

show me more of myself; and to make me feel more deeply my awful depravity; I was convinced of my imbecility and total insufficiency, not only to save myself independent of Christ, but to perform those conditions which my teachers assured me I must perform, *punctually* and *constantly* perform, in order to obtain and preserve an interest in the Redeemer, and the benefits of his life and sufferings, and to procure a title to eternal life. The things which I heard with my ears, and those which I felt in my bosom, were always at war. In the midst of this conflict my poor soul was like an infant, seized by sanguinary ruffians, cruelly lacerated and wantonly tossed from sword to sword, just ready to expire through fear and wounds. I fled from my frightful self, to seek for shelter and relief in sermons; the sermons which I attended threw me back upon myself, to receive fresh and deeper wounds: again, I fled to sermons, for peace and health, and though I pleaded my entire helplessness and utter inability, to fulfil the conditions which the preachers enjoined, still they insisted on them, and again threw me back, with redoubled violence, upon myself, to seek for peace and rest in my own performances upon the lacerating points of my inbred evils. In the midst of these tossings too and fro, my agitated, anguished mind came, at length, to this conclusion; if what these men say is true, I am lost, lost for ever; there is, there can be no hope of salvation for one so guilty, polluted, and helpless. I left them; they sought me; I

was unstable and deluded ; in short, I was fallen from grace ; and my class-leader, in the plenitude of his universal charity, told me that I was a serpent. But none of these things moved me. I was determined to seek food for my famishing and fainting soul elsewhere ; I sought and found. My Bible, the most excellent of books, was my companion, my counsellor, and my guide ; I read it by day and by night, on my bed, and at my meals, at home, and abroad. I heard other preachers ; I heard a joyful sound, salvation ; not to be determined by my depraved, capricious will ; but originating in the sovereign and immutable will of my Creator ; not to be contrived by my poor, purblind reason ; but planned by the all perfect wisdom of the Most High ; not to be effected by my withered enfeebled arm ; but begun, and carried on, and completed by the omnipotent Immanuel ; not to be purchased by my works, all contaminated ; but given, given freely, as the air we breathe is given ; not to continue mine, only as long as I was faithful to grace, and while I conducted myself with decorum, or in a manner worthy of the boundless favour, but mine, notwithstanding all my prodigious unworthiness ; mine, by the absolute, irrevocable grant of heaven, for ever and ever. These joyful tidings were to my sin sick, fainting soul, as a voice from heaven, as the voice of my God. The men who brought them to my ears, were to me as angels, departed from the celestial throne, with full commission to proclaim an everlasting

jubilee, to me and to others in the same state; their tongues were as the choicest silver, their voices as sweetest music, and their words were like apples of gold in pictures of silver. I listened with ardour, hanging on the lips of my generous instructors, while their doctrine dropped as the rain, and their speech distilled as the dew, upon my thirsty soul. The truths which I heard "came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." My prejudices against those sentiments which had been held up to me as erroneous, as dangerous, as licentious, and as blasphemous, bowed and fell down; they sunk as a millstone to rise no more; and those very doctrines which had been, with no small degree of adroitness, placed before me, in colours the most frightful, and figures the most terrific, I now saw to be the glory of the Bible, and the *essence* of christianity: they were, and still are to me, "the power of God unto salvation." With my whole heart I believed them to be the marrow of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, the truth as it is in Jesus. I found them to be richly salubrious, and pre-eminently sanctifying in their nature, and in their tendency, supremely honouring to each glorious person, and every attribute of Deity. I saw the transcendent beauty of the incarnate God, my only, my all-sufficient Saviour; beheld the Father's glory shining in the Redeemer's face and felt the vital energy of the Holy Ghost. My heart melted beneath the tender, the irresistibly tender impres-

sions of *divine electing love* ; my soul wondered, rejoiced, and adored. Then said I, "O Lord, I will praise thee : though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." "Behold, God," the incarnate God, "is my salvation ; I will trust and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation." Then "with joy I drew water," healing, purifying, consoling, fructifying water out of the deep, the overflowing "wells of salvation : " God the Father ; God the Son ; and God the Holy Ghost : their eternal, immutable counsel and covenant ; and their glorious works of grace performed for the salvation of the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven.

The pure waters, which I then drank, from these mysterious, unfathomable, eternal springs, quite spoiled my taste for the foul streams of both false doctrines and immorality of which I had drank very freely, and palled my appetite for every kind of worldly and fashionable amusement ; and, to the honour of almighty grace I speak it, my former zest for them has never returned : my language to the things which had been my dearest delights, then was, and still is, "*fly ! for I hate you all.*" In my new school, madam, old indeed in itself, but to me new, I learned, first, that there is a vast difference between a profession of religion, and the possession of it, and between external moral decency, and internal vital godliness. Secondly,

that alarms of conscience and fears of hell often impel people, and especially young people, to reform their lives, and impose upon themselves the most severe restraints, and carry them on for a long season, in a profession of religion, causing them to weep and pray, even while the love of sin is very great and powerful, and is only waiting for a favourable opportunity, when conscience is less uneasy, and fears of eternal death have a little subsided, to prompt the unhappy creatures to throw off every restraint, and return, with keener appetites, to their former criminal indulgences. Thirdly, that there never is, nor can be, real conversion, to Jesus Christ, unattended by a reformation of manners; but there may be, and frequently is a reformation when there is no such conversion. Fourthly, that obedience to the commands of God, which is the effect of terror, and fear of punishment, is only the obedience of the slave, under the lash of the holy law; not that of sons under the parental smile, who obey under the impulse of love to both God and his commandments, rising from his love to them, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. Fifthly, that obedience performed, in hope of escaping destruction and of obtaining by it the favour of the Almighty, and securing a title to a crown of immortal glory, is no other than the obedience of mercenaries, who in all they do, serve themselves rather than God; and who, like the hireling, that loves neither his master nor his work, but has his heart fixed merely

on his reward, would soon relinquish his service, if their hope and expectation of eternal life, as the reward of their obedience, were to subside. Sixthly, that neither fears of the wrath to come, nor terrors, the deepest and most awful, that can possibly exist in the human breast, nor the most confident and pleasing hopes of celestial bliss built upon our own obedience or personal worth, nor the most refined theory of religion, nor the finest external moral rectitude, not any one of these, nor all of them combined with all that bears the name of natural or moral virtue can constitute real religion; no, it is a new creation, madam, effected by the almighty energy of the Holy Ghost according to the purpose and grace of God given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, which gives being to religion in the soul of man, and forms the new christian character. It is God, you may believe me, it is God alone who makes the truly religious man, not in consequence of a second thought, there is, there can be no such thought in him whose mind is eternally the same, without the shadow of a change; not by a fugitive volition of his will; not by a casual emanation of his power,—things totally incompatible with a being of infinite perfection,—but according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in himself: yes, he does this glorious work as he does all his works, according to the counsel of his will.

