

**MINISTERIAL
OFFERS
OF
SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS
NOT
WARRANTED BY SCRIPTURE.**

By Job Hupton

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EQUALLY un evangelical 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 ;* The very identical words of the late John Wesley.* 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 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 favor 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 speaks, 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 apostle's 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 Caesar 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 Nazareth 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 God-man 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, honor, might, and authority, as God-man, 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 stouthearted, 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 fullness; 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 seignons 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 favors ; 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 fullness, 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 favor 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 honor 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 honor upon the head of the folly of proud mortals, and lay his own infinite wisdom and honor 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 defense, 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 defense 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 honor. 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, 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 labor 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. 6: 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 3:2, " 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. 10:7, 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 4:2, "Being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." Rom. 2:21, "Thou that preached a man shall not steal, dost thou steal?" 1 Cor. 1:18, "The preaching of the cross, is to them that perish foolishness." See also, 1 Cor. 15:1, 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 connection. 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. 60:1, "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 4:18, 19, "He hath sent me to preach deliverance, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Isa. 52: 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that published peace; that published salvation." Rom. 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the gospel of peace." Acts 13:32, "And we declare unto you glad tidings." Acts 20:27, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." 2 Cor. 11:7, "I have preached unto you the gospel freely." Acts 20:24, "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 honorable 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 2:14- 36; 3:12-26 ; 4:8-12 ; 10:34-43; 13:16-41 ; 17:2, 3, 22-34 ; 26: 22, 23; and 28: 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 3:19, Peter gives an exhortation; and in Acts 13:40, 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 have very much to the advantage of an individual, but to which he has a great aversion. This good is in the possession of a neighbor, 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 neighbor, be fairly deemed an upright, sincere character? Whether this supposed individual be acquainted with his neighbor'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 labors with ardor, and suffers with patience, it is for the elect's sake, that they might be saved. John 10:16; Acts 18:9, 10, 2 Tim. 2: 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 13:46; Heb. 12:25. Might not this objector, with equal propriety, say with the Arminians, that all the uncircumcised in heart and ears, mentioned Acts 7:51, 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. 8:14, 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 1:12, 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 declaration, 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. Isa. 11:12; Matt. 5:3, 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 felodese, 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, 11 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 favor 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 ; bath, as it is administered by Christ, the nature of a testament, and is called by that name, Heb. 9:15, 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 favors to them, but see Ezek, 33: 2.; Gen. 4:6,7.; John 5:34. 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 3:18."

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 fullness 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 favors to the non-elect; but that he does not so much as offer his special favors 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. 4:6,7., and Ezek. 33:2.; which shall be considered in their proper places, may be applied, which have no relation whatever to special favors.

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. I Tim. 1: 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 utter most 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 stouthearted 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 10: 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 19:10.; 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 Iffy 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 favors 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 10:43.; 13:38, 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. 2:5 ; Mark 14:15."

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 favors, 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 10: 44; Psa. 110:3. 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 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. 31:18, 19; Ezek. 16: 63 ; 20: 41,43 ; 36: 25-30 ; Zech. 12:10. Nay, it justifies the observation, that the special favors of God are not so much as offered to the non-elect ; and falls into the very sentiment which it endeavors 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.

(SUBJECT CONCLUDED.)

**AN EXPLANATION OF THE PRINCIPAL
SCRIPTURES REFERRED TO IN SUPPORT
OF MINISTERIAL OFFERS OF SPIRITUAL
BLESSINGS.**

I RESUME my pen to offer an explanation of some sacred portions of Holy writ, which have been, I think, misapplied and perverted; and, upon fair examination, I trust that what I offer will be found coincident, with the perfections of Jehovah; with his eternal and immutable decrees; with his real character; and with the whole analogy of faith. I

proceed, therefore, to consider the scriptures which are viewed and strenuously urged as countenancing those ministers who make offers and overtures of spiritual blessings to sinners in general; instead of preaching them, as the free gifts of God, granted absolutely, in his eternal counsel, to sinners elect, and immutably ordained to be conveyed, in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost to their hearts, through the free annunciation of them in the ministry of the gospel, by means of which, they are made willing and obedient, and discriminated, as God's elect, holy and beloved, from the rest of mankind.

If, in considering these scriptures, we regard biblical order, the first which calls our attention is Gen. 4:6, 9. "And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wrath? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door." Here the Almighty speaks to Cain, not in evangelical strains, but in the language of the legal covenant; under which Cain stood, and according to the tenor of which, "do this and thou shalt live," he expected to be accepted of God, and to have his works rewarded, with the divine favor and benediction. Nor does the divine expostulator utter a single syllable to him respecting the acceptance of the persons and offerings of men, through the person and offering of the promised seed of the woman, in whom Abel believed, and was accepted, and by faith in whom, he presented his offering to the Lord, but addresses him in the mere diction of the covenant of works: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door:" that is, if thou doest all things required by the law,

thou shalt live in them; but if thou continest not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, thou art verily guilty and accursed; thou shalt surely die.

