so the whole spiritual nature

of man must be changed, in order to make a subject of satan, sin and darkness, a subject of the kingdom of light, of righteousness, and of Christ.

If, therefore, local difference of character be so great, that a life-time is hardly sufficient to change it, what must be the difficulty with respect to those constitutional habits of sin, which, according to a trite, but true saying, being bred in the bone, is hard to extract from the flesh. We have no disposition to depreciate human nature; but really it is hard to tell, how he that is accustomed to do evil shall learn to do well.

However it has happened, it is evident that the morals of men are sunk very far beneath the standard of even man's own partial judgment. Now, evil example going to corrupt even good manners, how is the sinner, whose manners are bad, and habits corrupt, going to save himself? The absurdity, however, of such a supposition does not stop here. His nature is corrupt: Every imagination of his heart is evil, and that from his youth. By the time he is capable of reasoning, his depravity is confirmed. Every source of nature seems to be dry.

Where, or how is reform to begin? The natural man cannot discern spiritual things; the carnal mind is enmity against God; the jarring passions and clashing interests of immoral and self-willed man; the baneful examples and inveterate habits of corrupt society seem all opposed to reform. In such a crisis, is there any power but omnipotence that can avail? No, they are not only incapable, as being weak, but the strength they have opposes the motion to be produced. "When there was no eye to pity, nor hand to help, the Lord laid help on one who is mighty to save to the uttermost."—His own arm brings salvation, when revealed for that purpose, without which the ministers of religion would still have reason to complain, "Who hath believed our report?" No man can come to the Saviour, even by the help of Christ's own preaching, except the Father, which hath sent him, draw him; but every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Saviour, and that in a way most congenial with human liberty and freedom. This, however, cannot be, with-

out an entire change of nature. The mind which before was darkness. must now be made light in the Lord.—The heart of stone must be made an heart of flesh. The disposition which was enmity must be made love. The children of the wicked one must be made the children of the Most Holy.

Who, I ask, can do all this, but the great power of God? It will certainly produce the effect intended, unless the creature be stronger than the Creator; *that is*, unless finite power be greater than infinite—human frailty more mighty than divine omnipotence! Seeing man, had he continued in his original integrity, would have acted freely, what is there impossible or improbable in his acting freely, according to the principles of his new creation. The mode of effecting this change we do not pretend to describe. Who can tell how he is formed naturally—how the bones are formed in the womb? One thing the regenerate man knows, that whereas he was blind, now he sees—whereas he was unwilling, now he is willing—he was dead, and is alive! Now is there any thing incompatible with liberty in the divine production, and human exercise of new spiritual powers? No, on the contrary, it tends to perfect liberty.

It is impossible altogether, to reconcile natural conscience and irreligion. The judgment will see, in some measure, the better; the unsanctified bias, and natural inclination choose the worse. Supernatural grace conquers this depravity, and makes the man consistent with himself. It seems particularly strange, that advocates of partial and common grace should be opposed to entire, insuperable and prevailing grace, on the score of its destroying human liberty. Sure, if a little grace tends to free from the bondage of sin, one would think, more would be better for this end; and the more powerful, and invincible it is, the more free the man will be; *that is*, if sin be servitude, and righteousness and life be liberty, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making free from the law of sin and death, will not destroy liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty! If this influence, of which we speak, were contrary to freedom, all instruction in literature and science, all discipline in morals, must be so too; for these have a

tendency to make vice odious, and virtue eligible. Are we then to be barbarians, in order to be free? I ask, whether the intelligent, virtuous citizen, who regulates his conduct according to law and propriety, or the ignorant licentious debauchee, is the freer man? Do not all reckon intelligent moral restraint from evil, and constraint to good, consistent with, and constituting a very important ingredient of eligible freedom? Apply these thoughts to the case in hand, and you will see, that invincible sanctifying grace is so far from destroying liberty, that it is its basis, substance, and summit.

Nor can it be said, that if the grace of God operates upon the will, it thereby destroys liberty. No, on the contrary, this illustrates the mode, whereby a change is produced in conduct, consistent with human freedom. The man who was naturally unwilling, is supernaturally and graciously made willing. Although religious services were before burdensome, now they become his delight. He is never so free, as when under the restraints of grace—never so comfortable as when influenced by the constraints of love. Hence, the very significant language of Christians; “I felt an unusual freedom in the performance of such a duty.” What is this? Why, it is the effect of the presence and power of grace, impelling to, and assisting in, the discharge of duty. Those who before would not come to Christ, are now alive, and their affections run like the chariots of Aminadab. Now the tune is changed. They cry, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” He, in whom before they saw no beauty, wherefore he should be desired, is now to them the chief of ten thousand and altogether lovely. The most deliberate choice of their judgment is “None but Christ.” The chorus of their heart’s anthem is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