The Omnipotent Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, according to the economy of

grace, enters into sinners "chosen of God unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and a belief of the truth," even while they are dead in their trespasses and sins, he enters them without their direct solicitation or desire, therefore freely and of his own good will, and inspires them with new life purely spiritual and divine. Descending in all the plenitude of his love and power he breathes upon the dry bones lying in the low valley of their fallen and helpless state, and they live. This supernatural vivification, the glorious effect of all-creating might directed by sovereign electing love, is that which the scripture calls regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the subjects of it, highly favored of the Lord, and marked as his own, are born again, born of the water and the Spirit, born of God and declared to be his children and heirs of celestial and immortal glory: for if born, then children, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.

By the same effective energy which produces in them this vital God-like principle the light of life is diffused through all their souls to dispel their native darkness and irradiate their minds, by nature "like a land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness as darkness itself, and the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Their minds illumined, they see their former darkness, and the fatal errors in which they all along ignorantly lived without fear. They descry the way of truth, of truth divine,

devised by infinite wisdom in the counsel of the Holy Trinity, and delineated by the sacred writers in the scriptures with inimitable skill and unequal precision, so that the wayfaring man, the man whose mind is divinely enlightened to discern spiritual things, though in regard to human science, a fool, shall not err therein.

The glorious irradiation convinces them of the deep depravity of their nature, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as the transgression of God's most holy law; as rebellion against the supreme sovereignty of his righteous will; as enmity against the purity of his nature; as the only thing existing which he abhors, and by which his name is dishonoured; as the sole cause and fruitful parent of all the miseries known on earth and in hell. He discloses to their view the baneful turpitude of their thoughts, words and deeds issuing from hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. By means of his inward instructions they learn that they are extremely guilty, without ability to atone for the least offence, totally unrighteous, without power to make themselves in the least measure righteous in the sight of infinite purity, defiled throughout in body, soul, and spirit, and destitute of means to cleanse themselves from their filthiness, utterly unworthy of the divine regard, and quite unable to render themselves worthy of it, deserving, every moment deserving, the hottest displeasure of the Almighty, and to be destroyed with an everlasting destruction from his presence



and the glory of his power, without even the shadow of help in themselves. They see, they feel themselves to be wretched, helpless, and miserable.

The all powerful Spirit of judgment and of burning destroys all the foundations which they have devised for themselves, and on which their deceived and deceitful hearts have built their hopes of salvation, consumes every refuge of lies to which they have fled, and makes them both ashamed and afraid of the falsehoods under which they have hid themselves, and burns up all the hay, wood, and stubble of natural religion. He makes void their covenant with death, dissolves their agreement with hell, stains the whole crown of self-righteous pride, turns all the comeliness of sinless perfection in the flesh into corruption, breaks the high arm of self-conceit and self-sufficiency, lays all the boasted power and sovereignty of free-will in the dust, in fine, he strips all those whom he condescends to teach of every hope and every plea derived from themselves and founded upon their works, and leaves them nothing of their own to boast of, or in which to glory, that they may exalt and glorify Christ in their hearts, as all in all, and bring them to make their boast in him, and to glory in his cross.

Trembling and afraid, filled with shame and covered with confusion of face, reproaching themselves, and bitterly bewailing their woful condition, their Divine Instructor leads them hard by the

dismal gulf of despair, and through the bewildering mazes of manifold temptations to the door of hope which is opened before them in the dispensation of divine grace, to Jesus, the Father's unspeakable gift, the gratuitous gift of his free and boundless love,—to Jesus the helpless sinner's kindest friend, the Saviour, the only, the Almighty Saviour full of grace and truth; who says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest;" "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

The heavenly Teacher proceeds in this glorious work which he never for a moment relinquishes, he carries it on with a power to which all resistance must yield, and will complete it to the praise of the glory of the whole divine Trinity and all the sacred perfections of Deity. In the faithful mirror of the gospel he presents to their astonished view, the glory, personal and mediatorial, the grace, the righteousness, the atonement, the redemption, the salvation of Immanuel in the transcendant beauty of their perfection, and in the riches, the superabundant riches of their freeness to the guilty, whose only desert is the vengeance of eternal fire. His glorious almighty power effectually disposes them to believe the gospel testimony concerning Jesus; and, assuring them that the absolute grant which God the Father has made of

him, and all the riches of his fulness to sinners as such, is their complete and only warrant to receive him; he encourages their desponding minds, and emboldens and enables their fearful trembling hearts, swollen with anguish, to claim him as their own, on that very ground; to venture their languishing souls upon him, and to place their entire confidence in him for justification, pardon, and peace; for sanctification and everlasting life. Here they triumph, here they rest; this is their rest for ever, here shall they dwell in perfect safety, no power shall separate them from him in whom they confide, their righteous souls shall never be removed from this impregnable foundation, this invincible sanctuary where grace reigns over sin, and death, and hell, through righteousness unto eternal life.

This is the glorious era of their existence: before, they existed only as mere men, now they exist as christian men; they now enter upon a new career, they begin to live a life of faith, of love, of hope, of self-denial, of humility, of godly fear, of prayer, of praise, of cheerful obedience to the divine commands, and of ardent desire of the highest possible enjoyment of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom they affectionately regard as the supreme good, whose favour is life, and whose smile is bliss. The faithful Spirit carries on his gracious work; he will not, he cannot forsake it; he helps their manifold and various infirmities. Under his efficient influence and in his never-failing strength they fight the good fight of

faith, resist the devil, wrestle with flesh and blood, "put off, as concerning the former conversation the old man with his deeds," putting on the new; and "run with patience the race which is set before them, looking unto Jesus;" nor shall they faint, for God has granted unto them that they, being delivered from the hand of their enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him all, not a part only, but all the days of their lives. Whither am I running? I fear your patience is exhausted; a minute or two more and I shall have done. Be assured, Madam, that if you wish to indulge in any known sin, you must not become acquainted with the pure doctrines of divine grace commonly called Calvinism, for they have been found by the best of men, in all ages, when applied by the Holy Ghost, to be, both in their nature and their effects on the mind, "doctrines according to godliness." But if you would not indulge in any sin, you must drink deep and heartily of them. The more you imbibe them, and the more your soul is imbued with them, the more will all sin be subdued and mortified in you. You will, most undoubtedly, find that in proportion to the ascendancy of these sublime truths in your mind, you will rise in triumph over every sinful passion, and be transformed into the amiable image of your Saviour. "Sanctify them," said the gracious Redeemer when praying for his people, "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

You ask advice, I freely give you the best I can:

“search the scriptures.” The Bible is the best of books; be instant in prayer for divine instruction: none can teach like God; look unto Jesus, take him for your all and trust him with your all, hear him, be all attention to his gracious voice. “I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.” Believe me, Madam, he can do wonders, not only in individuals, but in whole families, and in a very short time too. His heart is love, his arm is power.