Now, should the truth of this interpretation be denied, and should it be affirmed that Jehovah addressed Cain in evangelical language, then it must be believed, that acceptance with God, even upon gospel principles, is conditional; that it is suspended upon the performance of human works; and consequently that it is not of grace. For, according to the apostle's reasoning, "If it be of works, then it is no more of grace." It has always very forcibly struck me, that there is a much closer affinity between what are called gospel offers of grace, and conditional acceptance with God, than most people are aware of.

" Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men. Receive my instruction, and not silver ; and knowledge rather than choice gold," Pro. 5: 8,4, 10. We have here a fine description of the teachings of him, who spoke as never man spoke: God the Son incarnate; the wisdom of God the Father in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. He taught among the Jews in Judea, on the tops of the mountains, in the highways, in the gates and streets of Jerusalem, in the synagogues and temple, and in the various places of public resort. He called unto men, and his voice was to the sons of men. But what evidence does the combination of these verses exhibit, that he offered to them his mercy and salvation? Can it be fairly inferred, from his call to the sons of men, that he approached them with

overtures of grace, and tendered them the bliss of heaven, any more than it can, from the address of a monarch to his subjects, in which he declares his own pleasure, and calls them to attend to their duty, as subjects, that he offers them his kingdom, and tenders them his crown?

And, if it does not follow of necessity, that because our Saviour called unto the sons of men, he offered them the special blessings of his love, there can be no shew of right whatever, to represent the above scriptures, nor any of similar import, as inculcating the doctrine of offers; especially when there is nothing, either in the scriptures themselves, or in their connection, that requires such a construction. It is, I think, much better to view them, as a lively and striking picture of the Prince of Peace, standing among the Jews, preaching the mysteries of his glorious kingdom ; asserting his own dignity, power, and authority, as the true Messiah ; his mission and commission from God the Father, to perform the stupendous work of salvation, to introduce a dispensation entirely new, set up and establish new rites and ordinances of divine worship, to remove and abolish the whole Mosaic ritual, and erect a glorious kingdom in the world, which should extend unto the ends of the earth, and exist coeval with time ; and counseling and exhorting them, as a nation and body politic, to attend to his ministry, admit the truth of his doctrine, and receive his dispensation, with a natural faith, such as that with which the Ninevites received the preaching of Jonah ; and Ahab, the messenger of Elisha; which, had they done, it would have been the means of saving them from those tremendous judgments, with which they were threatened,

because they set at nought his counsel, despised his reproofs, and rejected his person. Prov. 1: 2,13. Because I have called and ye refused, etc. ; and Isa. 65:12-15. "Therefore will I number you to the sword, &c.; all which has been fulfilled. The commonwealth of Israel is no more: the Jews are dispersed over many nations, and are a taunt, a scorn, and a curse, unto this day. But while the wrath of a jealous God came upon them to the uttermost, it was well with the righteous: they escaped. The disciples of Jesus were preserved from the common destruction; divine providence had appointed for them an asylum where they dwelt in security.

But it may, perhaps, be still better to understand these addresses, as powerful commands issuing, sovereign and free, from the Almighty Instructor, designed to convey, and actually conveying, spiritual instruction and understanding to the hearts of the elect, among those whom he addressed; and causing them to value the instruction which he gives, and the knowledge which he imparts, beyond the finest gold, or the choicest rubies. When we hear the Almighty saying, by the mouth of his prophet, to the dry bones, " O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord; " and when we behold him passing by the sinner dead in his trespasses, and wallowing in the blood of his guilt; and hear him say to the poor forlorn wretch, "live: " do we, or should we consider these divine addresses, as mere exhortations to live, or offers of life? No: we view them, and we ought to view them, as sovereign commands, replete with omnipotence and life; like those at which nonentity started into existence, and breathless Lazarus leaped from the tomb,

conveying both life and vigour to the dead. To understand them as mere exhortations and offers would greatly depreciate the majesty and grandeur of the scriptures, and obscure the meaning of the following declarations of our Lord; "I know that his commandment is life everlasting." "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life." To whom, and in what sense are the commandments of the Father, and the words of the Son, spirit and life everlasting, but to the elect; and as they are attended by the life and power of the Holy Ghost to their hearts? The rest hear their sound, but do not understand their spiritual import; nor are they ever addressed to them, any farther than principles and actions, merely natural or moral are implied; therefore they never are to them spirit and life. Now, when Jehovah says to the dead, "live;" if he utters a powerful command, giving life to the soul; where is the impropriety of considering him, when he says, "hear, receive my instruction," as issuing an effectual command, by which the ear of the deaf is opened, the understanding of the dark benighted soul is enlightened, and real spiritual instruction is truly and for ever sealed upon the heart of the ignorant. Should this interpretation be considered improper, it will be indispensable to show wherein the impropriety consists; and also to shew scriptural authority for asserting that when the "King eternal" says to the dead in sins, "live," he only exhorts them to live, or makes them an offer of life; or, admitting that he utters a command, by which he really impregnates the soul with divine life, to produce a warrant for maintaining, that when he says to the blind and ignorant, receive my instruction, he does no more than offer them instruction, and exhort them to receive it; since

