

It is proper, it is scriptural, yea it is truly evangelical to say, that he has purchased his people ; but it is, I presume, improper, antisciptural, and unevangelical, to say that he purchased spiritual blessings. If these be the purchase of his blood, he must have purchased them either for himself or others. Was it for himself? without hesitation, *no* : he wanted them not.. He ever had, he now has, and he always will have, all the fulness of the riches of eternal blessedness dwelling in himself. Which of all the spiritual blessings mentioned in the gospel did he want, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily ; and in whom, as Mediator, it pleased the Father, that all the fulness of the blessings of grace, and the blessings of glory should dwell? Even when he hung upon the accursed tree, he was God over all, blessed for ever ; and had in himself whatever comes under the notion of a spiritual blessing. He could never want the streams, who is himself the ever abounding and overflowing fountain. It would be absurd to say, or even to think that he purchased those things for himself in time, which, as Mediator, he had before time in full possession.

Did he purchase them for others? If he did it must be either for angels or men. If for the angels, it must be either for those that stood or those that fell : not for the former ; they stood in no need of purchased blessings, having had all the blessedness that their nature is capable of enjoying, in title, possession, and enjoyment, ever since they were

created ; and which they are in no danger whatever of losing : all is confirmed to them by the gracious and immutable will of their great Creator. Not for the latter ; for they, by a sovereign decree of the Almighty, were justly excluded from all blessedness, and destined to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, as the due reward of their rebellious pride, and the treasonable ambition of their minds.

Was it for men ? then it must be either for the elect or the non-elect. It could not be for the non-elect, for they are the people of the Lord's curse ; "reprobate silver shall men call them, because God has " *in righteousness* " rejected them." They are "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction," by their own iniquity ; and by an eternal, immutable, and equitable decree of the divine will, appointed to that condemnation which their pride, apostacy, insolence, stubbornness, and rebellion have merited ; from these every spiritual blessing is withheld, by him who does what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the children of men ; and who has an indisputable right to do what he will with his own. If the potter has power over the clay to dispose of every part of it as he pleaseth ; how much more has that amazing Being, whose existence is underivative and eternal ; whose independance is absolute and unchangeable ; whose peerless sovereignty reigns in its own infinite glory, ever defying the daring attempts of puny mortals to curtail its rights ; who has neither superior nor equal ; and who has given being to universal nature : how much more

has this transcendant Being, compared with whom the whole creation is less than nothing, authority to dispose of the works of his hands as he pleases ; to appoint and direct every creature to what end he will, and to dispense his favours as seemeth good in his sight. His will is his law ; what he wills is good, is just ; it is so because he wills it. “The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him.” “Be still,” ye haughty worms, “and know that he is God.” It is impious in the extreme, to say unto him, “what dost thou ?” Tremble at the thought of summoning your judge to your tribunal, to receive judgment from your guilty and polluted lips. Whence your authority to give laws to your Maker, to bound his rights, and to criminate those of his decrees and actions, which do not please your self-righteous pride, which do not comport with your sufficiency, and which clash with your brutal lusts ? Impartial justice reigns with absolute sovereignty, and mingles the rays of its glory with those of discriminating mercy and grace. While the great Eternal grants of the rich blessings of his grace to some men, and withholds them from others, his justice stands unimpeachable ; and unimpeachable it must stand, till it is proved that those from whom these favours are withheld have a *natural right* to them ; for an act of injustice done by one person to another is that person depriving the other of what is his due. And as it can never be proved by the scriptures, that any man on earth ever had, now has, or ever will have any

such right to those blessings, it is thought rational to conclude, that in choosing some to salvation, and passing by the rest ; in making a covenant of life and peace with none but his elect ; in giving Christ to die for his sheep, and not for the goats ; in hiding the mysteries of his gospel from the non-elect, though the wise and prudent of this world, and revealing them to the elect, though babes ; in giving faith to the latter, and not bestowing it upon the former ; in granting repentance unto life to these, and leaving those in their impenitence ; and in raising his many sons and daughters to glory, and leaving the world that lieth in wickedness to drop into utter darkness, the Almighty shines in all the splendour of his eternal justice, as well as in the glory of his stupendous grace ; in all these wondrous acts, he deprives no man of his right.

Presuming that the importance of the subject upon which I have been writing, will apologize for this digression from my main design ; I shall proceed to say, that as Christ did not purchase spiritual blessings for the non-elect, so neither did he do it for the elect. It is a truth in which my soul rejoices, and will rejoice, that all the elect are, and ever will be, interested in all the unnumbered blessings of the grace of God, but their *right* to them is not the effect of the Saviour's death. I think it would be found difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove that he purchased the promises of these blessings ; and if not the promises, surely not the blessings promised ; the promises are, indeed, said to be all in him, yea

and amen, to the glory of God; but they are nowhere^{*} said to be the purchase of his blood: his blood is so far from being the price by which the promise is procured, that it is absolutely the subject of it: one of the jewels by which that casket is enriched.

The covenant of the Trinity is called the covenant of promise. Why? because in it all the promises were freely granted, and made sure to all the seed. "God who cannot lie, promised eternal life before the world began." In this single promise all the rest of the promises are included: in promising everlasting life, he promised all its appurtenances, grace, Christ, redemption, justification, pardon, the Holy Spirit and all his graces, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification, these, in all their intrinsic worth, and all their unfading glories, are comprehended in this short phrase, "eternal life."

There is not, I think, one promise more written in the Bible, in time, than was inscribed in the covenant of grace, before the birth of time. Now if *all* the promises were made and granted in eternity, and Christ be himself the substance of them all; how are they the purchase of his death? And if the promises are not purchased by him, the blessings promised are not; the promises and the blessings cannot be divided; God has joined them, let no man put them asunder. Where the promise is given the blessing is granted; and the gift of the former, and the grant of the latter are marked with the same date, *Eternity*.

If the eternal Father of mercies actually blessed his elect with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, before the world began, how did Christ purchase those blessings, when time had been upon the wing 4000 years? I cannot conceive in what sense he can be said to purchase, either our title to them, or our enjoyment of them. If the right of a person to a blessing be established, is it necessary either that he should purchase that blessing for himself, or that another should purchase it for him? Suppose a father bequeaths an inheritance to his son, to be by him freely enjoyed, at a period specified in his testament; does not that bequest supersede the necessity of a purchase? Now, it is evident that God the eternal Father of all the elect, did, in his will and testament, freely bequeath to them, as his children the rich and glorious inheritance of all spiritual blessings, to be by them possessed and enjoyed, in the fulness of time, and to all eternity. The evidence of this fact appears in Eph. i. 3—6. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Here the inspired penman, in terms the most plain, positive, and unequivocal, assures us,

That God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen a people for himself.

That he chose them in Christ, and made them one with him.

That he chose them before the foundation of the world was laid.

That he chose them that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.

That he predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, when he chose them in him.

That he then made them accepted in the beloved.

That he then bequeathed unto them, and absolutely settled, or entailed upon them, all spiritual blessings *in him*, in whom he chose and accepted them.

That all this was done according to the good pleasure of his will.

And that in all these eternal transactions of his sovereign will, he designed the praise, glory, and honour of the riches of his grace.

These glorious acts and resolutions of the eternal mind, infinitely remote from the shadow of fluctuation, could not be shaken by any external cause.