As much as possible live peaceably with all men; but never for a single moment sacrifice one tittle of divine truth to the favour of the nearest relative, or the dearest friend. Never court disputes, but if those who differ from you in religious sentiments intrude their opinions upon you, do not give place to them in the least. Be valiant for truth, but then be careful not to contend with unhallowed warmth; angry disputes seldom produce any good effects. We who believe that no man can receive any thing divine except it be given him from heaven, and that by the mere grace of God we are what we are, should be the last to be angry with those who do not see and embrace divine truth as we do. In all our debates with them, pity, not anger, should move our tongues and tune our voices; we should speak and behave to them in such a manner, as, if possible, to convince them that although we can by no means approve their track, yet we love their souls. Watch for those around you, they will watch for your halting. Now you have begun to think favourably of those sentiments, which they mista-

kenly think, naturally and unavoidably lead to levity and carelessness ; they will expect to see you give the rein to the flesh, and become disorderly and licentious in your behaviour ; therefore, I repeat my admonition, “watch.”

That the pure word of eternal truth may dwell richly in you in all wisdom, and that Christ and his perfect and free salvation may be ever pre-eminent in your esteem, prays

Dear Madam,

Yours,

## THOUGHTS UPON THE DATE OF JUSTIFICATION.

Gospel justification is an act of the gracious will of God, by which the elect are constituted completely and immutably just, or righteous, in Christ Jesus, by the imputation of his righteousness to their persons. Union with the glorious Mediator is the basis upon which it rests ; as no man is justified who is not united to him, so no man is unjustified who is united to him. We have no authority whatever in the Holy Scriptures, to say either that a person who is not in him is righteous, or that one who is in him is unrighteous : it is in him that all the seed of Israel are justified ; because in him they have righteousness.

Justification is an article of the utmost importance, because an article in which both the honour of God, and the felicity of his people, are deeply interested, and firmly united ; we should, therefore,

neither think of it with indifference, nor treat it with lightness ; but contemplate it with the greatest solemnity, and discuss it with the utmost care. No part of it is trivial ; all the circumstances attending it are of moment :—of such moment, that the omission of but one of them would have entirely changed the nature of the wondrous scheme—would have diminished both the glory arising from it to God who justifies, and the bliss which it affords to man who is justified.

The dates of very important human transactions are, in general, of considerable consequence, therefore particular regard is paid to them ; and when such transactions are made public, accurate specifications of their dates appear. Now, as no transactions, which are human and earthly, are equal in importance to those of the Most High ; as among all his wonderful works, no one makes a more noble figure upon the scale of importance, than this of justification ; and as the same infallible wisdom which formed the scheme of it, superintended its publication, we cannot give a moment's indulgence to the thought, that in the mirror of divinely inspired revelation, its date is attended with obscurity.

It is affirmed above, that union with Christ is the foundation of justification ; by this position we must abide until force—force of evidence, that it is erroneous,—compels us to retreat. Now to the law and to the testimony. “ Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness.”



The same glorious person who has fixed us in Christ, has made him our righteousness. Who will undertake to prove that he did not do both at the same instant? But more will be said upon this subject in its proper place; my present business is, to inquire after the date of our union with the Saviour, and when that is ascertained, we shall soon perceive, whether time or eternity marks the date of our justification.

Some divines of high respectability, have represented the union of the elect with Christ, as commencing with their faith in him; and others have considered faith as the efficient cause of this union, affirming that it unites them to him. Though I hope always to pay all due respect to men of learning, of talents, and of eminence in the church of Christ, yet I cannot persuade myself to place implicit confidence in them, and to embrace what they advance, without proving it by the scriptures of truth; and having brought the above sentiments to this test, and maturely considered them, I confess, that, to me, they appear erroneous.

It is, I think, evident beyond all contradiction, that union with Christ has the precedence of faith in him; and the subsequent arguments, each of which is founded upon scripture, will, it is hoped, support this sentiment.

No sinner can truly believe in God our Saviour, prior to his regeneration. Living faith is the effect of spiritual life, but no unregenerate person has spiritual life; therefore, no unregenerate

person has living faith. The accuracy of this argument is evinced by the words of our Lord : “ he that liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live.” Here spiritual life is the antecedent, faith the consequent, and eternal life the promised portion of the man who lives and believes. Again, as faith and hope are kindred graces inseparably connected, and as the one cannot exist without the other, they must arise from the same principle ; and as men are begotten again by the Father of mercies to a lively hope, they must be also begotten again by him to a lively faith ; there must be a divine operation in the soul, before there can be either power or inclination to believe ; or else faith would be of ourselves, and the following scriptures would be untrue : “ Thou hast wrought all our works in us.” “ It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.” “ The faith of the operation of God.” “ The fruit of the Spirit is faith.”

Antecedent to any gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, the divine almighty agent by whom the work of faith is begun and carried on with power, there must be a communication of him, from the head of the church, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell : all fulness of the Holy Ghost, as well as of grace and of glory. It would not be consonant to either scripture or reason, to say that the work of grace is begun in any man before the Spirit of grace is communicated to him. We learn from the divine pages, those infal-

lible oracles, whose voice is decisive, and from whose authority there can be no appeal, that sinners dead in trespasses and sins, are represented under the striking emblems of bones dead and dry, and that the divine Spirit, figuratively called wind and breath, must really blow upon them, and enter into them, before they can live spiritually ; that to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, the Spirit of truth must come ; that the gracious Redeemer, for the very purpose of making his words known to the simple, pours out his Spirit upon them ; that the Comforter, in order to guide us into all truth, to testify of Christ, to take of his and shew it unto us, and to diffuse his divine delights through our sorrowful souls, must be with us, must be in us ; that the children of God, that they may know their adoption, and cry abba, Father, have the Spirit of the Son sent into their hearts ; and that before the unbelieving, impenitent, and prayerless, can believe, repent, and pray, the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them. Is it possible to resist, with effect, the profusion of evidence which is poured in upon us, by prophets, by apostles, and by the Lord of both ? No, we are compelled to believe, confess, and declare, that the divine Spirit must be imparted by Christ to his people, and that he must really dwell in them, prior to their regeneration. Reason too, ever in unison with the divine pages, declares that when and wherever a work of any kind is performed, the agent who performs it must be present.

The man who formed this sheet of paper upon which I now write was present, at the time when, and the place where it was made ; had he been absent, he could not have been the maker of it. Nor, in the nature of things, can the Holy Spirit be the author of any gracious operation in the soul of man, unless he be present there.