in both cases the form of speech is the same; since a power to receive spiritual instruction is as remote from the unregenerate, as is a power to give themselves life; and since the former is as much the gift of God, and the fruit of the Holy Ghost as the latter.

"Whoso is simple let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." Prov. 9: 4, 5. The characters here addressed are the simple, and such as want understanding. The word simple, is used in the scripture, in both a good sense and a bad one. In a good one, and signifies a principle of integrity and uprightness, diametrically opposite to guilt and hypocrisy, to serpentine art and cunning; as may be seen in the following quotations from the sacred records; "The Lord preserveth the simple." ". Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves ; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless," simple, " as doves." He that giveth let him do it with simplicity." "For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward." In a bad one: to signify folly, and real ignorance of God and divine things, and that foolishness, which is attended with a willful obstinacy, in rebellion against the laws of heaven: this the subsequent citations will fully evince. "For the turning away of the simple "from God, " shall slay them, and the prosperity of

fools shall destroy them." ,The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge." "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." In one of these two senses it must be understood here. If the latter; we behold our Saviour, not making general offers of his peculiar favors, but, with Godlike majesty, calling effectually his own people, from amongst the rest, to partake of the banquet of his love, just as he called James and John away from their father, who was with them in the same ship. It appears that our Lord, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, saw Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; and as he passed, said unto them, without mentioning either of their names, "follow me;" and they followed him. And as he proceeded on his way, he saw James, and John his brother, in a ship, with Zebedee their father; and he called them. Now as nothing is said respecting the language which be used in calling them, we are naturally led to conclude, from the connection of this account of the calling of James and John, with that of the calling of Peter and Andrew, that he made use of the same words, "follow me," without mentioning either of their names. Zebedee, no doubt, heard the words of his mouth, as well as his sons; and as the language used was not of a discriminating nature, why did he not conclude, that Jesus called him? Had he not the same external and rational ground on which to draw the conclusion that his sons had? Nay, had he not as good authority, from hearing what our Saviour said to his sons, to believe that be invited him as well as them, as any one has to conclude, that because the non-elect hear the same gospel language which the elect do, salvation is offered to

them ? Will any one venture to affirm, that when Jesus said, "follow me," he intended Zebedee, and that the call was directed to him? Surely not: it was evidently designed for James and John only; and being directed by divine power to their hearts, proved effectual; and they left their father and followed him. In like manner, when he says by his servants to a mixed multitude, "come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled," he intends the elect only; and his powerful and all constraining love, being secretly conveyed to them with his word, they come, they eat, they drink. If we understand the word simple in the former sense, then we see him with all the tenderness of a lover, and the kindness of a friend, giving the most encouraging invitation, and the most unquestionable authority, to sinners already regenerated, hungering and thirsting after spiritual refreshment, yet indulging hesitation, and, through the want of a correct understanding, fear to approach with boldness, and feast, with freedom, upon the bounties of his grace : the fullness of the blessing of his glorious gospel.

In Cant. 5:2. and its connection, we have a striking representation of the church in a supine, lethargic state, and of Christ coming to raise her from her sinful torpor, to a state of spiritual activity. He speaks: "Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." She hears him and knows his voice: "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." But still she indulges in sloth and indolence, and begins to frame excuses: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how

shall I defile them? "He touches her dull and sluggish heart with the magnetic power of his love. She feels the heavenly attraction, and unable to resist, she arises in haste, and flies to embrace her beloved, but alas! he is gone. As a just rebuke for her luke warmness, indolence, and ingratitude, he has withdrawn and concealed himself; and left her to seek him with shame, sorrow, and disappointment. But what has any part of this subject to do with offers and tenders of spiritual blessings to sinners, either elect or non-elect, converted or unconverted? I cannot help expressing my astonishment and grief, that any one, especially my venerable opponent, should suffer himself thus to trifle with sacred things, distort the holy scriptures from their true and obvious meaning, and prostitute them to the support of a sentiment, which I am confident, their divine Author never intended they should, in the least degree, countenance. Nor do I believe, that an honest man will, upon mature deliberation, venture to affirm, in the presence of a jealous God, and the world, that the above scripture does, in any shape whatever, favor the doctrine of offers.