The fall of man was, far beyond all created imagination, dreadful. By that awful catastrophe, man was at once deprived of all that rectitude of nature, with which he came out of the hallowed hands of his Maker, and that communion which he had with the Almighty, in his moral perfections, through

the medium of the creatures, and the covenant of works, and plunged into a fathomless abyss of guilt, pollution, ignorance, condemnation, misery and death ; the divine law was robbed of its due ; and the glorious Creator most shamefully abused and dishonoured, in those perfections of his nature, in which he was known, glorified, and enjoyed by man before his apostacy. But would it be speaking as the oracles of God ; would it be doing the work of an evangelist, to make ourselves of the number of those who corrupt the word of God ; would it be holding fast the form of sound words, or using sound speech that cannot be condemned, to say, that by the fall of man, the decrees, the counsels, and the covenant transactions of Jehovah were changed, that his schemes were disconcerted, that his eternal testament was nullified, or that his elect were deprived of their interest in his love, that they lost his favour, and that their right and title to the blessings of the covenant of grace were forfeited ? Surely not. Had their interest in the special love and peculiar favour of God, and their title to the blessings of his grace, been founded in the covenant of works, they would doubtless, by the transgression of that covenant, have lost all claim to them ; but as they had for their basis, the will of him who is unchangeable, and were guaranteed in a better covenant, one established upon better promises, infinitely too high to be shaken by the fall of man, their interest in them all still remained. Why then talk of the death of Christ as purchasing the love

of God for his people, buying heaven for them, restoring them to his favour, and procuring for them a title to spiritual blessings, and a right to the everlasting enjoyment of those blessings. It is freely confessed that the glorious person and perfect work of the Mediator are the medium through which we enjoy every spiritual blessing; but because the Godman in his mediatorial work, is the channel in which these blessings flow *to us*, does it follow that he purchased them *for us*? No more than an executor to a will would, by the performance of his office, purchase for the legatees the legacies therein bequeathed.

Divine grace and all its unnumbered blessings, are the grant of Jehovah the Father's eternal will to his chosen, to be by them inherited, through the obedience and death of Christ. To this will Christ is the executor, and as such he obeyed the covenant of works, and died for sin in order that the children of God might fully enjoy those things to which they had an eternal title, in that way and by those means which were appointed by the sovereign testator. But does this amount to a purchase? Or does this work of Christ appear any thing like a price paid for the above blessings.

It is said, Christ himself is the Testator. Granted: but can we from this fairly infer that he purchased the legacies mentioned in his testament? As God co-equal with the Father, and with him essentially one, he is joint Testator with him; but was it ever known that a testator made a subsequent purchase of

the very things which he had bequeathed in his will, for those to whom he had bequeathed them ? No ; they must be truly and properly his own, prior to, or at the time that he makes his will ; and being so, they, by his gift of them, should no change take place in his will, legally become the right of those to whom they are bequeathed ; and through the death of the Testator, as a means, not a purchase, they enjoy them.

To this purpose speaks the apostle Paul, Heb. ix. 15. “ And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by *means* of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” From what is here said, we learn, that Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament, or covenant ; that as such he died ; that by his death he atoned for the sins of his people who lived under the Old Testament dispensation, and redeemed them, as well as those who live under the New ; and that by means of his death, they who are called receive the promise of eternal inheritance. The death of the incarnate Testator was absolutely necessary, in order to the enjoyment of our inheritance, because God had determined that we should possess and enjoy it by that means, that he might display the glory of his justice, and maintain the honour of his holiness, by inflicting condign punishment upon our guilt, and by receiving ample satisfaction for our crimes, and that his holy law might be magnified and honoured ;

at the same time that he set forth his stupendous love, his boundless mercy, and his matchless grace, to raise us from the ruins of our fall, to the blissful inheritance of heaven : and in all this I cannot see any thing like a purchase of grace, mercy, heaven and spiritual blessings. The church was purchased for the inheritance, but not the inheritance for the church.

Should it be said by way of objection to the principle upon which I have reasoned ; that if it were not necessary that the divine Redeemer should purchase spiritual blessings for his people, because they had an eternal and immutable right to them in the covenant of grace ; could it be necessary that he should purchase the church, seeing he had an indisputable right to it, by virtue of the Father's gift of it to him before all worlds ? To this I would reply : the elect being carried away captive, and enslaved by sin and Satan, bound under the curse of the law for transgression, and held by divine justice in that dreadful bondage, and under that tremendous curse, their emancipation, through a price paid to divine justice, as a compensation for their transgression of the law, was absolutely necessary ; because without it they could not enjoy their patrimony. Christ did not purchase them to make them his own ; they were his from eternity ; they fell in Adam ; but they did not cease to be his through the fall. They were "his people," "his children," "his members," before they fell ; and they were the same afterwards. As their union

with him was not dissolved, so his interest in them did not cease, through their apostacy. But the holy law being deprived of its right; and divine justice, whose province it is to maintain the honour of the law, being offended by their rebellion; either the divine purpose that they should enjoy everlasting blessedness, must be relinquished and they must be left eternally in their guilt, to receive the due reward of it in hell; or the divine law and justice must be deprived of their right, degraded and laid aside; or else the determination of the divine mind must stand, and the heirs of eternal bliss be liberated, and raised to the enjoyment of their portion, through means by which law and justice receive all their rights, and have their honour and dignity for ever supported. As neither of the two first could take place without a change in Deity, or God ceasing to be God, the last must come to pass; and, indeed, so it was fore-ordained of God, whose infinite wisdom “devised means that his banished should not for ever be expelled from him,” nor his law and justice deprived of their due honour. And had the blessings in question been forfeited to law and justice by sin, they must have been redeemed or purchased, before we could have enjoyed them; but this not being the case, the notion of their being purchased, can, it is thought, have no foundation in truth.

Nor does the sentiment which I have advanced, depreciate the glory of the Saviour, the value of his death, or the preciousness of his blood. Every

thing is beautiful in its order, and excellent when it answers its divinely appointed end. The great Immanuel is as glorious and excellent in our salvation, as he would, or could have been had he purchased all spiritual blessings for us. For him to remove every legal and judicial impediment to our possession and enjoyment of those blessings, is as great as if he had purchased them for us. Whatever is pretended, it can never be to the honour of our matchless Redeemer, to say that his death effected that which it never was designed to effect, or that his blood redeemed that which never was forfeited, and purchased for his people a title to those things in which they were eternally interested, and which they never lost, nor could lose, without an imperfection in the divine will, which to suppose would be impious. His name is glorified when a just statement is given, and a true representation is made, of the real design of Jehovah the Father, in his appointment of him to his office, and his mission to our world; but as it could not be his design, that he should purchase those rights and privileges for his people, in time, which he freely and immutably granted them in eternity, he is not honoured, but dishonoured by the doctrine of purchased blessings.

I conclude by observing that if it is inaccurate to say that Christ purchased that love of God for his children in time, which he fixed upon them before time, it cannot be accurate to say, that he purchased those blessings for them, which ever were, and ever

will be, inseparable from that love ; and that as it is incongruous to say, that he purchased the covenant of grace, it cannot be congruous to say that he purchased the blessings which are contained in it, and which, nothing in time, nothing in eternity, can separate from it ; and if it would be untrue to say, that he purchased for them an interest in himself, can it be true to affirm, that he purchased for them those blessings, with which they are, and ever were, blessed in Him.

MINISTERIAL OFFERS OF SPIRITUAL
BLESSINGS NOT WARRANTED
BY SCRIPTURE.