And as previous to the work of the Holy Ghost in the highly favoured vessels of infinite mercy, there must be a communication of him to them, so prior to any such communication there must be a union between them, and the illustrious person, by whom he is gratuitously imparted. Christ is styled the vine, and his people are called the branches ; he is denominated the head, and they are termed his body. This is figurative language, and the figures which are here introduced, being selected, from the almost infinite variety of the boundless store of nature,—selected by that wisdom which framed the universe ; invented the numberless species of creatures ; formed every figure in the animal and vegetable worlds ; endued the various creatures with their respective qualities ; gave laws to universal nature, laws which no power inferior to omnipotence can change ; and appointed that astonishing series of causes and effects, which runs all through the endless race of beings which his hands have made ;—I cannot imagine, that there is any error in the choice of them, or that they are inadequate to the divine design in employing them : which design was nothing less, than to shew the

reality, the nature, and the effects, of that amazing union, which there is betwixt himself and his people. The branch is one with the vine, and the body is one with the head, but not more truly so than Christ and his people are one. The branch, in consequence of its union with the vine, receives from its sap, life, vigour, foliage, and fruitfulness; and the body through union with the head derives from it life and influence: just so the people of God receive the Holy Spirit, divine life, vigour, influence, fruitfulness, and beauty, from Jesus Christ, the true vine and their ever-living and all-glorious head. Without union there could be no communication of sap and life to the branch, nor of sense and influence to the body. In philosophy it would be deemed quite inaccurate to say, that the branch independent of, and before the commencement of its union with the vine, while it lay withered, dead, and dry, at a distance from the vine received from it a supply of sap, by which means it was raised to vegetable life, and endued with prolific power, and that the fruit which it brought forth united it to, and made it one with the vine. Why then should it be thought accurate in theology, to say, that antecedent to their union with Christ the elect receive the Holy Spirit from him, in consequence of which they live and bear fruit, and that by the fruit which they bring forth they are united to him? We frequently hear that faith unites us to Christ, and that we become one with him by faith. Pray is not faith a fruit which

is brought forth by persons who are born of God ; a fruit of the divine Spirit produced in them, by his regenerating power and fructifying grace ? Is it then correct ; is it not rather absurd, unscriptural, untrue to say, that it unites us to him who says, “ as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me ; for without, or severed from me, ye can do nothing ? ” Our Lord, in these words, plainly shews, that our fruit is not the cause of our union with him, but the effect, and that our union with him is the cause of all the gracious communications which we receive from him ; all the delightful communion which we have with him ; and all our spiritual fruitfulness toward God. We are first united to him by a free act of stupendous, matchless love ; then we receive the Holy Spirit from him ; then we are regenerated, according to his eternal purpose, “ who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ; ” and then we bring forth the fruit of faith, and all other fruit connected with it. In this order the only wise God proceeds to make his chosen people fruitful ; to humble the pride of man, and to display the riches of his own stupendous wisdom and love. In this divine procedure, all is order, all is harmony, all is beauty. Here the ineffable lustre of eternal wisdom and love meets our eyes, and commands our adoring admiration. Yet in this, as well as in other branches of his inimitable conduct, the Supreme stands corrected by his creatures, who, both in their ideas,

and their language, entirely invert this order; and very gravely assure us, that we first believe, and then our faith becomes the efficient cause of our union with Jesus: thus the cause is changed into the effect, and the effect into the cause; while the dark veil of human confusion conceals divine order and beauty from our view. Perfectly satisfied that union with the head of the church is a precious privilege which exists prior to faith, regeneration, and the impartation of the divine Spirit; we should still proceed in our enquiries after the precise date of it. With the divine records, those infallible guides in our hands, we may advance in our researches beyond the utmost boundaries of time, and enter into eternity; may pry, without presumption, into those mysterious deeps, which, during eternal ages, lay concealed in the infinite mind of the Almighty, but are now made known to the sons of men, in the holy volume of inspiration. Here we read the ancient thoughts of our heavenly Father: thoughts of love and peace, of pardon and salvation. Here we view, recorded, with unimpeached integrity, and minute exactness, those amazing transactions of the Godhead, in which all human salvation is found; and from which, as from an immense ocean of delight, flow all those ample streams of strong consolation, which gladden the heirs of promise, in this vale of temptation and distress. Here we are told, that we were chosen by the Father of mercies in Christ Jesus; that we had grace given us in him; that a promise of eternal life was given

us by him who cannot lie ; and that all this was done before the foundation of the world. In the detail of these eternal transactions ; we behold the date of our union with God, the Son, written in characters the most legible. Upon what ground shall we resist this evidence of the eternity of our union with the Saviour ; or by what means shall we invalidate this divine proof of eternal interest in him ? Chosen in him, blessed in him, made partakers of grace in him, in eternity ; and yet no union with him, no interest in him till the arrival of certain periods of time. It cannot be : if we were chosen *in* him in eternity, we were then united to him, and made one with him ; and if we were eternally blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, we must have been eternally interested in him. A title to the riches of his fulness is founded upon interest in him ; interest in him is established upon union with him ; and union with him stands upon election in him. God, in his infinite wisdom, and absolute sovereignty, has joined these things together ; let no man endeavour to put them asunder. Again, as the love of God to his people centres in Jesus ; as he does not love them but as *in him* considered ; and as he loved them before the foundation of the world, they must have been in him before the foundation of the world. Moreover, as Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in all his covenant relations to his church ; and as he is now her head and representative, he must have been so before the commence-



ment of time, and she must have been one with him from of old, from everlasting. As in the natural womb, the head and the members are not conceived apart, but in union with each other, so Christ and the church were conceived in the eternal mind, as head and body in perfect union. In that glorious act of sovereign grace, election; head and members were chosen for each other: were chosen as one.

But the elect fell in Adam. Granted: but did they fall out of Christ when they fell in him? No, he who sanctified, choose, or set them apart for himself, *preserved them in him* to be called. So that although they suffered much by that awful event, they still stood firm in Christ, and their interest in the special love and favour of God, in him, continued immutable.

To conclude this part of the subject; God, according to his sovereign good will and pleasure, and for his own everlasting praise, did, at once, fix his unchangeable love upon his people; choose them in Christ; firmly unite them to him; and make them one with him. Divine eternal love was the impulsive cause, and is the everlasting bond of this blissful union: we may therefore say of Christ and his church, from everlasting to everlasting they are one.

And now we have found the date of our union with Christ, we are not far from that of our justification in him; for union with him, and justification in him are kindred blessings in the closest con-

nexion, and incapable of separation. They are effects of the same cause, are granted to the same persons, and are stamped with the same date. Let my opponent prove the contrary if he can. But to shew how a person can be in Christ, and be, notwithstanding, unjustified will, it is thought, be a task too difficult for him to perform. All who are united to him are the righteousness of God in him; and if of God we are in him, he of God is made unto us righteousness.

Justification is a simple act of the divine eternal mind, or the absolute determination of God not to impute sin to his people, and to place the righteousness of Christ to their account. Deny the eternity of this determination, and where is the immutability of deity? Can it be said, with truth, that new resolutions are formed in the mind of God, and yet that he is unchangeable? Surely not, for in that very moment in which he forms a new design, mutability attaches to his character, and his glory is tarnished. Let us then be careful, not to maintain a favourite notion at the expence of our Maker's glory. He is the Lord; he changes not. His thoughts, his counsels, his purposes and decrees, are, like the perfections of his nature, without the shadow of a change.

