

whether these were the persons whom he had in view, while it is very certain that he has not been so understood, at least, by Mr. Haldane. If then Mr. Romaine meant absolutely what Mr. Haldane has taken him to mean—namely, that all acts of worship “done before the grace of Christ, are only so many splendid sins,” and that they are such “because they flow from an unregenerate heart,” as he says, it remains to be enquired, Are these things so?

Mr. Haldane—and we may take him to be a representative man on the opinion in question—says: “Did ever the prayers and the alms of an unbeliever go up before God for a memorial? Is not the sacrifice of the wicked an abomination to the Lord?” We may reply to these questions by asking, Could Mr. Haldane, can those who adopt his opinions, have forgotten that God accepted the humility of Ahab, and, in consequence, averted from his house during his lifetime the evil that had been threatened thereon by the mouth of Elijah? Or that Nebuchadnezzar was counselled by Daniel to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, with the hope that such a course might be acceptable to God, in order to the lengthening of his, the king’s, tranquillity? Or that the idolatrous Ninevites by repentance found such acceptance with God as to avert the doom of their city? Or that the mariners in the storm prayed, when they cast Jonah overboard, and found acceptance? Or that Peter exhorted Simon the sorcerer to pray God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven to him? Were not all these unbelievers—or, at least, were any of them believers, in the complete sense of that term, in its relation to Christ? Had some of them the least inkling of the Messiah at all? Was Nebuchadnezzar taught to pray by the Messiah, or Simon by Jesus Christ? The Ninevites believed God, but had their faith any reference to the Saviour of sinners? Was the worship mentioned in either of these cases spiritual in its nature, or did it at all relate to spiritual things? Those that have not the per-

spicacity to see a distinction between an acceptable homage rendered to God in reference to things that are natural, and to those things that are spiritual, cannot understand the Scriptures. Neither can they that are unable to distinguish between an unqualified acceptance with God in righteousness, whether under law or under grace, and a qualified acceptance with him under a dispensation of longsuffering. If the question were whether the worship of a sinner is accepted absolutely on the ground of its natural acceptableness, as that of Adam was in his primitive purity, there could be no doubt about the answer. Or if it were whether a worship rendered with an object that is not warranted by any revelation that God has made, as that of doing any legal works for justification from sin to life eternal, the answer would be equally certain. But it is neither of these. It is whether a sinner can render an acceptable worship to his Maker and Preserver relative to things that are temporal, without, on the one hand, imagining that he will entitle himself to be dealt with according to what in a like case would be due from the Creator to a sinless creature; or, on the other hand, according to the right acquired by the righteousness of Christ for them that are justified. Whether, in a word, considering that though a sinner, God his Creator, under a dispensation of longsuffering, has extended favour to him, and given promise of its continuance, he may, and should, give thanks for the good he possesses, and pray for the fulfilment of the promise in future. He that doubts, let him learn.

In all acceptable worship the worshipper will call upon God "in truth." What he knows to be true of God and of himself will be his guide in his confessions, supplications, and thanksgivings. This it is that will govern his sentiments, regulate his expressions, and guide his life. Little or much may be comprehended herein; but what there is will be true. It may be that the accepted worshipper has no more knowledge of God and of himself than the light of nature teaches a savage, and that he has never had a

thought carried beyond natural things in his worship; or it may be that, though he has not equalled, he has emulated Paul in his understanding of spiritual things, his desire after them, his delight in them, and in his devotion to God. However this may be, in either, in every case of true worship, God is "nigh to" the worshippers. "Nigh to all that call upon him in truth," whether they be penitent Ninevites, devout Romans, or believers in Christ of any age and nation. Nigh to manifest himself to them appropriately, and to accept their worship according to its character, whether it be that of natural or spiritual men.

Again, in all true worship the worshipper will call on the name of the Lord; that is, he will worship God, not as an unknown or unappreciated abstraction, but as bearing some appropriate designation in his relation to him, and one that he will know how to value. Thus, when Abraham built an altar he called upon the name of the Lord; so did Isaac; and so did David when he offered to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Some appropriatively descriptive title under which God had manifested and magnified himself would, in each case, occupy the mind of the worshipper, and afford at once a reason and a vehicle for his worship. But when some Athenians built an altar, they consecrated it to *the unknown God*. Herein there was no acceptable worship, for there was no knowledge, which is essential to a calling upon God in truth. A difference is represented by these instances that, it is to be feared, still exists, and extends far more widely than is commonly credited. Under what name that God will acknowledge do many, denominated Christian, call upon the Lord? To how many is God an absolute abstraction? To how many is he a wholly unknown God? To how many is he an altogether anonymous God? But to those who do know him, his name will be some definite and instructive designation under which he has been pleased to make himself known to men, not only as the Supreme Being, but as the true object of worship in any given condition of

the worshipper. Different persons will call on the Lord under various names, such as may seem to them the most fitting for the occasion. In prayer they will call on the Lord under that name that will appear to them most to warrant and encourage their supplication in the peculiar need that may press on them; and in thanksgiving they will render praise to the Lord under that name that shall appear to them to be made illustrious by the favour vouchsafed and enjoyed.