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Isaiah, 48:18. What has this portion of scripture, any more than the former ones, to do with overtures of mercy and offers of salvation? There is not the smallest degree of apparent affinity between them. In the fear of God, with whom we have to do, in the application and exposition of his holy word, the subsequent thoughts upon the prophet's meaning, in this place, are humbly submitted for the consideration of the candid reader.

The Most High, in the freeness and sovereignty of his pleasure, choose the seed of Abraham for his portion, and set them apart to be to himself a peculiar nation. Deut. 14:2.; 26:18. "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments." With his right hand he led them forth out of Egypt; and according to the purpose which he formed in himself, and the promise which he made unto their fathers, he, with miraculous wonders and signs, planted them in the land of Canaan. To them he committed his lively oracles, and gave them statutes, laws, and ordinances relative to both their civil and ecclesiastical polity, such as he never gave to any other nation under heaven. Dent. iv. 8. He gave them also peculiar promises and threatening, both relating to their national economy, and both suspended upon certain conditions clearly specified in the word of God. Lev. 26. Dent. 4:23,27. If they hearkened to his voice, kept his covenant, obeyed his commandments, observed his statutes, and performed his ordinances, they were to be blessed with perpetual national existence, increase, power, dominion, grandeur, and greatness, above all nations upon the earth ; and to enjoy rest, peace, and tranquility uninterrupted, with a profusion of wealth, cattle, corn, oil, wine, and all the delicacies produced by the good land which he had given them ; but, if they refused to obey his voice, broke his covenant, disobeyed his commands, and neglected his statutes and ordinances ; curses the most

tremendous, and plagues almost innumerable, war, famine, pestilence, and dreadful diseases, evil beasts, dispersion, captivity, and death, were to be inflicted upon them without mercy. Dent. 28:15,68. The commands given to this people, with the promises and threatening annexed to them, may be considered as constituting that national covenant which God made with them, and according to the tenor of which, he invariably dealt with them in all succeeding ages. With the conditional tenor of this covenant, the language used by the prophet in the passage under consideration, perfectly accords; but with the gospel scheme of absolute grace and unconditional salvation; with righteousness imputed without works; and with peace made by the blood of the cross, it is quite discordant. In the punctual performance of the conditions of this covenant consisted the national righteousness of Israel, by which they were secured from temporal calamities, and through which they enjoyed national peace and prosperity; and the nonperformance of them was that unrighteousness which exposed them to the desolating scourge of the Almighty, and actually deprived them of peace and every earthly good. Deut. 6:24, 25, and 32: 46, 47. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." « And he said unto them, set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall

prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." See also Ezek. xviii. Had they obeyed the commands of God and kept his covenant, then had their peace been as a river great and permanent, and their righteousness abundant, grand, and to their enemies, terrible like the waves of the sea. Lev. 26:3, 6, 7, 8. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; and I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword."

Upon the principles of this covenant God stood bound by his faithful oath, to bless them with all that he promised them, and he was no less bound by his justice and truth, to inflict upon them, all the evils with which he had threatened them. Upon these principles the servants of God proceeded in their warnings, admonitions, and exhortations, implying conditions which they gave to the house of Israel, and upon these principles therefore must Ezek. 18:30; 33:2; Matt. 23:37,38; Acts 3:19, and all scriptures of the like import be explained. For whoever views them with reference to the covenant of grace, and the scheme of spiritual and eternal salvation, suspends our title to, and our possession of, everlasting life, and its attendant blessings, upon the good pleasure of the human will; and throws a veil of impenetrable obscurity over the freeness and sovereignty of divine grace.

“Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Isa. 55:13. The objects of this divine address, are not the unregenerate, the earthly, the sensual, the devilish; who with appetites eager and insatiable, are pursuing the empty riches, the airy honors, and the sinful pleasures of the present world. They are, in general, self-sufficient, self admired, self loved, self-satisfied, and self blessed. They are, in their own esteem rich, and see no want of any thing, relating to the future world; full, and feel neither hunger nor thirst after spiritual delights: for them they have no gust. Things divine and heavenly, are too refined and exquisite for their depraved taste; they treat them as things nauseous and disgusting while the pollution which is in the world through lust, is grateful to their vitiated appetites. If these, as some think, are the hungry and thirsty poor, whom God invites to the fatness of his house, who are the rich whom he sends empty away?” Luke 1:53. Let this question be fairly answered. If the hungry and thirsty, who are filled with good things are the unregenerate then the rich, who are sent empty away, must be the regenerate, and regeneration must be a real disadvantage, and an awful mark of God's displeasure but if the former are the rich, who are sent empty away, then the latter are