Eternal justification has been termed eternal nonsense. But why this odious epithet? Is it thought absurd that a person should be justified before the commencement of his existence? Why then not think it absurd, that a person should be

elected prior to his existence? There is no more absurdity in the former than there is in the latter: that as well as this, being a pure act of the divine will.

Sanctification, indeed, requires the real existence of the person to be sanctified; because that is a work performed in him by an act of Almighty power; but justification, being an act of the divine will passed in a man's favour, and concerning his eternal state, it no more requires his existence when it is passed, than that act of the same sovereign will which appointed Cyrus to release the captive Jews required his existence, when he was ordained to that work: it is, therefore, audacious impudence to call it eternal nonsense.

The apostle Paul speaks of justification and election as in the closest connexion. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Here he represents the elect as justified; does he speak of all the elect, or only a part of them? Doubtless of the whole; for had he spoken of a part only, he would certainly have specified the part intended. He does not say, who shall lay any thing to the charge of a part of the elect, or those of the elect who believe? It is God that justifieth them; though that would have been a truth; but who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect; without either limitation or distinction; intimating that all the elect are justified, and that they are justified as persons elected. Now if they are justified as God's elect, their justification must be eternal; because they were his elect in

eternity. It will be difficult to find a justified person who is not elected, and it will be no less difficult to find an elect person who is not justified in the sight, and in the account of God.

The same wise and holy apostle informs us, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Now when was he in Christ doing this? Perhaps, some will reply, when Christ was suspended upon the cross; when he poured out his soul unto death; and when he made atonement for sin; then the Father was in him reconciling the world of his people to himself. What, not before? Pray what was he doing when he set up his Son from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when he laid help upon him, who is mighty to save; when the council of peace was between him and that Mighty One; and when he made the everlasting covenant of grace with him? Was he not then reconciling his chosen to himself? Did he not then appoint his beloved Son to bear all the sins, which they should in time commit; and to be the Lord their righteousness? Did he not then transfer the sins of his people, from them to him; and impute his righteousness to them?

If it be said that he then purposed to do these things, but did not actually do them; it will be said in reply, that purposing and doing are the same with God, when a simple act of his will only is concerned, and an operation of his might is not employed. The non-imputation of sin and the im-

putation of righteousness, are not acts of his power, but merely of his will ; therefore, his purpose not to impute sin, is the non-imputation of it ; and his determination to impute righteousness, is the imputation of it. If then God was in Christ in eternity, purposing, decreeing, or determining, never to impute the sins of his people to them, but to charge them upon Jesus, and always to impute his righteousness to them, it must follow that their sins were never imputed to them, but always stood to the account of the Mediator ; and that his righteousness was eternally imputed to them ; unless repentance were found in the Almighty, and he relinquished his purpose, and nullified his decree : things utterly incompatible with a mind infinitely remote from the shadow of a change.

Again, we read, that “ Jesus was made the surety of a better testament.” By the better testament, the apostle means the covenant of grace. Of this Jesus is called the surety. But why the surety of it ? Because when it was made between him and his Father in eternity, he engaged his heart to draw nigh unto the Father, to offer himself to him as the surety of his people, to bear their transgressions, and fulfil all righteousness in their stead : which perfectly corresponded with the Father’s will, and met his highest approbation. Being accepted by the Father as surety for all the elect, and bound by his own voluntary engagement to be responsible for all their iniquities, and to perform that obedience which the divine law required of them ; and thus,

at once, to give the most ample satisfaction to divine justice, magnify the law, and make it honourable, and rear everlasting honours to every divine perfection, all their crimes became his, and his obedience became theirs. Nor are these views of the subject at all inconsistent with reason; for it is well known by almost every one, that if a person, possessing ability, offers to become surety for one who is insolvent, proposing to pay out of his own personal estate, the whole of his debt, and to give his creditor full satisfaction; if the creditor accepts him for the debtor, and receives from him a legal bond, there is a real transference of the debt, from the debtor to the surety; and to the debtor there is a transference, equally real, of the payment to be made by the surety; so that the surety absolutely stands debtor to the creditor, as really as if he had himself contracted the whole debt; and the debtor is fully discharged from the imputation of the debt, and from all obligation to payment, or to suffer for non-payment: he is completely exonerated, all his obligations devolve upon his surety, and to him only the creditor looks for satisfaction. We must, therefore, relinquish every just idea of the eternal suretyship engagement of Christ, and conclude that the apostle, when he called him the surety of the better testament, made use of words which were foreign to his ideas, if we deny eternal justification.

Moreover, it is written, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness

in Israel.” Though these words were uttered by a wicked man, yet God put them into his mouth; therefore there is a sense in which they are strictly and literally true. That there is, and always was, iniquity in the people of God, cannot be denied; and that he, with the eyes of his omniscience, always beheld it, must be confessed. How then hath he not seen it in them? Let us view them as eternally chosen in Christ, and standing in him from everlasting; let us consider their sins as imputed to him, and his righteousness as imputed to them, when he became their surety; let us consider the divine Father as beholding them in their covenant head, and spotless representative before the worlds were made; and then we shall not be at a loss for a true comment upon this surprising portion of the holy writ; but we shall clearly see how it is strictly true, that God hath not, at any time, seen with the eyes of his holiness and justice, iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. Eternal justification is the only key to this text; none beside can open it without depreciating its excellency, and eclipsing its glory, and rendering its verity doubtful.

Having stated my views of the subject to which you object, I would submit to your consideration the subsequent answers to your objections.

Object. 1st. “God in the scripture, positively declares, that those who believe not in Jesus Christ, are under condemnation. John. iii. 19.” It is, I think, evident upon the face of this objection, that

the reasonings of your mind are something like the following: "a person cannot be, at the same time, in a state of condemnation, and a state of justification; but unbelievers are in a state of condemnation; therefore, unbelievers are not in a state of justification." This reasoning is false, and it affects some other grand leading truths of the everlasting gospel, as much as it does eternal justification; truths which are delivered by the lip of divine eternal truth, in terms equally strong, positive, and unequivocal, with those in which the condemnation of unbelievers is expressed; and which it is thought you, Sir, with all your objections, would confess, as a part of your creed, and publish without hesitation, as the glory of the gospel: the truths to which I allude, are the eternity of God's love to his elect, their eternal blessedness in Christ, and their redemption from the curse by the death of Christ. The following arguments, framed upon the same principle as the above, which is supposed to militate with justification before faith, might be introduced, with some degree of plausibility, to prove that the love of God to the elect, their blessedness in Jesus, and their redemption are not prior to faith.