But it will be evident that the true knowledge of God, without which there can be no acceptable worship, will vary much in its extent in different persons. Such as have never had the light of revelation can have known no more than nature teaches; and many such, alas! there are now. Many that have the Scriptures in their hands are without that Divine teaching by which alone a man can attain to the higher branches of the knowledge of the Lord, the highest of all the sciences. What, then, is the amount of this knowledge that is required to be possessed by any one to qualify him to render an acceptable service to God? Suppose a man approaches the sanctuary who, while reverently regarding the Bible in his hand as the Book of God, is conscious that he is not "born of the Spirit," that he "remains a "natural man," and that he does not know "the things of the Spirit of God;" is he, as a worshipper, to be prohibited from entering? Or, suppose a man to come to the entrance of God's house that has no more knowledge of God than that heathen poet had who wrote the line, "For we are also his offspring;" is the door to be shut against him as a worshipper? If so, why so? By what law is it enacted that if a man knows not God, and therefore cannot worship him as his Redeemer and Saviour, he must not render to his Maker and Preserver such homage as he can?

As a fact, men in different states and under great diversity of circumstances have worshipped, and do worship, God acceptably. Adam, in his primitive purity, and the Jews that outwardly kept the commandments and

ordinances given to them by Moses, rendered to God an acceptable service. Christians that worship God by faith in Jesus Christ are without doubt accepted. About these there will be no question. But here is a man that has fallen in Adam, and who, in the sight of God, is without holiness, righteousness, and goodness. He is not a Jew, nor has he the hopes or fears of one, nor does he worship as one. Neither is he a Christian, in the sense that a man is one who has a consciousness of a change wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, whereby he is created anew in the image of Christ; nevertheless, he is a worshipper of God. He receives the Scriptures as the Word of God. He accepts the historical testimony of the Lord Jesus though he is a stranger to the spiritual power of the Gospel. He holds himself to be amenable to the divine law. He recognises that it is in God he lives, moves, and has his being, and all his well-being. He worshipfully acknowledges God as the Governor of the creatures, and he prays and gives thanks accordingly for the blessings of divine goodness. Is the worship of such a man acceptable to God? If not—why not?

Those that deny the acceptableness of such a man's worship, rely on, what we think to be a misinterpretation of some Scriptures; notably that in Prov. xv. 8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." But can their interpretation of this Scripture be the true one? If so, carried to its legitimate issue, it will follow that every soul of man not justified by the righteousness of Christ, that offers a sacrifice of prayer or thanksgiving to God will add wickedness to sin. Does such a proposition need a refutation? May it not be that the wicked person spoken of here is one that adds hypocrisy in his worship to all his other forms of wickedness? Would not this interpretation meet every difficulty? Is it not the true one?

Another Scripture that is relied on, we believe, in support of the unacceptableness of such worship as a man of the world can render to God, is that in Heb. xi. 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Those who support their view by this Scripture contend that the faith spoken of here is identical with that by which a sinner believes with the heart in Christ unto righteousness. But this is begging a great question, and one which must be brought under consideration later on. It will be enough here to say that this view is disputed. The worshipping man of the world we have briefly sketched answers every requirement of this text. He believes that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and he seeks him accordingly. What more is demanded ?

Let but the truth taught in the Scripture on this subject be apprehended and accepted, namely, that God after the fall of man, without any reference to Christ, introduced into the economy of nature a dispensation of long-suffering, created a predicament of grace, and imported into the relations between himself and his fallen creatures, the law of faith for temporal purposes, then all will be set right. Men of the world will then see that, if they cannot worship God as Christians, they are not utterly excluded from the sanctuary ; but that they have the privilege to pray for such blessings as the Lord has promised to give them, and that they are under the obligations created by Divine favour to give thanks for all the good they enjoy. Those that doubt the obligation and the privilege of such men to worship God at all, will then feel, it is to be hoped with pleasure, that their ground is completely taken from under them ; and that they may invite their fellow men, nevertheless for that these may now lie under an entire disqualification from worshipping God as their Redeemer and Saviour, to unite with them in doing homage to the Most High as the Maker and Preserver of all. Then, too, those that have heretofore encouraged and exhorted such men to acknowledge God, often it may be feared with no sounder arguments than the promptings of their own good-nature have supplied, will emerge from the confusion of their uncertainty, and will speak with

such a confidence as is inspired by the clear guidance of the true reason for urging a right thing to be done.