EQUALLY unevangelical with the notion of purchased blessings, and yet, notwithstanding, full as popular, even among those who are deemed gospel preachers, is the ministerial offer of spiritual blessings. Long have our pulpits rung and our presses teemed with offers, tenders, and overtures of mercy and grace, pardon and peace, life and salvation, Christ and heaven. Ministers of all denominations are zealously employed in making these offers, tenders, and overtures: in whatever else they differ, in this they are in perfect unison. Here the avowed Arminian and the reputed Calvinist join hands; and although it is difficult to say which of the two is the most strenuous for general offers, it is easy to determine which is the most consistent. These offers and overtures accord very well with the Arminian notions of universal grace, general redemption,

the sovereignty of free will, and the imperial powers of human nature; but neither the wisdom of man, nor the deeper sagacity of angels, will ever be able to reconcile them with Jehovah's perfections, with the volume of revelation, and with legitimate Calvinism. When I hear a professed Arminian declare to his auditory that God always intended his grace for every man; that he loves one of the sons of men as much as he loves another; that, "*election is the devil's lie, and a horrible decree* ;* that Christ has obtained redemption for every child of Adam; that God has not absolutely determined any thing relative to the effects of the death of Christ, but has cast the lot into the lap of human caprice, and left the whole disposal of it to the will of man; that men have it in their power to chose or refuse Christ, turn the scale which way they please, and render his obedience and sufferings effectual or not effectual to salvation; and that after all that Christ has done and suffered, with a view to the salvation of all the human race, it rests with man to determine whether all or none, whether many or few shall be saved; when I hear a man of this description advance such sentiments as these, and then vociferate his offers of grace, of Christ, of salvation, I forbear to wonder; because I consider him, though at war with the scriptures, yet consistent with his own principles and character as an Arminian. But when men who are distinguished

* The very identical words of the late John Wesley.

by the Calvinistic character ascend the pulpit, and assert that God in the riches of his unbounded grace, freely and immutably chose a people for himself in eternity, and appointed them to a *certain* salvation by Jesus Christ; that he absolutely determined the number of his chosen, and specified the persons who compose that number, so that neither addition nor diminution, nor a change of persons can by any means take place; that all the immense treasures of his transcendent love, grace, and mercy, together with all spiritual blessings and privileges, were entailed upon them, *exclusively*, in Christ, by a sovereign act of his will; that he passed by the rest in righteous sovereignty, and never designed any spiritual favour for them, but left them to perish in their sins; and that in consequence of the fall, every man's will is entirely depraved, enslaved by Satan, and averse to all that is good; and then in a moment drop from this eminence into the quagmire of Arminianism, and begin to advance their offers and overtures; who can help exclaiming with amaze, "how is the fine gold become dim, and the wine turned into water!" How is the melodious note of the mounting lark, changed for the doleful din of the bird of night! These men are not only beside the scriptures, but also beside themselves, and hostile to their own characters as Calvinists.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, let him imitate the pure harmonious diction of holy inspiration; and bid adieu to human tradition. Did any of the prophets offer Christ; did

any of the evangelists make overtures of grace ; or did any of the apostles tender salvation ? Where can we find the divine command to offer spiritual blessings ; or which of the inspired penmen shall we name as our precedent ? Mark the scripture page, if it can be found, which offers heaven to the sons of men.

The prophets wrote of Christ, “to him they all bore witness, that whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.” They saw his day; they saw it and were glad ; they enquired into his great salvation, and proclaimed it in the ears of men ; they spoke of his covenant engagements, predicted his advent, foretold his obedience, and agonies, with all their attendant circumstances ; they exhibited the dignity of his person, and the glory of his majesty ; and they made known his eternal triumphs, the extent of his kingdom, and his everlasting reign ; but never, in any one instance, made an offer of him or any of his gifts.

The evangelists have faithfully detailed the various scenes of his life and death, but have no where offered him to any one. They have informed us that he was conceived by his Virgin mother, in consequence of the miraculous overshadowing of the Holy Ghost ; that he was born in a stable at Bethlehem, in the days of Cæsar Augustus ; that Herod hunted for his precious life ; that God ordered him to be conveyed into Egypt, the asylum destined for his safety, from the fury of the savage monster ; and that after his return, he dwelt in the city of Naza-

reth with his parents ; and was obedient unto them in all things. By these divinely inspired historians we are informed, that when he was about thirty years old, he was baptized of John in the river Jordan, where the Holy Ghost descended and abode upon him, and God the Father proclaimed his delight in him as Godman and Mediator ; that afterwards he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he combated and conquered the infernal powers ; that after this ever memorable victory, he began his ministry, went about preaching the gospel, healing diseases, casting out evil spirits, raising the dead, and always doing good either to the bodies or souls of men. And from these faithful witnesses of all that Jesus did and suffered, we learn that he prayed and agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, till a profuse and bloody sweat issued from his sacred body ; that he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies by Judas one of his disciples ; that he was arraigned before Pilate, examined, mocked, condemned, scourged, crucified, and buried ; that on the third day he rose from the dead, and appeared unto his disciples ; and that after he had been seen of them for the space of forty days, he ascended to heaven to sit on the right hand of God. Moreover we are told by these "friends of the bridegroom," who stood and heard his voice, that he is the gift of the Father's love ; that he came into the world to seek and save the lost, the lost sheep of the house of Israel ; that he gave his life for the sheep ; that he finished the

work which was given him to do ; that he is full of grace and truth ; that he receiveth sinners, and casteth out none that come to him for salvation ; that he has called the thirsty to come unto him and drink, and pronounced his blessing upon the hungry soul ; that he gives to his people his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink ; that he causes the dead to hear his voice and live ; finally, that he gives to his people eternal life, and absolutely says they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand. But although they have said so much of what he did, they no where inform us that he *offered* himself or his grace ; nor do they themselves any where tender him, and make overtures of his mercy to a guilty world.

Nor did the apostles employ their talents in making offers of the Saviour ; but in *preaching* him : each obeyed, with faithfulness, the high command of his divine Master, "*preach* the gospel : " with a dignity becoming their exalted character as ambassadors of Christ, and a majestic simplicity of style, suited to the grand mysteries, which they taught, they all held forth the word of life, to Jews and Gentiles. They preached " Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." They asserted, peremptorily, the infinite divinity, majesty, and glory of Jesus, as one of the self-existent Eternal Three, and his greatness, honour, might, and authority, as Godman,

and Mediator. Each, ambitious to exalt and magnify his person and character, *exhibited* him freely as the prophet, priest, and king, of his church, anointed by the Father with the oil of gladness to teach, to atone, to conquer, and to rule : to teach the ignorant, and make them wise unto salvation ; to atone for the guilty, and make them free from the law of sin and death ; to conquer the stout-hearted, who are far from righteousness, and lay them at his feet, clothed with humility, and filled with ardent desires to be found in him ; and to rule for ever over angels and saints, over sin and death, over wicked men and raging devils, and over all the creation of God. It was the constant employ and delight of these great intrepid souls, to testify the gospel of the grace of God ; to publish the riches of a Saviour's fulness ; to tell their fellow-sinners how freely, how ardently, and how constantly he loves ; to publish his infinite tenderness, and boundless compassion, to the miserable and helpless ; and to declare, in terms the most expressive, his matchless ability and firm resolution, to save the most guilty and unworthy of men. In every place, they preached, the all-glorious righteousness and complete atonement of the great Mediator and proclaimed justification for the ungodly, by the former, and pardon of all sin, for the guilty and condemned, through the latter, and both as the most absolute gift of God. All their superior wisdom and might were engaged in stating, explaining, and defending every part of the counsel

of God. Of all the treasure which was committed unto them, as stewards of the mysteries and the manifold grace of God, nothing was withheld, nothing concealed, nothing mutilated, nothing corrupted, by these men of zeal and integrity, who "counted not their lives dear, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus." That they perfectly understood the will of Christ, relative to the means, which he had appointed, for the conversion of elect sinners, cannot be doubted; and that each of them acted in conformity to that will, in the use of those means, must be confessed; or else the apostolic wisdom and integrity must be impeached, and the scriptures of the New Testament invalidated. Now is it not reasonable to conclude, that if offers, tenders, and overtures of grace and its glorious train of blessings, were appointed by the legislative authority of Christ, and if they were a part of the gospel, and essential to the conversion of sinners, they would have made a part of the apostles ministry, and appeared in their sermons and epistles: but where in any of these are they found? It is well known that in all their writings, there is neither an offer, nor the shadow of an offer, of any one spiritual blessing; let those who plead for overtures &c. evince the utility of them by scripture; and produce if they can, from the sacred pages, their authority to use them.