the poor, who are filled with good things, and of course, the persons addressed in the text; as they must be called to the waters before they can drink them. John 6: 37. These are the poor and needy, who, when first brought to feel their poverty and want, seek the waters of spiritual peace, comfort, and refreshment, from the doctrine of the old covenant, " do and live," and their own performances of things, which they conceive to be their duties; but these, like broken cisterns, deceive. From these channels, therefore, they return, like the children of the Jewish nobles, ashamed with their heads covered. Jer. 14: 3. In this pursuit they meet with disappointment after disappointment. They seek earnestly and sincerely, early and late: they toil and labor, till they fatigue both body and mind, but all in vain ; they find no water. The fiery law, and the burning heat of sin dry up their spirits, till their tongues fail for thirst, and their souls faint within them. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he hears their piteous moan, and delivers them out of their distresses. Psa. 107:5, 6 ; Isa. 41:17. He opens before them the fountain of living waters in the gospel of his love, and presents to the view of their enlightened minds the rich, nutritious doctrines, the cheering promises, and the satisfying blessings of his grace; infinitely more sweet and pleasant than wine and milk; all free, the absolute gifts of his bounteous goodness, to the poor and needy ; and meets their " ardent wishes and longings," their indigence and fears, with a hearty welcome to all they want and ask; bidding them come, with all their poverty, and all their wants, and freely partake of the rich repast. Ho! every one that thirsteth," that desires the blessings of grace, and longs for divine delights, turn from

the fiery law, which breathes nothing but death, and throws destruction around ; " come ye," to the sweet refreshing waters of the gospel; "and he that hath no money," that is, reduced to the last extremity and hath no price of merit to bring in his hand ; " come ye," with all your wants and woes, with all your demerits and unworthiness ; " buy and eat," receive as my free gift, all that the gospel presents to your view, and make a free use of it, for your spiritual nourishment, comfort, and satisfaction ; solace yourselves ; drink to satiety ; all is free; all is at your service ! "Wherefore do ye spend money, for that which is not bread; and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Why do ye toil and labor under the legal yoke, and spend your time, and strength, and property, to fulfill the law, and all with a view of obtaining peace and satisfaction for your troubled souls? " Harken diligently unto me," listen with attention to my voice in the gospel, by which you are directed to living fountains of water, and , a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined," freely granted to the poor and needy, who are ready to perish. " Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your souls shall live;" the words that I speak, when heard with understanding, and mixed with faith, are spirit and life to the soul ; " and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" I will seal upon your hearts my everlasting covenant of grace, which I made with you in Christ before the world began, which is ordered in all things and sure, and in which you are truly and for ever blessed, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Now as this very affectionate and pathetic language is evidently directed, to those persons, who are

brought by regenerating grace, to feel their guilt and misery, and ardently desire divine enjoyment of pardon, peace and communion with God ; but who through the influence of an erroneous judgment, a disposition to cleave to the covenant of works, the temptations of Satan, and sometimes an unsound ministry, are seeking them in the use of improper means ; I cannot help concluding that it is designed of God, to correct their mistakes, to inform their judgment, to evangelize their minds, and to bring them through the power of the Holy Spirit, to the real enjoyment of his love and favor, and all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord ; and that there is not an offer, nor the shadow of an offer, of any one blessing, to be seen in the text.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55:7. What is offered here? Mercy ! pardon! If these are offered to the wicked and unrighteous man, to become his, upon his forsaking his ways and thoughts, and returning unto the Lord, then, prior to his performing these acts, he has no kind of interest in them, nor title to them but his right to them is suspended upon his forsaking his ways, and thoughts. Where then is free grace, and the gift by grace? Alas! they are enveloped, and concealed in the dark, thick fog of evangelical offers and all that appears is an ignis-fatuus; a system of duty, with proposals of reward ; if you forsake your ways and thoughts, which are not good, and return to the Lord, you shall be amply rewarded with mercy and pardon. Such is

the divinity current in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, of error and delusion, of wandering and apostasy from the truth as it is in Jesus ! When the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts, and return unto the Lord, is there not a cause? Undoubtedly there is; and that cause must be either of God, or of themselves. If of God, where are overtures of mercy and offers of pardon to the unregenerate? Is it not an act of amazing mercy in the Most High, to turn sinners from the evil of their ways P And, does he not cause them to return unto himself, because he formed them, in his ancient counsel, to be vessels of mercy and honor, and afore prepared them unto glory; and because they have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace? If not, what means the following inspired language? "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but 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 mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isa, 43:22-25. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins ; return unto me;, for I have redeemed thee." Isa. 44: 22. Redemption and pardon, including all the riches of mercy, are here represented, by the pen of inspiration and infallibility, as freely given to sinners, prior to their