My apology for having pursued this subject to this great length, is a conviction that without such a discrimination of things that differ, no clear understanding of a great part of the Word of God is possible.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE LAW OF FAITH AND THE LAW OF WORKS AS THEY OBTAINED IN THE JEWISH ECONOMY.

IN speaking of the Jewish economy, I include so much of it only as takes in the gift which God made of the land of Canaan to Abraham, the promise that he should have a numerous seed to people the possession, and the covenant made with these relative to their retention of the inheritance given to their father. Both faith and works had a place in this economy, each occupying its own appropriate sphere.

God, when he made his gift to that distinguished man, said, "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed, for ever." Somewhat later on, the Lord of all, condescending to his servant's weakness, gave Abraham an additional guarantee that he should have a numerous offspring, and inherit the land, by making a covenant with him by sacrifice. In all this we have nothing but pure promise. Of due from the divine Giver in this gift there was none, and nothing of duty to be done by the receiver in order to his possession of the bestowment. The law of works had no place in this business. Not a single precept was given to Abraham as a rule of any obedience to be rendered in order to the possession of the inheritance. No promise of rewarding him with this inheritance was made to him upon his rendering any required obedience. Neither was there any threatening of a penalty of the forfeiture of the inheritance being inflicted on him in

case of disobedience. "God gave it to Abraham by promise." All was pure grace. It was a case of gift and acceptance. The whole business of the gift, both on the side of the Giver and of the receiver, was conducted according to the law of faith. Had there been any due from the Giver, or had there been any duty to be discharged by the receiver, in order to the possession of the inheritance, in either case, or in both of them, the law of faith would have been wholly made void and displaced, and the law of works established. The inheritance, then, would have been "of the law," and, consequently, according to the apostle's irrefragable argument, could have been "no more of promise."

The rite of circumcision was, indeed, afterwards enjoined on Abraham. But this was not imposed on him as a duty upon the discharge or failure of which the inheriting of the land was contingently to hang. To the descendants of Abraham, when they possessed the land, circumcision fell under the law of works; but to him this ordinance came under the law of faith, and was instituted for a token of the covenant God had made with him, and a seal of the good promised to him. *They* were, when in possession of the land, to observe the rite as a part of the righteousness by which they were to retain the inheritance; *he* received it as a token of the covenant between God and himself, that he should enter upon the possession.

Moreover, not only was the original appropriation of the land to Abraham a pure gift, but everything requisite to his descendants taking possession of it was secured as a matter of favour. It was altogether of faith and grace that the promise might be sure to all the seed. Nothing was left hanging contingently upon the performance or the omission of any duty whatever, for none was imposed. As there was in the original appropriation to Abraham a case of pure gift and simple acceptance, so in the actual possession his descendants were led to, and, so to speak, seized of the inheritance purely by favour. Before entering on their possession, Moses constantly spoke to the people about it as the



“land promised,” and “the land which the Lord our God giveth ;” not as the land that was to be obtained upon the performance of any condition laid down in some precept. When, also, they had taken possession, Joshua bore this testimony to the truth we are presenting ; “ And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers ; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers ; and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them ; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, all came to pass.” Josh. xxi. 43—45. The law of works, then, had no more a place in the business of the actual possession than in that of the original appropriation of the land. All was conducted according to the law of faith.

Deeply interesting as all this is to the historian, it has for the divine a peculiar significance, which may well warrant the engagement of his keenest attention. This land was a type, and the antitype is something spiritual. Among other designations which Canaan received was that of a rest. It was God’s rest. Not one, indeed, in which he reposed, but one which he gave for the temporary repose of his people Israel, and one which foreshadowed another. Writing to the Hebrews, the apostle refers to Joshua introducing their fathers into this land as into a rest, though but an incomplete and passing one. Connecting the type with the antitype, he said, “ For we which have believed do enter into rest.” The gospel state, that is, the state in which a believer in Christ is found under the gospel dispensation, was then, we may take it, and as by very general consent it is taken, foreshadowed by the rest of Canaan. If, then, the antitype answers to the type, a believer in Christ will have entered into this spiritual rest of the gospel wholly according to the law of faith ; and therefore, without having discharged the least imaginable duty in order to his introduction and possession. Plainly

this is so. But is not this truth the very reverse of the theology that, from the chair and the pulpit, is now almost universally taught on this subject?