First, no man can be at the same time, a child of wrath, and an object of God's love; but the elect are, by nature, the children of wrath even as others; therefore, while they are in a state of nature, they are not the objects of God's love. Now contrast this argument with the declarations of scripture, and the fallacy of it will be obvious and the danger



of adopting your mode of reasoning will appear. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." "God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

Secondly, persons cannot in the nature of things, be under the blessing of God and the curse of the law at the same instant; but unbelievers are under the curse of the law, therefore unbelievers are not under the blessing of God. Now this is quite discordant with that inspired apostolic testimony; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Here the eternal election of God's people, and their eternal blessedness, as founded upon that election, and inseparable from it are positively declared; and will you conclude, that because these persons are said to be under the curse, while they are unbelievers, this testimony is untrue, and that they were not eternally blessed? Surely not. Why then object on that ground to eternal justification? Can you draw a line of distinction between justification and blessedness, and separate the one from the other?

Thirdly, no man can be redeemed from the curse of the law and yet be under that curse; but the people of God are under it till they believe in Jesus;

therefore they are not redeemed till they believe in him. This argument is in direct opposition to that well known declaration : “ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” The manifestation of the redemption of Christ to the hearts of the redeemed adds nothing to it ; no, it was as complete when the Redeemer uttered those ever memorable words, “ It is finished,” as ever it will be ; and the elect were as perfectly redeemed from the curse then, as they are after they believe, or as they will be when they are glorified. Much the same may be said of justification ; neither the application of it to the heart, nor our faith in Jesus, contributes to the perfection of it, much less gives being to it, any more than the *application* of a plaister impregnates it with healing virtue, or gives being to that plaister ; or the mouth by the act of receiving food, adds to its goodness.

And here it may be proper to observe, that the unbelieving elect, stand in a twofold relation ; that through grace they are related to Christ, in whom they were chosen in eternity, and by nature to Adam ; that as they stand related to the former, they are, and ever were, within the bond of the everlasting covenant of grace in which their justification is, and ever was complete ; that as they stand related to the latter, they are under the covenant of works, and its dreadful menace ; that when God declares them condemned, he utters his voice in the law, and speaks truth of them, and to them, as they are related to Adam, as under the law, and

as in their fallen state ; that he thus speaks with a gracious design for their conviction, to make them sensible of their need of Christ, and to demolish all their legal dependences, hopes, and expectations ; that having reduced them to despair of obtaining salvation by the ministration of death, he utters his voice in the gospel, speaks to them as they stand related to Jesus, declares the great transaction past, and brings down the immortal blessing of justification, and reveals it to them as the fruit of his stupendous love laid up in him, in whom it pleased him that all fulness should dwell, even in eternity.

Object. 2nd. "The righteousness of Jesus Christ is set forth to those who are under condemnation, that in believing on it they may be justified. Rom. iii. 25." That the righteousness of Jesus Christ is set forth to those who are under condemnation is confessed ; but that it is set forth to them that in believing they may be justified is denied, except justification in the conscience is meant. The text referred to will not support the position which is here laid down ; for the apostle does not teach the condemned to believe, that they may be justified ; but, that God appointed his Son to be the propitiation for sins, and ordained his righteousness, that he might be just to himself, and to his holy law, in pardoning the guilty and justifying the unrighteous ; that in the gospel he sets forth, reveals, or exhibits this propitiation and this righteousness, that his justice as well as his grace, may appear in the for-

givenness of sin, and the justification of sinners ; and that they who believe are the happy partakers of the above inestimable blessings ; not for believing, but according to the absolute freeness of divine favour, in which they were always interested, and of which their faith is the effect and the evidence.

Object. 3rd. "Every one who comes under the effectual teaching of the Spirit of God by the word, believes that he is under condemnation. Acts ii. 37, 38." What has this to do with eternal justification any more than with eternal predestination ? Is all true that a man believes who is under the effectual teaching of the Spirit of God by the word ? Surely not. Some who have been under this teaching have stedfastly believed, that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and sealed their destruction sure ; but their belief of this was no proof of the truth of it. But suppose what they are here said to believe is true, and it undoubtedly is, as they stand related to that law, which says, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them," they may, notwithstanding, be perfectly justified, as they stand related to Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace. And the same Spirit, who has taught them to know, that they are justly condemned by the law, will also teach them, that they were justified in the sight and the account of God, in Jesus, even while they had the sentence of death in themselves by the law, though then they knew it not.

Object. 4th. "Faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ is to believe with the heart in God, as justifying me freely by his grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ. Rom. iv. 3—14." In the scriptures to which you refer in this objection, we are told, that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" and that the man is blessed, "to whom God imputeth righteousness without works;" but not that faith in the righteousness of Christ is to believe with the heart in God, as justifying me. Nor do the scriptures any where teach us, that the first act of faith, or that act in which a sinner first applies to the righteousness of Christ for justification, is always a belief that God is justifying me; if it were, there would be no such thing as little, or weak faith, but every believer would, in the very moment in which he first believes, have faith in the height of perfection: for beyond assurance of our personal interest in Christ it cannot go. That some of God's people have the full assurance of faith, is a glorious truth; but that every real believer is favoured with it must be denied. The faith of God's elect is a firm persuasion of the soul that God freely justifies the ungodly, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and a dependence upon that righteousness only, for justification from all ungodliness. And this may be, and often is attended with many distressing doubts and fears,

respecting their right and title to that righteousness in which they desire above all things to be found, and in which they put their trust. But, after all, the above objection furnishes no argument against eternal justification; for if when a sinner under conviction of sin, is disposed and enabled by divine power, to embrace the righteousness of the gracious Redeemer, he were to believe that God in that very moment pronounced him just, it could not be thence fairly inferred, that he never did so before, nor that he did not constitute him just, and pronounce him righteous in his own eternal mind, before the foundation of the world; any more than it could, from his promising to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 2, to multiply him exceedingly, that he never promised the same thing before; see Gen. xii. 2: or than it could be concluded, from the giving of the moral law from Mount Sinai, in the days of Moses, that it had no existence prior to that event.

Object. 5th. "If the elect were never under condemnation, they never, in the nature of things, could enjoy a deliverance from it." In this objection, you suppose that the justification of the elect in eternity, is inconsistent with their condemnation in time. But please to view them as connected with both the first and the second Adam; and as related to the two covenants, that of grace made with Christ, their spiritual head and representative, and with them as chosen in him in eternity; and that of works made with Adam, their natural head and representative, and with them as created in him,

in time ; and then, it is thought, you may easily perceive, how they might be completely justified in the former, and yet in time be justly condemned in the latter.

They who believe the eternal justification of the elect to be a truth, do not deny their condemnation by the law, but consider them as standing in a two-fold capacity, members of Christ and children of Adam ; and in *that* justified in eternity as perfectly as if they were not condemned in time ; and in *this* condemned in time, as completely as if they had not been justified in eternity. Nor is there any inconsistency in this, any more than there is in believing that Christ was, in different characters, at once infinitely blessed, and rigourously cursed ; infinitely blessed as the Son of the Father ; rigourously cursed as the surety of sinners.