returning to God, and before they perform any good work. Now, could we conceive it possible for the divinely instructed Isaiah, while acting as the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost, to be inconsistent; affirming, at one time, that mercy and pardon are freely given to elect sinners, in the purpose and covenant of God, prior to their forsaking their sinful ways, and vain thoughts, and turning to the Lord; and that their forsaking their pernicious ways, and returning to the Lord, are the effects of their interest in the unbounded treasures of his mercy, and the invaluable blessing of pardon; and at another, declaring that they have no interest whatever in either of these blessings before they forsake sin and return unto the Lord ; and, that their forsaking sin, and returning unto him, are the cause of their interest in them : could we imagine this eminently wise prophet, to be so like many among us, who think, or at least, seem to think, that it is the most consistent to be inconsistent ; we might then think, that in the passage before us, he might possibly make a conditional tender, of what he had before published as free gifts already bestowed. But if we believe it impossible for him, while declaring the counsel of the Most High to err in judgment, or advance doctrines at all discordant, we cannot but conclude, that in the text before us, he speaks of mercy and pardon, as manifested and applied only; and that it contains neither proposal nor offer of any thing; but is a plain and positive declaration, that whenever the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts, and return unto the Lord, they shall receive mercy and pardon at his hands ; as if he had said, ° let the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, " whenever they will, they shall receive both mercy and

forgiveness ; both shall be applied with evidence and power to their hearts.

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your 'transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Ezek. 18:30. Israel had sinned by transgressing the covenant which God had made with them, as his chosen and peculiar nation; upon the performance of which, depended their national peace, prosperity, and existence. They had done those things, which he had forbidden them to do, on pain of punishments the most dreadful, to be inflicted in various forms. He, therefore, according to the conditional tenor of that covenant, repeats, in the most solemn and awful manner, his determination to punish them, if they continued to go on in sin. But, as that covenant admitted of repentance and reformation, as conditions of pardon, and exemption from punishment, the prophet, on that very ground, and on no other, exhorted them to repent, and turn from all their transgressions, that iniquity might not be their ruin, as a body politic. Joel 1: 2.

Now, if, in that covenant which contains all our eternal salvation, with every spiritual good, repentance were made the condition of our interest in the invaluable treasure ; then we might, without incurring the charge of inconsistency, offer spiritual blessings to sinners to become theirs upon the performance of the condition required : but this is not the case. All is free, in that holy and glorious covenant; nothing is conditional; all is absolutely given and applied ; nothing is proposed and offered ; and it is very remarkable,

that God, by the mouth of the same prophet, whose words we have just been considering, when speaking to the same people, on the grand subject of the covenant of grace, uses language quite the reverse of the above language the most positive ; and not in the least indicative of any thing like overtures, offers, or conditional proposals, of the blessings therein specified. « Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezek. 36: 25-27.

I will, and you shall, is the language of sovereign grace, speaking in that covenant, which is established upon better promises, than those which are attended with conditions and threats.

"As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? " Ezek. 33:2. If we explain this upon Arminian principles, we represent that absolute, Almighty Being, who neither " borrows leave to be;" nor craves permission to act; who willed universal nature into existence ; whose dominion knows no limitation ; whose power is subject to no control ; and who ever did, and ever will do, all his pleasure, amidst all the murmurs, frowns, and hostile airs of human pride : this immense, amazing

Being, is, I say, by an Arminian interpretation of this passage, represented as dependent upon depraved and helpless worms ; wishing and longing for their salvation, but unable to effect it without their leave; and prostrate, at the feet of sovereign dust and ashes, wooing and beseeching them, to gratify his wishes, and give him the desire of his heart : than which representation, nothing can be more false, nor more degrading to infinite majesty. If we explain it upon Calvinistic principles, then we are under the necessity of considering it in connection with some other economy, than that of the covenant of absolute grace, in which divine sovereignty, unlimited, and immutable, reigns with infinite grandeur, in the absolute, eternal, unalienable grant of all spiritual blessings to the guilty and undone : and shines with ineffable and unfading luster, in the free and effectual application of them to the heart and mind, darkened and enslaved by the joint powers of hell and sin ; by which application, without either offer or tender, the soul is delivered from its darkness and chains, and is brought into the light and liberty of the sons of God. With this grand economy, independent of all creatures, it will by no means agree. But it perfectly coincides with the national covenant made with Israel by their sovereign Creator, in which he promised them, life, peace, and prosperity as a nation, upon the condition of obedience, or of repentance and reformation, in case of default. When they obeyed his voice, they increased, they prospered, they were happy. When they rebelled, the longsuffering God, sent his prophets to warn them, to expostulate with them, and exhort them to turn from their wickedness and live. Nor is it possible to explain these words of Ezekiel, in harmony