But while it is indisputably true that God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise, and that the original appropriation and the actual possession were comprehended in the gift; it is an unquestioned fact that all the Jews that came out of the land of Egypt that were twenty years old and upward at the time of the exodus, save Joshua and Caleb, fell in the wilderness through unbelief. Here lies a difficulty; but a little patient endeavour will suffice to untie the knot.

It must be distinctly understood and constantly held in mind that where the law of faith is in force in relation to any specific object, that there the law of works is, of necessity, utterly excluded. Both these laws cannot obtain respecting the same thing. The term, duty-faith, has, indeed, been employed to designate the doctrine of the duty of believing in Christ in order to salvation; but, as salvation is by grace, the expression is a very infelicitous one for a designation, being a simple self-contradiction, yet sufficiently good, perhaps, to designate a self-contradictory doctrine. We may as correctly use the term acid-alkali as a designation of some chemical substance. Duty and faith necessarily exclude each other respecting the same object. If anything be by faith, it cannot be by duty; and if by duty, it cannot be by faith. By the use of other words of similar import, the apostle teaches by an unanswerable argument this self-same truth in respect to election. "Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Like duty and faith, works and grace exclude each other respecting the same object; and, indeed, they are, in some cases, interchangeable terms.

But, nevertheless, while these truths are to be clearly understood and distinctly held in mind, it should be

with equal clearness known, and with like constancy held in mind, that according to the express testimony of the Scripture, the unbelief of those Jews whose carcases fell in the wilderness was a sin, and that their crime brought upon them the retributive judgment of being denied admission into the promised land. Seeing, then, that their unbelief was a sin, and seeing that according to the law of faith no duty can, in the nature of things, be imposed and discharged in order to the enjoyment of any good promised absolutely, it will necessarily follow that their sin must be the transgression of some precepts still binding on them according to the law of works in connection with another economy. This was so. When God made promise to Abraham and his seed, they were not as a consequence released from the law of nature. They were not lifted out of the natural condition of men when they were raised to a state of favour, as the seed of Abraham, in distinction from all other people. The law that requires men to love the Lord their God with all their heart, was as binding as ever upon them; and if it pleased the Most High to bear a testimony to them with sufficient evidence, they were bound to believe him. From what one may sometimes hear, and read, and see, it might not be unprofitable to some, who profess to be distinguished by the highest state and style of man known in this world, to lay to heart the doctrine taught here concerning the Jews; that is, to understand that by becoming Christians they do not cease to be men.

The seed of Abraham did not believe God, and this was their sin. Again and again God had testified, and had confirmed his testimony under the solemnities of an oath, that he would give them the land of Canaan, but they believed him not. He had further assured them by many miracles wrought in their favour, but still they believed not his word. Their unbelief in one view of it was positive, was disbelief; in another it was negative, was non-belief. In view of the precept originally given to man enjoining upon

him, according to the law of works, the duty to love the Lord his God with all his heart, their unbelief was positive, was a criminal disbelief of the testimony of God, which, in effect, was to make God a liar. In view of the promise God made to Abraham and his seed, assuring them, according to the law of faith, that he would give them the land Canaan for an inheritance, their unbelief was negative, was a disqualifying non-belief. For as God swore that they should not enter into his rest, because of their transgression of natural law, by their disbelief of his testimony; so also, "they could not enter in"—this is set down by the apostle distinctly and emphatically as impossible in the very nature of things—because of their disqualifying non-belief of the promise given, according to the law of faith.

It may be just observed here that there may be non-belief in some cases where there is no disbelief; for unbelief, like belief, has its differences. Many never deny or dispute, the testimony of God. Many receive, and some will ostentatiously avow, the witness of God to be true, who appear to be uninfluenced by its truth. Agrippa believed the testimony of God by the prophets; but he did not act on his belief. There was in his case, as in many others, to use the old distinction, the *credere Deum*, and the *credere Deo*; but there was not the *credere in Deum*. That is, there was a belief that God is, a belief of what God has said as true; but not a relying belief upon God for the fulfilment of his word. There was not the criminal disbelief of God, or of his testimony as true; but there was the disqualifying non-belief. But this is a subject which must come under review later on.