Offers are both too high, and too low; too high for the non-elect, and too low for the elect. To

the *former*, the Almighty Sovereign, does not *so much* as offer his special favours ; to the *latter*, he *more* than offers them. From those he justly withholds every blessing of glory and grace ; to these he has granted Christ and all his fulness, with immutability and freeness, in a covenant which is firmer than mountains of brass ; an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, in which the whole Trinity have condescendingly pledged themselves, to convey every gospel promise, and every spiritual blessing to the hearts of the chosen, and not to put them off with an offer.

The non-elect indeed, many of them, hear the gospel where it is preached. Before them Christ is evidently set forth as crucified, and life and salvation are proclaimed in their ears. They hear of all that Jesus has done and suffered for sinners, and the immense blessings unnumbered which flow from the celestial throne, through his obedience and wounds to the guilty and undone ; of the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of millions ; and the graces and comforts which arise from his operations in all the saints ; and of the kingdom, perfection, and glory, which God has promised to all that believe. But among all the abundance, and almost endless variety, which they hear, there is not one *offer* of any thing sent to them from God. To this add, that since the scriptures declare of the non-elect, that they are a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them ; and he that formed

them, will shew them no favor; that to them that are without, it is not given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom; and that he who is the Lord of heaven and earth, has hid those things from them; it is hardly rational only to suppose, that he *offers* them the favour that he will not shew them, and tenders to them the things which he hides for ever from their eyes.

To say that God designs spiritual blessings for all where he sends the gospel, is to renounce Calvinism and establish Arminianism; and to say that he never designed spiritual blessings for any but the elect, and yet offers them to all, is to impeach his sincerity, and represent him as deceitful, and as mocking and tantalizing his creatures. Such representations of that Being, whose nature, names, and conduct, are all perfection, is, I must say, highly reprehensible, and quite unworthy the man of God; it is therefore necessary in order to support the character of God, our own reputation, and the honour of his gospel, to abandon offers, tenders and overtures.

Indeed, I cannot but view them as the fruits of the wisdom of the flesh, which is foolishness with God; muddy streams, from the corrupt fountain of depraved reason; human inventions, innovations and corruptions. Oh that Christianity were once again free from these extraneous human appendages which only tend to eclipse the lustre of Sovereign grace, darken counsel with words without knowledge, and bewilder the minds of simple

souls. Nor can I forbear observing, that how much soever the ministry of those good men may be blessed, who through mistake and the want of due consideration, use offers, it will be found, in the end, that only the sound parts of their sermons have been owned of the Lord ; and that all their offers are among the wood, hay and stubble, which, as the apostle tells us, are doomed to fire. We may say, with boldness, that God never makes useful to any soul, those means and ordinances, which are not of his own appointing ; but have been invented by men, and are used by human authority ; for, by so doing, he would put the crown of honour upon the head of the folly of proud mortals, and lay his own infinite wisdom and honour in the dust.

(SUBJECT CONTINUED.)

MINISTERIAL OFFERS OF SPIRITUAL
BLESSINGS NOT WARRANTED BY
SCRIPTURE, DEFENDED.

Nothing but a real desire to disseminate gospel truth, free from those things which have long appeared to me as incompatible with Jehovah's perfections, decrees, and character, at first induced me to write upon a subject, in the discussion of which, I could not avoid giving offence to men of talents, men of godliness, and men whom I truly respect, and sincerely love. Nothing else now excites me to defend my position, "that ministerial offers of spiritual blessings are not warranted by scripture." This sentiment has been condemned as being destitute of scripture proof; and despised, as unworthy of attention.

But, before I proceed to make my defence, I beg leave to premise, that in all debates upon religious subjects, as well as upon those of human science, it is absolutely necessary to fix upon some first

principles, upon which to stand, and from which to argue; and to which every sentiment, every argument, and every interpretation of scripture, must be brought, for examination and trial. That God has, in the Holy Scriptures, made a revelation of his immutable attributes, his absolute decrees, and his glorious character.—That by his attributes, decrees, and character, thus revealed, every doctrine, every argument, and all interpretation of scripture, must be proved.—And that the doctrine, the argument, or the interpretation, which will not accord with these principles, although it may boast *antiquity*, the patronage of *multitudes*, and the defence and support of the *highest authorities on earth*, ought not to be received as *divine truth*.

Upon this ground I take my position; and upon this ground, the sentiments for which I contend, shall stand or fall. If, upon strict and fair examination, they be found inconsistent with Jehovah's perfections; if they derogate from the glory of his eternal unchangeable decrees; if they depreciate the dignity of his character; or if they infringe any *real* rights of apostate man, or weaken any *lawful* claims upon his Maker, which he may, *with truth*, be said to possess; let them be abhorred, rejected, and despised, by all who regard the divine honour.

Should any opponent object to the above test of divine truth, he must, in that case, produce one more *safe*, and more compatible with the divine character, etc.; should he admit it as just, then he must consent to have all his doctrines, arguments,

and interpretations of scripture examined, tried, and proved by it; nor should he feel himself in the least hurt, when what he advances inconsistent with it, is rejected.

The points in question are not, whether the gospel should be *preached* to all who attend it, nor whether invitations, exhortations etc. should be given to the sons of men; but whether *preaching* the gospel, and *offering spiritual blessings* are the *same thing*; and whether invitations and exhortations, to receive those blessings, are to be given indiscriminately, or confined to certain characters. Indeed it very forcibly strikes me, that preaching the gospel, and offering the blessings of it, are things quite different and distinct; that the former is the appointment of God, the latter the invention of man; and that encouragements to receive those blessings, ought to be confined to the "*weary and heavy laden*," the *hungry*, the *thirsty*, the *longing*, to sinners *truly sensible* of their *absolute need* of them, and filled with *ardent desires* after them, arising from a real conviction of their suitableness and worth: see the following scriptures, "Ho! every one that *thirsteth* come ye to the waters," "when the *poor and needy* seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them; I will pour water upon him that is *thirsty*, and floods upon the dry ground." "Come unto me all ye that *labour* and are *heavy laden*, and I will give you rest." "He hath filled the *hungry*

with good things, and the *rich* he hath sent empty away." "Jesus stood and cried, if any man *thirst* let him come unto me and drink," and "let him that is *athirst* come," and "whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely."