with reason and truth, unless we consider them with reference to the system of divine government which Jehovah established in Israel, and according to the principles of which, he ruled his ancient people in all their generations. And therefore, when he appeared in frowns and poured out his indignation upon them, he assured them by the mouth of his prophet, that he did not punish them capriciously or wantonly, and for the sake of seeing them in misery, as if he delighted in cruelty, and felt pleasure in the distress and anguish of his creatures ; but having threatened them with death and destruction, if they broke his covenant, and remained impenitent; and they having sinned, it became him, as a righteous governor, to proceed against them and punish them to the full extent of the threatening. Nay, that unless they repented and turned from their wickedness, he was bound by all the ties of holiness, justice, and truth, and by all the honors of his eternal throne, to consume them utterly. Hence the propriety of that affectionate exhortation, "turn ye, turn ye;" and of the pathetic expostulation, "why will ye die, O house of Israel? As they had power to turn from that external wickedness, which had exposed them to death or national ruin, and as life and prosperity were promised, upon condition of reformation, it remained according to their federal constitutions, for them to determine, whether it should be life or death : God could not but act agreeably to his word. « See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall

blest thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them ; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess, it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deut. 30:15-20.

"Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break of thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it maybe a lengthening of thy tranquility." Dan. 4:27. No spiritual blessings, and of course no offers of them here. The utmost that can be fairly made of this text is good advice to the king of Babylon, to leave his high crimes, that he might escape those degrading judgments, which they were likely to bring upon him, and that his temporal tranquility might continue.

" And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding ; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth

other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize; and the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways; and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good ; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. 22:14.

If bidding to the marriage, and offering spiritual blessings are the same, it must unavoidably follow, that all who come at the bidding, receive the offer, and of course accept the things which are offered ; as the acceptance of an offer, and the reception of what is offered, always involve each other. How then comes it to pass, that among the guests, there was found one who had not a wedding garment? He had accepted the offer as truly as any one there, if bidding and

offering are synonymous. He was bidden with the rest; he came in with the rest, and he was with them in the house when the king came in to see the guests. Now if the wedding garment be a spiritual blessing, if it be offered with other blessings of the same kind, and if the acceptance of the offer, be the same as the reception of what is offered ; how, I again ask, came it to pass, that he was found without it, and for the want of it, cast out ? Will any one say, that the wedding garment is not a spiritual blessing? How then is it essential to salvation? Or will it be said that the acceptance of the offer, and the reception of what is offered, are different things? Then let the difference be defined, and let it be shown how I could accept the offer, without receiving the thing offered; or else discharge this parable, as unfit for the service of evangelical offers.

My opinion of this parable is, that the design of our Lord in speaking it, was to exhibit the state of the visible church, under the gospel dispensation ; and to show, that after his ascension, his apostles should first preach the gospel to the Jews ; that upon their refusing to hear it, they should turn to the Gentiles, and go from one kingdom to another preaching the word of life ; that, after them other ministers would be raised up, and sent forth to proclaim salvation in his name; that by these means some would be truly called and converted unto the Lord, and others influenced to reform and assume a profession of Christianity, without receiving its life, light, power, and glory ; that these different characters would be united in the bond of external church fellowship, and be together in the same visible church state, undistinguished by every eye, but his who

searches the heart and the reins; and that all mere profession of religion, and exterior church privileges, are quite insufficient to save without his own righteousness, with which he arrays his people, and in which they are exalted to everlasting honor.

" O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! " Matt. 23:37. I cannot conceive our Lord's meaning to be that he would have gathered them to himself spiritually so as to make them the happy partakers of eternal salvation; because that kind of gathering has no dependence whatever upon the will of man; and because it is expressly declared by the scriptures, that " all whom his Father giveth him, shall come unto him; " and that " his people shall be willing in the day of his power." But, that had they, as a nation, attended to the voices of his prophets, been obedient to his word, and kept his ordinances, he would have preserved them from their enemies, just as a hen preserves her brood under her wings, from injurious weather, and birds of prey. Or, if after they had sinned and brought themselves into distress, they had forsaken their wickedness, he would have delivered them from all their troubles. Deut. 30:11; Jer. 26:12, 13. But they would not : they despised his messengers, and stoned and killed them ; they closed their ears against all his warnings, threatening, and promises, and persisted in their sinful conduct; which according to their national constitution, and the peculiar covenant they were under, made it impossible that he should preserve or

deliver them, for he could neither change his mind, nor break his word; their house was, therefore, left unto them desolate and unprotected ; exposed to all the fury of the Roman army, and abandoned to total destruction. Luke 19:41-44. All then contained in this text is conditional, temporal protection or destruction, depending upon obedience or disobedience. There is nothing in it which gives countenance to offers of those free blessings, which have no dependence upon human conduct.