From what has been said confirmatory of human freedom, in the work of grace tending to life, we need not spend long time in proving that exhortations are consistent with the view of it which has been given. Indeed, although God has always a right to command, or instruct his servants; to exhort to duty his rational creatures, who are also evidently culpable, if they do not obey;

yet from the view we have taken of the subject, it will appear, that these commands, however reasonable and authoritative, will not be obeyed, only in so far as they are accompanied by grace. When it does, the command, or exhortation is not made void, but has special emphasis. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Phil. ii, 12, 13. But it will be asked, how is this economy consistent with a state of retribution, or of rewards and punishments? We answer; with regard to the wicked, it will be the same as if no such plan had been discovered. If they have sinned without law, they shall be judged without law. They are left without excuse, by the discoveries of nature, and the remonstrances of conscience. If they have sinned under the law, they shall be judged by the clearer light which they enjoyed. They shall be judged by the law. If they have sinned under the gospel dispensation, and against the particular privileges of that most benign, and favorable constitution of things, it will of course be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation!" If against some operations of the Spirit inwardly experienced, so much the worse—they are more confirmed and hardened. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the power of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves afresh the son of God, and put him to an open shame." there remains no more sacrifice for the sin of them, who despise that blood whereby alone sin can be purged, and wilfully, and maliciously, and knowingly blaspheme the only name whereby sinners can be saved.

With respect to the righteous, we readily admit that our plan destroys all claims of human merit, and every reward of debt in the work of salvation. It is of faith that it might be by grace; and if by grace, then not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if of works, then no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. The two are entirely, and *toto cælo* different, so

that we cannot, without the greatest confusion of thought, language, and theological principle, blend them. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his grace hath he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ. Not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus to good works. To him that worketh the reward is reckoned of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that rose from the dead, his faith is accounted to him for righteousness," and his reward, of course, is according to grace. The humble sanctified mind will not reckon the reward less valuable, nor the labour in vain, because they are both of grace; and in the whole of the work and reward they will rejoice, and sing, grace, grace, unto it. "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise. To him that loved us, and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Such is the nature of the sentiments of the redeemed, and such shall be the strain of their praise, and the essence of their felicity. While angels declare him worthy who made them, the redeemed from among men shall declare him supremely worthy, who saved them, to receive all glory, and honor, and might, and dominion, forever.

A few inferences and exhortations from the whole, shall now close the subject.

See, dear christian brethren, what a doleful condition all are naturally in. No salvation is seen in all the book of nature. "No light is here, but rather darkness visible." How God is to be just, and justify sinners, no one of nature's pupils can tell. How fallen man may come before the Most High God, no pagan priest, nor gentile seer can show. They all say, "such wisdom is not in me." How earnest should we be at the throne of grace, for the spread and prevalence of the gospel, which brings to light the mystery which was hid from ages. "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." O, may this name be found to be a strong tower; and may it be

in God's good time and way, declared for salvation to the ends of the earth. Where no vision is, Ah me! the people perish. Pray, then, for the success of missionary labors, so far as conducted upon evangelical principles. How shall the poor heathen call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, without a preacher? They are not innocent, it is true; for when by the visible things of creation, they had an opportunity of learning some of the invisible attributes, eternal power, and God-head of Jehovah, they worshipped him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. "The gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, which shew the works of the law written in their hearts; their conscience accusing, or else excusing one another;" so that even upon the privileges they have enjoyed, they may be judged, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts. Rom. ii, 12-16. They are without excuse; still they shall not be condemned for rejecting the gospel. This greater condemnation shall be ours, if we neglect this great salvation.

We have it not at our option how we are to be judged. If we never read the word—never give serious attention to its purport and spirit; still we must be judged with those who have not only Moses and the prophets, but also Christ and the apostles. What a melancholy prospect does it present to the reflecting mind, to see so many having all these privileges, and yet by their neglecting the duties of morality, and ordinances of piety, evidently shew they are unwilling to come to Christ that they might have life. How, think you, must it grieve ministers particularly, to see such demonstrations of aggravated crime, occasioned by their work and labor of love, even by the exercise of the benevolent and divinely appointed functions of their office. Ah me! how often does the thought, that many to whom we preach shall have it to their greater condemnation, that light has come into the world, pierce our hearts! If in any thing a man may yield to grief and tears, it is in this. The complaint is ancient,

and has often been repeated ; “ Who hath believed our report,” and this too when the nation have been running after false prophets. Many shall follow their pernicious ways, and if it were possible they would deceive the very elect.

Surely, were it not for the revelation of the arm of the Lord, making his chosen willing in the day of his power, there would be none saved. There is, however, to the praise of his name, a remnant according to election. To all whom he calls he proposes an evident duty, viz. to come to Christ for life ; and declares a certain truth, that all who come shall be saved. Still it is evident, that not only the ministration of inspired men, such as Paul, Apollos and Cephas, will be inefficacious ; but even the external ministration of Christ himself. “ No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. Many are called but few are chosen. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. The election has obtained it. Let us strive to make our calling and election sure. He takes away the stony heart—he puts a right spirit within us ; and yet for all these things he will be enquired of, by the house of Israel and Judah, that he may do it for them.” So long then as we are sojourners, favored with ordinances, and yet have not been willing to come to Christ, our case is truly critical ; yet it is not desperate. While there is life there is hope. Let such wait upon the ordinances of divine institution, expecting and soliciting a divine blessing ; praying that inward power may accompany the outward administration of the gospel, so as to make the foolishness of preaching the wisdom and power of God to salvation.