To make the terms *preach* and *offer* synonymous, is, I think, an abuse of words, and a gross perversion of scripture. Might we not as well say that sun and moon are expressive of the same object; or that to preach a sermon and to read one, are the same thing? Surely the terms in question are intended to convey very different ideas to the mind. To preach, is to testify, declare, publish, proclaim. In this sense the translators of the Bible have used the word *preach*. This I think appears, with satisfactory evidence, in the following scriptures: Neh. vi. 7, "And thou hast appointed prophets to *preach* of thee in Jerusalem; *saying there is a king in Judah;*" by which nothing more can be meant, than that he had appointed or employed men, to *proclaim him king*. Jonah iii. 2, "Arise go unto Nineveh, that great city, and *preach* unto it the *preaching* that I bid thee;" and what was it? nothing but a peremptory declaration; "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Matt. x. 7, 27, "And as ye go, *preach*, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "What I tell you in darkness, that *speak* ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that *preach* ye upon the house tops." Acts iv. 2, "Being grieved that they taught the people and *preached* through Jesus the resurrection of the

dead." Rom. ii. 21, "Thou that *preachest* a man shall not steal, dost thou steal?" 1 Cor. i. 18, "The *preaching* of the cross, is to them that perish foolishness." See also, 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. 12. Is it possible to construe the word *preach*, in any one of those places, into an offer? If *preach* and *offer* were synonymous, or convertible terms, the *latter* might be used as a substitute for the *former* in all the above scriptures, without any violation of the laws of language; and we might read "thou hast appointed priests to *offer* of thee." "Go to Nineveh, and *offer* the *offering* that I bid thee." "Being grieved that they *offered* through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." "Thou that *offerest* a man shall not steal." "The *offering* of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." But such a change of the words would not only cause a very disagreeable harshness, in the reading of these passages, but also render them absolutely unintelligible. Now as the word *preach*, cannot be understood as implying an offer in any of the above places; I think we ought not to consider it, as implying one in any other parts of the word of God; unless we are obliged to do so, by something in the context or connexion. And, I must say, that I cannot perceive any thing connected with any of those passages where it occurs, to make it necessary, that we should understand it, as meaning any thing like an offer, or more or less than to publish, proclaim, declare, and testify.

To what has been said, we might add, that the

words publish, proclaim, declare, and testify, are used in the scriptures promiscuously, to signify the same thing. Isa. lx. 1, "The Lord hath anointed me to *preach* good tidings to the meek, to *proclaim* liberty to the captives, to *proclaim* the acceptable year of the Lord," etc. Luke iv. 18, 19, "He hath sent me to *preach* deliverance, to *preach* the acceptable year of the Lord." Isa. lii. 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that *publisheth* peace; that *publisheth* salvation." Rom. x. 15, "How beautiful are the feet of those that *preach* the gospel of peace." Acts xiii. 32, "And we *declare* unto you glad tidings." Acts xx. 27, "I have not shunned to *declare* unto you all the counsel of God." 2 Cor. xi. 7, "I have *preached* unto you the gospel freely." Acts xx. 24, "To *testify* the gospel of the grace of God."

In the face of all this evidence can it be asserted that the word in question is of doubtful meaning, and that it may signify to *offer*, as well as to *proclaim*. In making the bold assertion should we not reflect, with severity, upon the character of God, and expose to reproach the Almighty name, for declaring by a term of uncertain import, his will, relative to an ordinance of the highest importance, both in regard to his own glory, and his people's happiness? Does the divine trumpet, by which the indulgent God of love, directs the conduct of his ministers, in the discharge of their high and honourable office, give an uncertain sound, and leave them in doubt, whether they are only to

proclaim salvation, or also to *offer* it? How then are the “scriptures able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work?” It appears to me not to be of minor importance; to understand, and interpret the words which God has been pleased to adopt, in the revelation of his will, in the very sense in which he has used them : a knowledge of which is attained by comparing scripture with scripture. To alter the established meaning of words, especially the words of God, is like removing the ancient landmark; were we allowed the liberty of giving what turn we please to his words, consequences the most fatal must ensue. What truth is there which might not, by this means, be explained away? What error is there which might not, by this artifice, be imposed upon the church of God? It is well known that the church of Rome, the Arians, the Socinians, the Arminians, the Winchesterians, the Antinomians, and others have all had recourse to this art, and have chiefly, by this means, disseminated their vile, pernicious tenets with success.

I have been the more particular and prolix in my remarks upon the import of the word *preach*, because so much depends upon it in this controversy: indeed it is the principal hinge upon which it turns; for could it be once proved, that the terms *preach* and *offer* are *synonymous*, and are used by the Holy Ghost to convey the *same* idea, the dispute would cease, because every one must, in that case, be satisfied that offers are appointed of God. But

unless this be done, I shall think myself justified in opposing the common practice of offering Christ, and in affirming, that to *preach* free grace; Jesus Christ; justification by the righteousness of Christ; pardon of sin through his atonement; redemption, peace and purity through his blood; everlasting life and salvation through his name; and the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all the elect, by which they are brought to believe, repent, reform, and walk with God, in faith, humility, and love, is to *testify* of them, to *declare*, *publish*, and *proclaim* them in the name of God, in the audience of all who attend to hear, without *offering* them to any. Thus preached the apostles of our Lord; Acts ii. 14, 36; iii. 12—26; iv. 8—12; x. 34—43; xiii. 16—41; xvii. 2, 3, 22—34; xxvi. 22, 23; and xxviii. 25, 26, 27, 28. Now is there any thing in these scriptures, to countenance ministers in addressing their hearers in the following language? “We come to you with *overtures* of mercy and grace, we *offer* you Christ; we *tender* you pardon, peace, and eternal life.” It is true that in Acts iii. 19, Peter gives an exhortation; and in Acts xiii. 40, 41, Paul gives a most solemn warning. But what have either exhortations or warnings to do with offers? Sinners may very well be exhorted to their duty, and warned of their danger, without having offers or overtures of spiritual blessings made to them.

Whoever declares himself a Calvinist, professes to believe that God, the Father of all mercies, has

blessed his own people with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world ; and that he never intended that a single person more than the number of his elect should partake of any such blessings. Now, by what means can general offers of spiritual blessings be made to accord with election, particular redemption, and the limited grant of those blessings ? Can it be made to appear, how God can, consistently with his character, as a being of *infinite sincerity*, make an offer, where he has absolutely determined never to make a grant of what he offers ? Or how the Almighty, who has immutably decreed that all shall not be saved, can with *sincerity and uprightness*, principles eternally inseparable from his existence, offer salvation to all where he sends the gospel ? This ought to be done, and must be done, before the doctrine of general offers can be established. It is said that we cannot possibly account for all the divine procedure ; and that we are obliged, upon the authority of scripture, both to believe and publish many things which, though they are not contrary to reason, yet are so far above the comprehension of a finite understanding, that it would be presumption in mortal man, to attempt to explain them. Granted : but then we are not called to believe any thing which is incompatible with Jehovah's revealed character, nor to publish any thing which militates with his known attributes of truth, integrity, and uprightness ; which the doctrine of general offers appears

to do ; but to abide by that sacred axiom, " God cannot deny himself ; " or, in other words, he cannot act inconsistently with his own perfections, purposes and character.

For the farther illustration of this subject, let us suppose a case. There is a *good*, the possession of which would be very much to the advantage of an individual, but to which he has a great aversion. This good is in the possession of a neighbour, who has both power to bestow it upon him, and to dispose his mind to receive it, but has *determined not to do either* ; and yet he makes him an offer of it. Can this neighbour, be fairly deemed an *upright, sincere character* ? Whether this supposed individual be acquainted with his neighbour's determination, or not, can be of no consequence ; for neither his *knowledge* nor his *ignorance*, can, in the least, alter the *fact* as to the man's *real character*. Nor can the non-elect's ignorance or knowledge of God's decrees concerning them, in the smallest degree affect *his real character*. The question therefore is, First, whether he can, consistently with himself, or with the truth, uprightness, and integrity of his nature, appear to be what he is not, or manifest a disposition which he does not possess ? Secondly, whether in making an offer of spiritual blessings to all, he would not manifest a disposition to bestow them upon all ? and, Thirdly, whether he really possesses any such disposition ? Indeed I cannot help concluding, that as he is a being of infinite perfection, it is impossible for him

to manifest a disposition which he does not possess; that as a disposition to bestow spiritual blessings upon all the world, would be inconsistent with his doctrine of election, he possesses no such disposition; and that as the manifestation of a disposition to bestow them upon all, is inseparable from an offer of them to all, there can be no such offer intended by God in the preaching of the gospel.