Object. 6th. “The apostle Paul does not say whom he justified them he also called, but whom he called them he also justified. Rom. viii. 30.” This objection is founded upon a notion that the Sovereign Disposer of all things has, in his wise and wonderful counsel, arranged spiritual blessings exactly in the same order in which they are mentioned in the revelation of them. But this notion cannot be right ; because the holy scriptures do not always mention the same things, in the same order ; and therefore, not always in the order in which they stand, in the divine economy, in which there can be no variation. In Rom. viii. 29, 30, predestination, the same with election, is mentioned before

calling; but in 1 Peter i. 10, and again in Rev. xvii. 14, calling stands in order before election; yet nothing is more evident than the priority of election to calling: the former took place in eternity, the latter takes place in time; and, indeed, the above notion, if admitted, will effectually confute your favourite opinion, and establish justification before faith; for we are told, that God hath saved us, and called us. Here salvation is mentioned before calling, and you know that, as there is no faith without calling, so there is no salvation without justification. Though the apostle in the place referred to, does say, "whom he called them he also justified," nothing can be concluded from his words, hostile to eternal justification; for the construction of them does not make it necessary, to understand him as speaking of justification, as subsequent to calling, though, perhaps, the connexion in which they stand does; therefore, it is best to interpret them as meaning justification in the conscience, which takes place when we believe, and is perfectly consistent with eternal justification in Christ: for the former is, in fact, nothing but the latter shining into the heart, in the rays of the gospel, and the beams of the divine Spirit.

Object. 7th. "Many appear to conceive that the gospel is a revelation of God's purpose, to save an elect people, 1 Tim. i. 15, and that they are evidently elected and justified, because they believe this. 1 Thess. i. 4, 5." This objection is enveloped in obscurity, and therefore the objector's meaning



cannot be easily comprehended. Does he mean that some people think, that they are elected and justified, in consequence of their believing that the gospel is a revelation of God's purpose to save an elect people? Or that they conceive that by their faith in the gospel, their election and justification are made evident? However, let his meaning be what it will, eternal justification has no more to fear from this objection, than the strongest rock has to dread from the stroke of a feather moved by the hand of an infant; for the question is not, what this, or that man conceives, or believes; but what is truth? As true conceptions of the gospel cannot increase, so false ones cannot diminish either the number or the excellency of its truths.

It appears with evidence, bright as the meridian sun, that God, in eternity, absolutely chose, or elected, a definite number of persons, out of the human race, and fixed them in his Son, in whom he chose them, with a firm determination to save them from all sin and misery, and to raise them to glory everlasting, by his own never-failing might, through the mediation of Jesus; and it is no less evident, that he chose them to faith and holiness, means appointed by his own will to accomplish, in confederacy with other things which his sovereignty has adopted, his grand design: his own eternal glory, in his people's everlasting bliss. Nor is there any scarcity of evidence, that the gospel is an accurate and ample description, of the whole glorious and amazing scheme of salvation, as issuing

from the sovereign will, and the infinite wisdom of Jehovah ; and carried into execution by the joint operation of the Eternal Three. Now as the elect were absolutely chosen in Christ to faith, as well as to glory ; as interest in him is founded upon election in him ; as justification before God is inseparable from interest in him ; and as every effect proves the existence of the cause which produces it ; faith must be the indubitable evidence of their eternal election, interest and justification, in him : blessings which can never be disjoined.

## THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF SOME RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

As one who stood justly condemned by the law of God, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, for original transgression; as one whose guilt has been increasing from his very infancy, through the baneful operations of those innate immoral principles, which he derived with his nature by lineal descent, from him by whose fatal fall sin entered into the world, and by the perpetual commission of external crimes; and as one who has, notwithstanding, found favour in the eyes of affronted and dishonoured Majesty, and received mercy at his hands; I cannot but feel myself deeply interested, in whatever is designed by God or man, to exalt and magnify the absolute sovereignty, the ineffable splendour, and the unbounded riches of that grace to which I am entirely indebted for my election, adoption, justification, pardon, redemption, regeneration, and every holy principle, every good

thought, every just idea of divine truth, every fruit of the Spirit, and every spiritual good. Consequently, my mind is greatly pained, whenever I meet with sentiments quite subversive of the real truth as it is in Jesus, and such as can boast no higher tendency, than to eclipse the lustre of the grace of God, bewilder the simple followers of the Lamb, throw stumbling blocks in the way of the feeble-minded, and overwhelm the weak believer with a flood of discouragement and distress.

Such are the following: “The *truth* of our interest in God’s electing love, is always in *proportion* to the *measure* of the sanctifying effects of the doctrines of grace, on our temper and walk.” —“The *truth and reality* of grace, as well as the *measure and degree of it*, must always be ascertained by its influence on the whole man.” Against the dangerous tendency of these sentiments, I would enter a caveat. These positions, unless I am greatly mistaken, raze the whole foundation of christianity to the ground, and leave nothing but a rotten system of Arminian uncertainty.

The first position supposes, *that some of the elect are more deeply interested in the love of God than others are*; for that the doctrines of grace have a greater degree of sanctifying influence upon the tempers and conduct of some of them, than they have upon those of others, is a truth too evident to be denied. Some of the objects of electing love have a greater measure of spiritual knowledge of those doctrines, stronger faith in them, more expe-

rience of their power upon their hearts, and more abundant enjoyment of them than others have ; and of course feel more of their sanctifying influence than others do. If then, the *reality of interest* in divine electing love, be, as some suppose, always in *proportion* to the sanctifying influence of those doctrines upon their tempers and conduct, it unavoidably follows that they who are the subjects of the greatest degree of this influence, must have the most interest in that love. But where, in the book of God, shall we find a single passage to support such a notion ? Does not the Almighty love all his elect in his beloved Son ? Does he not love them all with his great love ? And does he not love each of them as he loves his Son ? Let it be proved, if it can, that he loves one of his people more than he does another ; or that his love to each of them is not infinite. Till that is done, we ought to relinquish every idea of their interest in his love, being in proportion, either to the sanctifying influence of the doctrines of grace upon their tempers and walk, or to any thing out of the eternal mind.

This position further supposes *that some of God's people are more fully elected than others* ; for as is their interest in the electing love of God, so is their interest in election. Is the former imperfect, then the latter cannot be complete ; if then their interest in that love be in proportion to the sanctifying influence of the doctrines of grace upon their tempers and walk, and if these doctrines

have different degrees of influence upon different persons, we cannot but infer, that some of the elect are more perfectly elected than others ; that there are as many and as various degrees in election, as there are in the sanctifying influences of the doctrines of grace ; and that election cannot be complete, till the influences of those doctrines are perfect.