I know the heart of man will find many objections against such exhortations ; but so far from weakening, they rather corroborate our discussion, confirm and prove the mournful fact, that men are not willing to come to Christ, that they might have life. What ! do nothing—try nothing, because we cannot do all ! Shall the force of his authority, the comfortable expectation of his assistance, not influence us to wait on means, unless this waiting shall be allowed to go to our credit and honor, as the cause of our salvation ? This shews

what we are, but it will not do for an excuse. So long as we go about to establish, in any way, our own righteousness, we will not submit to the righteousness of Christ. How can we believe, if we receive honor one of another! Unless we are persuaded that it will be just in God to condemn us, and that we are entirely self-destroyed—have nothing that we can plead—nothing that we can do—we will not come to Christ for life: of this however no reasoning of men can persuade the sinner. Our gospel is hid to him. “The god of this world hath blinded their eyes, that they should not come to the knowledge of the truth.” It is only the Spirit of truth that can bring down the high thoughts. When he does so, it is that we might have life; not that we should submit, and be as willing to be damned as saved, as willing to curse and blaspheme, as to praise God; as willing to be separate from us, to be near God in Christ, in whom is life. No, he takes of the things that are Christ’s, and shows them to us, so as to make us wrestle and strive in faith and prayer for them. Have any of us then been so subdued, and made not only willing, but also importunate and resolute? What cause of rejoicing, if our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord! What! is it so, that he not only provides for us a salvation, and tenders it to us, in the most affectionate manner, but does he also make us willing, by the inward working of his grace and Spirit, to come and accept? Yes! wonderful grace! So far as any of us have experienced this, let us manifest that we are free men in Christ Jesus, created to good works, which shall be to the confirmation of our freedom, and habits of sanctification, and redound altogether to the praise of his almighty saving grace. Let us try, not only to be always ready to give an intelligent answer, to such as ask a reason of our hope; but let our uniform, cheerful and growing diligence in the duties of morality and piety, witness to the moral tendency, and sanctifying efficacy of the system and form of sound words, which we profess and maintain.

There are some who abuse the doctrines of grace, saying, let us do evil that good may come. Let such remember, that their damnation is just, whatever they

may think or argue to the contrary. We may deceive and baffle ourselves; but we cannot convict God of any inconsistency in the plan of salvation. Whatever he has said is firm truth—whatever he commands is holy, and just, and good. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; out of their own mouths will he judge them, who boast of their powers, and yet will not use them. Whatever the presumptively wicked may here blaspheme, as if they could defy God, every mouth will be stopped, at the terrible judgment; and especially of those who obey not the gospel, and will not come to Christ, that they might have life. All pharisaical pride shall be humbled; all pretences to power, and good improvement of common grace will be relinquished. No flesh shall then glory in his presence. Every one who shall inherit eternal life will be forward to say, “By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I but grace in me. I have learned, that they have come to Christ, that they might have life. How inconsistent then, is it to think of living, willing, or acting without him! If we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in him. When we are dying daily to all selfish hopes, and human dependence, then are we living to Christ. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can we, except we be in him. As it is altogether of his grace that we are saved, so it must be by the same grace, that we continue, and bring forth fruits of holiness and righteousness, whose end shall be life. Without him, in a natural sense, we can do nothing; it is eminently so in a spiritual sense. He who is the Author, must be the Finisher of our faith. Beginning, he must carry on the work of faith to salvation. All power in heaven and in earth is given to him, that he may appoint and send ambassadors to negotiate the great business of salvation externally; and power is given to him over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as are given him. Such as are ordained to life shall believe and come to him. His counsel will stand. He will do all his pleasure—not one of his shall be rejected; yea he will

put his Spirit into them, so that they shall not depart. While this work then of sovereign, divine, and eternal love, is going on in the salvation of the elect, by his gospel, let us still the tumult of our minds, respecting his other fearful works with the wicked, saying, with Christ, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: even so, Father, so it has seemed good in thy sight." At the same time we must reckon them culpable, for their unwillingness to come to Christ for life. This shall be the climax of all their other sins, and the form of their condemnation who hear the gospel, that light has come into the world, and they have loved darkness, because they will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Father of light, and life, give us to choose, and do thy will, and believe in, and come to thy Son, that we may have life; and to thy name be all glory, now and forever.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page, 3, last line, for *truth* read *Israel*.

5, line 14, for *distant* read *distinct*.

6, line 22, for *any case*, read *many cases*.

The following errors, in the fourth page, will be found only in part of the copies.

line 25, leave out the word *by*.

34, for *lure*, read *lucre*.

two last lines, read *possessed of a self-determining power, and could act independently of motives*.