But here I anticipate an objection. It may be asked, whether God does not manifest a disposition to bestow the blessings of the gospel upon all, in having them *published*, in the hearing of all, where he sends his word, as much as he would by *offering* them to all? By no means; unless it were *declared* in the proclamation that they are *designed* for all. But this is not the case; for the gospel declares, that "Christ loved the *church*, and gave himself for it;" that "he gave his life for the *sheep*;" that "he saves *his people* from their sins;" that "*Israel* shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;" that "*he gives eternal life to as many as the Father has given him*;" that "*his people* shall be willing in the day of his power," and that where the gospel was preached, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

It may be also asked, why then are the blessings of the gospel *published* to all, where the word of God is sent? Because the ministry of the word is God's ordinance, appointed for the glorious purpose of calling effectually, all his elect, to the knowledge of salvation, through the remission of sins; and as

they, while in a state of nature, are mingled with the rest of mankind, and cannot be distinguished from them by those who preach the gospel, it is necessary that it should be preached, in all its fullness and glory, to people of every description. But then it is not for the sake of the non-elect, that it is thus preached, indeed were it not for the elect, there would be no such thing as gospel preaching in any place, or among any people. If Paul is commanded to tarry at Corinth, to preach the glad tidings there, it is because God has *much people* in that city. If the voice of Christ goes into the Gentile world, it is because he has *sheep* there who must hear it, and be brought to the fold; and if Paul labours with ardour, and suffers with patience, it is for the *elect's sake*, that *they* might be saved. John x. 16; Acts xviii, 9, 10; 2 Tim. ii. 10.

But it has been urged, that in the preaching of Christ and the salvation of the gospel, there must be *something* of offer, overture, etc., because, First, if there be no offer or *something like it*, unbelieving obstinate sinners, cannot, with propriety be said to put away, refuse, or reject everlasting life, which they are said to do, Acts xiii. 46; Heb. xii. 25. Might not this objector, with equal propriety, say with the Arminians, that all the uncircumcised in heart and ears, mentioned Acts vii. 51, had the Holy Ghost working and striving in them, or else they could not, with propriety, be said to resist him? But why may not obstinate sinners, when, upon hearing everlasting life *proclaimed*, they despise

the proclamation, shut their ears against it, and blaspheme, be, with as much propriety, said to refuse it and put it away from them, as they might if it were *offered* to them; or as those persons mentioned Matt. viii. 14, might be said to put away Christ from them, when they bid him depart out of their coast? Had he offered himself to them? He had not so much as once preached among them; yet they may, with strict propriety, be said to reject him.

Secondly, "Because they cannot be said to put away Christ from them, if when he is preached to them, they are not to understand the offer of *himself* and *benefits* for their acceptance and *life*." But if they who reject the servants of Christ are said to reject Christ himself, why may not they, who reject the gospel, of which he is the sum and substance, though it consists in a *mere proclamation* of him *without an offer*, or any thing like one, be said to reject him? Reject the preaching or proclamation of Christ, and you reject Christ himself.

Thirdly, "Because believing souls cannot be represented as accepting the Saviour, when they receive the gospel of his love, and submit to the proclamation of his mercy, if the gospel message do not contain *something* of offer, overture, etc." Oh this mighty *something*! How often repeated! When shall we know what it is? By receiving the Saviour, I apprehend nothing else is intended, but believing in his name; as the latter part of John i. 12, explains: and a sinner may believe in the name of

Christ with all his heart, as well upon hearing the *proclamation* of him, and his salvation, as if he had an *offer* of him. Nor can a reason be shewn, why a sensible sinner, who feels himself undone without him, may not embrace him with his affections, and give him a joyful welcome to his breast, as well upon hearing him *published* as the complete and free Saviour of the guilty and undone, as if he had *ten thousand offers* of him.

Fourthly, "Because, did not the gospel include a tender, or something of that kind, *of what the gospel contains*, to them that hear it preached, it would not meet the anxious wish, and craving desire of the poor, hungry, exigent sinner." Now it appears to me, that the poor, hungry, exigent sinner, who desires and craves *what the gospel contains*, is one who is taught of God, has his eyes open to see, and his soul quickened to feel, that he is wretched, and helpless, and poor, and naked; is brought to know the suitableness and worth of the things contained in the gospel; and is made willing, in the day of God's power, to be saved by sovereign grace alone, in Christ Jesus. And I cannot help thinking that the ministers of the gospel should meet the desires and cravings of such persons, with something *more*, than a dry, cold, empty offer of what they long for. Might not these hungry, exigent sinners, address both offers and offerers, in the language of disconsolate Job to his friends, "*miserable comforters are ye all*"? Let them hear for their comfort, a peremptory declara-

tion, that their desires and cravings after Christ and his great salvation, are the fruits of the Holy Ghost, produced in them by his mighty power, according to the purpose and grace of God, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began; that they are *evidently* his covenant people, *already* interested in all that the gospel contains, and that the same divine agent, who has freely begun the good work of grace in their hearts, will freely and fully complete it, and lead them into the everlasting possession and enjoyment of all that they stand entitled to, in that holy covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. Psal. cx. 3; Isa. xi. 12; Matt. v. 3, 4, 6. Let ministers thus preach, and then their word to the poor and needy, would not be "*yea and nay*;" *yea*, if they *accept* the offer; *nay*, if they *neglect* it: but *yea and amen* to the glory of God. Oh! how much better adapted is this method of preaching, to comfort the feeble-minded; to encourage the fearful heart; to strengthen the weak hands; and to answer all the wishes and craving desires of the poor, hungry, exigent sinner, than a poor vacant uncertain offer.

Indeed the system of offers, appears to me at least, a perfect *felo-de-se*, and to be so far from laying a sure foundation of encouragement and comfort, for the fearful and disconsolate, that it really destroys itself. For if, as has been said, "the gospel must include a *tender*, of what the *gospel contains*, to them that hear it," then the gospel must *contain* a tender of what the gospel *includes*,

and the *tender* must itself be *tendered* ! But what in reality, is contained in the gospel ? The answer will be, “ *Christ and his benefits,*” and these, we are told, “are offered to sinners, for their acceptance and life, *upon their belief,* or else they could not be said to reject them.” Now, I would ask, whether *faith* is not one of the blessings contained in the gospel, one of the benefits which sinners receive by the death of Christ ? One should suppose it is, since it is declared in the scriptures, that to us “it is given, *on the behalf of Christ* to believe,” and that Christ is “the *author and finisher* of faith.” It will naturally and unavoidably follow then, that *faith*, as well as other things, other benefits of Christ contained in the gospel, must be “ *tendered*, offered, or proposed, to the acceptance of sinners, *upon their believing,*” that is, if there be any meaning in the words here used, the blessings or benefits offered become theirs, subsequent to, and in consequence of their believing, and receiving them ; or they *first* believe, and by faith receive them ; and *then* they become theirs. So *faith itself*, unless upon a strict inquiry into its origin, it should prove not to be a spiritual blessing, contained in the gospel, or one of the benefits of Christ, becomes theirs *upon their believing*, or *subsequent to*, and in consequence of it ! What a monstrous absurdity ! What a glaring untruth ! I proceed to ask, further, whether the gift of the Holy Ghost is not a blessing contained in the gospel ? If an opponent say, yes ; I