The absurdity of this position will further appear by observing, that *it also supposes some of the vessels of mercy to be more perfectly interested in Christ than others* ; for, as far as they are interested in God's electing love, and in election, so far they are interested in Christ, or entitled to the riches of his fulness ; and if the interest of any one of these be perfect, all must be the same ; or else the words of the apostle Paul, Eph. i. 3, 4, have no meaning. "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." But if there are various measures of interest in divine love ; if there are different degrees in election ; there must be higher and lower degrees of interest in Christ, and if interest in electing love, be always in proportion to the sanctifying influence of the doctrines of grace upon their tempers and conduct, then their interest in Christ must be the same, and some of them must be more truly and fully inte-

rested in him than others; as all are not alike influenced by those doctrines. Such are the unscriptural consequences of this doctrine.

But these are not all, for it implies, *that the very same persons are at different times differently interested in electing love*. This cannot be fairly denied; for that the doctrines of grace produce different sanctifying effects upon the tempers and conduct of the same persons, at different seasons, is a truth which stands supported by the joint evidence of scripture and experience. It must be confessed that they had not the same degree of sanctifying influence upon the temper and conduct of Noah, when by faith he obeyed the Lord, and prepared the ark, and when he lay uncovered in his tent;—of Abraham, when he bound his Isaac, and laid him upon the altar, and when, through fear of man, he denied his wife;—of Jacob, when, by falsehood, he obtained the blessing, and when he anointed the pillar at Bethel;—of David, when he coveted and defiled his neighbour's wife, and when he penned the fifty-first Psalm;—of Solomon, when he composed the book of Canticles, and when he bowed to the idols of his wives;—of Job, when he cursed his days, and charged God foolishly, and when he said, “behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth;” and of Peter, when with oaths and curses he denied the Lord, and when he went to the cross for his sake. And not only these men, but all the saints, in every age, and in every nation, have

known that gospel truths have, at different seasons, made very different impressions upon their minds ; and that their sanctifying influences upon their conduct has been sometimes more and sometimes less. Now, if the truth or reality of their interest in electing love has *always* been in proportion to that influence ; they must have been more really and truly interested in it at some seasons than they were at others. Nay, as in some cases, the people of God have so far backslidden, as to neglect all the duties of religion, and live in open sin for months, yea, for years together, they must in such cases have lost all true interest in it ; for during the time of their backslidings, those doctrines have not any sanctifying influence at all upon their tempers and conduct. They must, therefore, in the real Arminian sense of the words have fallen from grace.

Moreover, *this miserable sentiment denies the eternity of our interest in electing love, and by consequence of election itself*: for if we are truly interested in that love, only in proportion to the sanctifying effects of the gospel upon our tempers and conduct, it must follow, that prior to the commencement of that influence, we could have no degree of real interest in it, nor could we be in any sense elected, unless we are elected without being interested in the love which elected us ; to suppose which, would be quite ridiculous: indeed, we might as well talk of living without life.

Where now is God's eternal unchangeable love



to his chosen? Where eternal, immutable, and absolute election in Christ? Where our eternal interest in the ancient counsels and covenant settlements of the Holy Trinity, and in all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? Where is the immutability of Jehovah, and where the glory of the gospel? They are fled and gone! They are lost in the midst of this fine hypothesis; which, while we have followed it, in its natural and unavoidable consequences, has, like an ignis fatuus, led us into the very mire of arminianism!

When we are told that “the *truth and reality* of grace, as well as the *measure and degree* of it, must *always* be ascertained by its influence upon the *whole man*,” by the “whole man,” must be meant, every member of the body, and every faculty of the soul; and by the influence of grace upon them, either an influence which is perfect, and which eradicates every nefarious principle from the heart, effectually prevents the commission of every sin, and exalts to sinless perfection; or else one which suffers sin to remain in our nature, which does not put an entire stop to the commission of it, and *only weakens, in various degrees*, the body of sinful corruption, in the regenerate, and prevents them, *in measure*, from the commission of sin. If the *former*, then it must be supposed that the truth and reality of grace in the hearts of God’s people, cannot be ascertained, till they arrive at the very summit of sinless perfection. If the *latter*, then the measure or degree of gracious influence, which

must take place in order to assure us that we are born of God, should be marked with exactness. This, it is the duty of those to perform, who maintain, that the influence of divine grace upon the whole man is the *grand or only criterion* of the truth and reality of our possession of grace; and when they teach us, that when the important question, have we the grace of God in truth and reality? arises in our minds, to seek a solution of it in that influence, we have an undeniable claim upon them for an accurate specification of the quantity of it necessary, to warrant us to rest assured that we are in real possession of the grace of God. But should they find themselves unable to mark, with precision, the degree of gracious influence necessary to fix in the heart an unshaken assurance of the truth and reality of interest in divine grace, they must either renounce their sentiment, or deny that a satisfactory assurance of interest in the divine favour, is attainable in this life; for if there be no other means of ascertaining the truth and reality of grace in the heart, than its influence upon the whole man, or upon all its parts; it follows, that unless we know exactly how far this influence must extend, in order to warrant a conclusion, that the grace of God is in us of a truth, we must remain in a state of perpetual uncertainty, tossed upon the waves of temptation, and exposed every moment to despair.

Now, I would ask, whether these sentiments are calculated to strengthen the weak hands, and to

confirm the feeble knees? or do they administer comfort to the feeble minded? Have they not rather a tendency to bewilder, discourage, and distress the feeble of the flock of Christ? and to sink in despondency such of his disciples as have the deepest experience of the plague of their own hearts and the total depravity of their apostate nature; who sometimes can neither see nor feel any thing in themselves but evil, and are constrained to cry, in the bitterness of their souls, “iniquities prevail against us!” “O wretched men that we are!” On the other hand, they buoy up with false confidence, those who are ignorant of their internal wickedness; who think their hearts are good; who are pure in their own eyes, though they are not washed from their filthiness; and who say to others stand by yourselves, come not near us, for we are holier than you. Oh! how easy for such characters to conclude that they are entirely under the influence of grace, and consequently, according to the scheme laid down, infer that they really possess that grace; when the fact is, they are blind and dead; totally incapable of seeing their depravity and apostacy; and quite destitute of grace.

## SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS NOT PURCHASED BY CHRIST.

THAT Christ made a purchase I shall not attempt to deny : it is a truth ; a truth in which the glory of God shines with lustre ineffable, and from which flows abundant felicity, with freeness to man. He purchased the church with his own blood. We read of the “ purchased possession ; ” but what is it ? We are not authorised to say that it is either glory or grace, or any spiritual blessing. The “ purchased possession ” is the people to whom it is said, “ ye are not your own, but are bought with a price ; ” “ the general assembly whose names are written in heaven ; ” “ the church of the first-born ; ” “ his inheritance ; ” “ his possession.” These he has redeemed from all evil ; sin, the curse of the law, the wrath of God, the dominion of Satan, death, the grave, and the dark gulph of hell ; and he has redeemed them unto himself and to his Father, out of all nations under heaven.