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15. Whether we understand this as a mere exhortation to faith and repentance, natural or spiritual, or as a powerful creative command, which reaches the hearts of the elect, and produces faith and repentance in them, while it only enters the ears of others, there is nothing in it favorable to the offers contended for; unless faith and repentance are offered, to suppose which, even upon this scheme would be absurd, since it is maintained, that whatever is offered in the gospel, is offered or proposed to sinners, to become theirs upon their believing.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19. Does the apostle speak here, of spiritual repentance and conversion; and of the forgiveness and refreshment from the presence of the Lord, which are inseparable from everlasting life? If he does, either the former are conditions of the latter, or the Holy Ghost uses conditional language when speaking of absolute blessings, neither of which ideas can be received,

because they evidently militate with truth. The forgiveness and divine refreshment, which are united with eternal salvation are blessings absolutely granted, by an act of divine grace ; and are therefore, free from every human condition, and it being the office of the Holy Ghost, who is truth itself, to bear witness to the truth, and to guide the simple into all truth, it is quite incompatible with both his character and his office, to make, to the human mind, a false representation of the will of God, by using language implying conditions, when speaking of blessings which are absolute. It is, I think, made evident by the context, that the apostle in this address to the Jewish nation, exhorted them to repent, of the rejection and murder of Jesus Christ, by which they had exposed themselves to calamities the most dreadful ; to turn to him as the true Messiah ; reform their lives ; and receive the gospel dispensation ; that they might, as a nation, receive forgiveness, be delivered from those tremendous judgments, with which they were threatened, and receive times of refreshing, or national prosperity, from the Lord, according to the tenor of the covenant between him and them, in which, temporal good and evil were set before them, and suspended upon their conduct. If they obeyed the voice of his prophets, and regarded the word which he sent to them, they were to live undisturbed in the peaceful possession of the rights and privileges, which he had granted them ; but if they despised his servants, and disobeyed his word ; they were to be punished with war, famine, and captivity; and in case of impenitence, and a continuance in disobedience, and rebellion, total dispersion and destruction. The Lord God of their fathers, had, according to his promise, raised up unto them the glorious

Messiah, the Prince of all the prophets. Him they despised and hated; and closing their ears upon his word, they conspired against him, and became his betrayers and murderers. Now, God having declared by Moses, that whoever would not hearken to the words, which that prophet should speak, he would require it of him; Peter put them in mind of the awful threatening. Dent. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22, 23. But as God had promised them forgiveness, deliverance, protection, and prosperity, if they repented and reformed, the apostle exhorted them to repent, and turn to God, that they might receive the promised pardon, and escape the threatened punishment. Dent. 4:30, 31; Isa. 1:16-20. The latter chapter from the 10th to the 20th verse, is evidently descriptive of the state of the Jews, between the death of Christ, and the destruction of their nation. They had killed the Prince of life, and their hands were full of blood ; they still continued to offer sacrifices, but the ceremonial law being abolished by the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, they were no longer acceptable to God; they had forgiveness of sins preached by the apostles, to which they were advised to attend; and if they received the gospel dispensation, they were to continue in the land of Canaan, and eat the good of it, but if they rebelled they were to be devoured by the sword.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20. If the Redeemer stands at the door of the hearts of all who hear the gospel, knocking, and offering to enter, it must be with a design, either to enter, or not to enter them; if with a design not to

enter, where are his uprightness and sincerity; or to what purpose does he make the offer? Is it for the real benefit of sinners; or is it for his own glory? If he merely offers to enter, and proceeds no farther, what real advantage do sinners derive, or what honor arises to himself, from the offer? Are the former profited by being trifled with and mocked; or is the latter glorified, by pretending to do, what he never intended? If with a design to enter, it unavoidably follows that if he does not enter every heart at which he knocks, it must be either owing to a change in his will, or a defect in his power; or else, to the suspension of his entrance upon the determination of the human will. Now I presume, it will not be said, even by my opponent, that it is owing to either of the former; because he professes to believe both his omnipotence and immutability; nor to the latter, because he would not seem to favor Arminianism. It must, therefore, either be proved that Christ enters the hearts of all who hear the gospel, or confessed that he does not knock at the hearts of all who hear it. The real meaning of the text, I think, is this ; Christ by his servant John, had been addressing the seven churches of Asia; some of them he had censured, and had threatened to come to them, and chastise them, unless they reformed ; to others of them he had made most precious promises, and in order to raise their minds, to a due attention to what he had said, he assured them, that he would " come quickly," that he was, even then, like a person standing before the door, just ready to enter in among them, to fulfill both his threatening and promises ; and that the members of those churches who were spiritually minded, and disposed to receive him, and

desirous of holding communion with him should be honored with his presence and blessed with his fellowship.