again ask, whether this blessing must not be both granted, and actually communicated to the heart, before any sinner on earth can believe? To this he will assent, and allow that a "*disposition* to receive Christ is the work of his own Spirit." Thus, behold, how one part of his creed is devoured by the other! The gift of the Holy Ghost, *as a blessing contained in the gospel*, is *proposed* to sinners, *to become theirs upon their believing*. They must therefore believe of themselves, independent of the Holy Spirit, and in order to their receiving him as a blessing offered to them in the gospel. No: for even "a disposition to receive Christ is the work of his own Spirit." He must, therefore, be both granted and imparted, and sinners must be in the real possession of him, before they can possibly believe, or feel themselves at all disposed to receive Christ or any of his benefits. Now it remains for those who hold these unscriptural opinions, either to deny that the gift of the Holy Ghost, *is a blessing contained in the gospel*, or that he is *the author of faith and a disposition to receive Christ and his benefits*: or else to confess, *that what is contained in the gospel* is not tendered, offered, or proposed to the acceptance of sinners, *upon their believing*. They cannot all be true.

(SUBJECT CONTINUED.)

REPLY TO OBJECTIONS
TO THE OBSERVATION, "THAT OFFERS
ARE BOTH TOO HIGH AND TOO LOW."

It must, I think, appear to every person of discernment, that the objections fall very far short of proving what they ought to prove, to justify them from the charges of frivolity. It should be evinced by scripture, interpreted in harmony with Jehovah's perfections and decrees, in which of all the things the Almighty has done for the salvation of his elect, there is any thing so *mean and low* implied, as a *mere* offer of his grace, or any of its blessings; also, what he has done, with a *view*, or *design* to the salvation of the non-elect, which rises so *high*, or amounts to so *much*, as an offer of his grace, and its blessings; then these objections would have weight.

It will be vain to say, that, notwithstanding, the absolute grant of divine grace, with all its attendant blessings, to the elect, "there must be an

offer, or *something like it* ; *something of offer, overture, etc.*, of those things made to them in the gospel ;" till it can be proved, that a favour absolutely granted, cannot, in the nature of things, be received upon the *publication* of the grant without an offer, or "*something like it.*" But this I think cannot be done ; for it is a well known fact, that those legacies, which in a last will and testament, are absolutely bequeathed, are not in any sense offered ; yet, upon the *publication* of the testator's will, they are received, as truly as if they were offered ; and it is evident, that the covenant of grace, made with all the elect in Christ, in which God has freely given them all the blessings of his love ; hath, as it is administered by Christ, the nature of a testament, and is called by that name, Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17. Nor will it in the least avail to say, "that God although he offers his grace to all where the gospel comes, does not intend the salvation for all ;" until, an offer, without a design to give the thing offered, can be made to coincide with the uprightness and integrity of Jehovah's character. Neither will any advantage be gained by saying, "that, as the elect and non-elect are alike by nature ; as they who are employed in dispensing the word of life and salvation, cannot distinguish the one from the other ; and as they, consequently, do not know where, and where not, to apply the grant, it is necessary, that they should treat both elect, and non-elect, as undone sinners, and offer salvation to both ;" unless it can be made to appear, that the

free proclamation of the grant of eternal life and salvation, to sinners as such; to the guilty, the condemned, and the helpless; to the chief of sinners, and the most unworthy of the sons of men; to all in every nation and in every age, who are made willing to receive them, as the free gifts of God in Christ Jesus, is not a *full* warrant, and *sufficient* encouragement for all, of the above description, to receive them. If, therefore, it cannot be proved, that a blessing freely granted, cannot, in the nature of things, be received, without its being offered; that God can, in perfect consistency with his uprightness and integrity, make an offer of salvation to all, without a design to save all; and that the free *proclamation* of the absolute grant of life and salvation to sinners *as such*; is not a complete warrant, and sufficient encouragement, for them to receive these invaluable blessings, it must be shewn, in *which* of all the wonderful things that God has done for the salvation of the elect, any thing so *low* as a *mere offer* of his grace, or any spiritual blessing is implied; and what he has done, with a view to the *salvation* of the non-elect, which amounts to *so much* as an offer of his grace, or any spiritual blessing: or else it must be granted that offers are too high for the non-elect, and too low for the elect, and the objections advanced must appear frivolous.

Having made these preliminary observations, I shall proceed to answer the objections, in the order in which they have been stated.

Objection 1. "According to this writer's own specimen of preaching the gospel, salvation is to be proclaimed to our fellow sinners at large, amongst whom, we may reasonably conclude the non-elect will be found ; yet he tells us the Lord does not so much as offer his favours to them, but see Ezek, xxxiii. 2. ; Gen. iv. 6, 7. ; John v. 34. If the gospel, however, be not preached with a view to our acceptance of it, there can be no condemnation in rejecting it, contrary to John iii. 18."

To this objection I reply, that although according to my own specimen of preaching, the gospel salvation is to be *proclaimed* to our fellow sinners at large, it will not follow that the gospel salvation is to be *offered* to all our fellow sinners at large until it be proved that *proclaiming* salvation, and *offering* it, are precisely the same thing.

The gospel should always be preached with a view to its being accepted ; but by whom ? By the non-elect ? What hopes soever may be entertained by others of its being received by them, I know not ; for myself, I must confess, that I never had the least hope, that it would ever be received by a single individual more than God's elect ; and therefore, could never preach it with a view to its being received by the non-elect. That all the elect will receive it, we have the most positive proof. "For whom he did predestinate them he also called." "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and

belief of the truth.” “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Let us preach the gospel in all its fulness and glory, with a view to its being received by all the chosen, and then we shall preach according to the oracles of God ; according to the will of God ; and in perfect accordance with sound Calvinistic principles. But if we preach it with a view to its being received by the non-elect, as well as the elect, our view will be hostile to the word of God, to his design, to every sound Calvinistic principle, and instead of doing the work of evangelists, we shall, whatever may be said to the contrary, be found daubing with the untempered mortar of Arminianism.

I did not say, that God does not so much as offer his *favours* to the non-elect ; but that he does not so much as offer his *special* favours to them. The word *special* is important in this case, as it marks the distinction, between the common blessings of providence, and the special blessings of grace. To the former such passages as Gen. iv. 6, 7., and Ezek. xxxiii. 2. ; which shall be considered in their proper places, may be applied, which have no relation whatever to *special* favours.

Objection 2. “The elect, in innumerable instances, do not know their election, and must be addressed in the encouraging terms of the gospel, to inspire them with a good hope, not as elect sinners, which they may not know, but as those for whom the good news of the gospel is provided. 1 Tim. i. 15.”

That all the elect, while unconverted, are ignorant of their election, and that they must be addressed, as sinners, in the encouraging terms of the gospel, are positions which are not, in any sense, denied in the observations objected to; therefore this objection is irrelevant, and might be dismissed without any answer, but as it involves some questions of importance, a reply may not be altogether useless.

What are the terms of the gospel? The words which man's wisdom teacheth; or those which are taught by the Holy Ghost? Are they "Christ is offered," "salvation is tendered," "overtures of peace are made to sinners?" or, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "Wherefore he is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for them." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "By grace are ye saved." "It is God that justifieth." "He justifieth the ungodly." "He imputeth righteousness without works." "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast made me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more." "Hearken unto me ye stout-hearted that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will *place*," not offer, "salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory?" The *latter*, not the *former* are, I am bold to affirm, the *terms* of the gospel, and the good news prepared for sinners.

Which then, are best calculated, *these* or *those*, to inspire elect sinners with a good hope? Doubtless positive declarations from the mouth of God, of the absolute, immutable grant of life everlasting, with all its concomitants to sinners, the chief of sinners, are infinitely more conducive to a good hope, than a vague, unmeaning offer of them from the mouth of man. The offer of the inheritance, leaves both our title to it, and our possession of it, uncertain; and therefore encourages despair, rather than hope; but the free grant has insured both;

therefore, the publication of it tends to crush despair, and encourage that hope which maketh not ashamed.

Again, I ask, does the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to inspire elect sinners with a good hope, perform that work, by means of offers and overtures, or by the free proclamation of Christ and his great salvation, as the gift of God to the guilty and unworthy? To this query we have a complete answer, Acts x. from the 34th to the 44th verse.

Objection 3. "Because we have nothing to do with either the elect or non-elect, under these denominations in preaching the gospel to sinners, being perfectly unable to discriminate them, but to deliver the plain testimony of divine truth and mercy for their acceptance, Luke xix. 10.; leaving the Lord to work such a disposition where he pleaseth."

Suppose we have nothing to do with either elect or non-elect, under these denominations in preaching the gospel to sinners, though that cannot be admitted as fact, it would by no means follow, that my assertion, that offers are too high for the non-elect, and too low for the elect is untrue; for in order to prove it untrue it must be made evident, that God, in the dispensation of his *special* favours by the ministry of the gospel, has nothing to do with them under these denominations.

To deliver the plain testimony of divine truth and mercy, is, unquestionably, the province of ministers; but, methinks, to apply it, belongs to

power and authority, infinitely higher than any possessed by mortal man. No effectual application of the gospel testimony, was ever yet made to the heart of any sinner, by other agency than that of divine omnipresence ; by other authority than that of supreme sovereignty. The utmost application that ministers can make is to the ear ; and this is done sufficiently, by the delivery of the divine testimony of truth and mercy, or in declaring the whole counsel of God, without either offers or overtures, or any thing of that kind. But had they power at command, sufficient to convey the word of life to the heart, it would be dangerous for them to attempt the application ; because as they are “ perfectly unable to discriminate the elect and the non-elect ; ” they would be liable to make mistakes, and apply it where it should not be applied ; unless God had appointed a general application, which is not the case. Ministers should therefore, deliver the plain testimony of divine truth and mercy without either offer or tender, in the ears of their fellow sinners ; leaving the Lord to make the application to the heart ; or, which is the same thing, work a disposition to receive his testimony, when and where he will.

Objection 4. “ It cannot be too low for the elect, when they are even made manifest, to be accommodated with that for their acceptance, which was given them in Christ before the world began, in order that they might accept it, and be glad and rejoice in it, Acts x. 43. ; xiii. 38, 39. Not too high

for the non-elect, when it was the purpose and command of God, that the same gospel, should be preached to them as to others, for their acceptance, whether they complied therewith or not, Ezek. ii. 5 ; Mark xiv. 15."

To this objection, replete with ambiguity, I answer, the sentiment here objected to, does not deny that the elect should be accommodated in time, with that, for their acceptance, which was given them in Jesus Christ before the world began, in order that they might accept it, and be glad and rejoice in it; but that the accommodation furnished by the gospel does not consist in offers, tenders, and overtures, of what was given them in Christ before the world began; for offers are not a sufficient accommodation for the elect, when made manifest by special conviction of their depravity and guilt, and a sense of their miseries and wants. They need accommodation abundantly higher than any which tenders and offers can afford, to enable them to rejoice, and be glad in those things, which were given them in Christ before time. In order to turn their mourning into joy, there must be a positive declaration of the absolute grant of those things to them in that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; and an effectual application of the declaration, made by the Holy Ghost to their hearts; things as far above offers, as the heavens are above the earth.

Though God has commanded the same gospel to be preached to the elect and non-elect, it does

not follow, either that he offers his special favours, to the latter for their acceptance, or that he ever designed that they should receive them, or have an offer of them; nor can any opponent make it appear, that he ever purposed that they should receive them, till he has proved that the doctrine of election is untrue; nor that he has commanded them to be offered to either elect or non-elect, till he has clearly shown that preaching the gospel, and offering the contents of it, are precisely the same.

The observation, to which the fifth objection is made, does not go upon the supposition, that the *elect and non-elect*, all know their own state while dead in sins, as an opponent falsely affirms, but upon the certainty that God knows their state, that all his conduct towards them is in the most perfect harmony with his own perfections, decrees and character; that it would not accord with the sincerity and uprightness of his nature, to offer to the *non-elect*, what he has immutably determined never to give them; and that it would not comport with his infinite wisdom, to approach the *elect* with an offer of that, which he has absolutely settled upon them, by covenant and oath, and positively declared they shall possess and enjoy. By the divine grant, they are completely entitled to all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; and by the proclamation of those blessings, as the free gift of God to sinners, attended by the Spirit of light, life, and power to their hearts, they are, at once, brought to know them, and made *willing* to receive them, nay,

they are really *enabled* to receive them, and live joyfully upon them by faith. Acts x. 44; Psa. cx. 3. Where then is the utility of offers, to either elect or non-elect? They come quite too *late*: the designs of God are completed, and his people are made happy without them.

It is wrong to imagine, that, on the supposition that the elect know that Christ was theirs from eternity, the gospel can do them no good: a more egregious error cannot be; for even they who have the most perfect assurance of their interest in him that can be, still rejoice at hearing the proclamation of pardon and life; and feed upon the invaluable blessings, as presented to them in the gospel. Indeed, this part of the objection appears to me quite dangerous; because it tends to make the gospel useless to many of the Lord's people, and to encourage a neglect of the word of truth, in those who are blessed with a knowledge of their interest in Christ.

That mercy and forgiveness are blessings suited to the case of sinners under guilt, and that they should be presented to, or before them, is not denied. But it seems they must not be presented only, but they must be offered also, and the acceptance of them must be urged in the way of true repentance. I should really be glad to know, what is meant by the acceptance of these blessings *in the way of true repentance*. Is it that true, or evangelical, repentance is the *condition* upon which they become ours in point of right; or that it is the

ground on which we are to claim them as our own? One of the two must be meant, if any thing at all is meant. If the *former*, it denies that mercy and pardon, are the absolute gifts of God, and suspends salvation upon a work of man, contrary to the scriptures. If the *latter*, then it places true repentance, by which I suppose is intended that which is truly spiritual, before the reception of mercy and forgiveness, and makes it the warrant of a sinner's reception of them, in direct opposition to Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Ezek. xvi. 63; xx. 41—43; xxxvi. 25—30; Zech. xii. 10. Nay, it justifies the observation, that the *special favours* of God are not *so much* as offered to the non-elect; and falls into the very sentiment which it endeavours to shun. For if mercy and forgiveness be offered to sinners, and their acceptance of them, be urged in *this* way of repentance, it unavoidably follows, that after all the contention for general offers, they are, in fact, made to none but the truly penitent; and as none are ever truly penitent but God's elect, the *universal* proposals are *limited* to them only.

Nor can these views be fairly exculpated from the charge of making repentance, either the condition of a sinner's title to mercy and pardon, or the ground and warrant of his acceptance of them, while they are offered to sinners, *to become theirs upon their repentance*: nor yet from the charge of limiting these offers to the penitent; as long as repentance is made either the condition of the right of sinners to, or the ground of their acceptance of

the things which are offered. For, if they have no right to receive and enjoy them, but as penitents, and they are proposed to them *as such*, it would be absurd to say, that the offer is, *in reality*, extended beyond them, whatever it may be in pretence.