Passing from a consideration of the province which the law of faith held in the Jewish economy to notice that in which the law of works obtained, we shall find that while everything connected with the original gift, and the actual possession of Canaan, was conducted according to the former law, the retention and peaceable enjoyment of the land were afterward governed by the latter.

The covenant made with the heads of the people respecting their inheritance in the day when God took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt had the principle of works for its basis. In this respect, as we are expressly told (Deut. v. 3; Heb. viii. 9) this covenant wholly differed from that which was made with Abraham. *That* with him was a simple case of promise. *This* with them was a case of contract. God required of them an obedience to his will expressed in sundry precepts, and they consented; saying, "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient." Afterward, when they were in possession of the land, Joshua, who had led them into their inheritance, knowing that his end was approaching, renewed this covenant with them in solemn form at Shechem. Here again they said, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." It was, then, upon these terms that the land, now possessed, was to be retained and peaceably enjoyed.

An important difference, it may be observed, has uniformly existed between the law of works and the law of faith respecting the enjoyment of the good promised according to each of these laws. The enjoyment of what good has been promised according to the former law has constantly failed sooner or later, while that which has been promised according to the latter has invariably been realized and never lost. In the economy of nature, the enjoyment of the good originally promised to Adam, according to the former law, was wholly and irretrievably lost. On the other hand, the enjoyment of the good promised in the same economy under a dispensation of long-suffering according to the latter law, is held to the present hour. The reason is not far to seek. Everything in the former case was made to depend on man; everything in the latter rested, and does rest, on God. In the former case unbelief could, and did, destroy the faithfulness of man to God, through the maintenance of which the good was to be perpetuated; but in the latter, neither the unbelief of man, nor any other sin of his, could in

he least degree influence for ill the faithfulness of God by which the continuance of the favour promised is secured. Developed as that original God-denying sin of unbelief may have been in every form of wickedness known or possible to man in every age of the world's history until now, no flood has covered the earth since the Noachian deluge, the sun has not failed to rise and set, the recurrence of the seasons has not been prevented, nor their progress retarded, and seed time with its opportunity, and harvest with its plenty, have come round in their "appointed weeks" with an unvarying precision. In reckoning on the future continuance of this order, no one in his senses thinks of taking into the account the rightcousness or the wickedness of individuals or nations; but every one rather looks on the rainbow when it appears, and relies on the faithfulness of God.

It is without doubt true that, in occasional instances, God, it may be to manifest to men that they are, indeed, living under a dispensation of long-suffering, to rebuke their practical and sentimental atheism, to exhibit to those that deny, and to those that own him too, that the earth is his, and that he exerts a providence over all, and for innumerable other purposes beside, has sent famine at different times upon the nations of the world. But as this dispensation of favour under which all are living was established with the admission, and in the very face of the fact that "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," so, nevertheless for the wickedness of men, Divine faithfulness perpetuates the good they enjoy.

In the case of the Jews in the typical economy, the same truth holds. God gave to Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance according to the law of faith. Many, however, of the Jews disbelieved God, and as a consequence, their carcasses fell in the wilderness: a fearful example of the sinfulness of disbelief. But this in nothing made the promise void. Their unbelief did not make the faith of God without effect. The land was given in possession according to

the promise. Nothing failed ; all was brought to pass. But, on the other hand, the retention of the inheritance, together with its peaceable and prosperous enjoyment, were promised to them, according to the law of works, upon obedience rendered to certain precepts. These they weakly and wickedly disregarded, broke their promises of obedience, forfeited their title to their possession, offended their God, and have reaped, and to this hour are reaping, the miserable consequences of their defection.

There is one thing, however, relating to the retention of the land which, for more than one reason, deserves special notice. The terms of the law according to which the Jews were to hold and enjoy their inheritance differed in one very material particular from that according to which, originally, Adam was to hold Eden. Both he and they, as we have seen, held under a law which had the principle of works for its basis ; but that, it should be observed, under which Adam held Eden was wanting in one important provision, which the other contained. In the law under which he held his state there was nothing enacted to allow of repentance for wrong. For the first disobedience, by an irrevocable sentence, he was to die. In the law under which they held theirs, there was such a provision. We have the record of this remarkable enactment in Lev. xxvi. 40—46. Without this statute in their law there would have been no more ground of repentance for them than there was for Adam. It is on the ground of this provision that we find such confessions as, for instance, those in Isa. lxiv. 5—7 ; Dan. ix. 3—15 ; Neh. i. 6, 7 ; together with the prayers which accompany them. It was on this ground that Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, founded the arguments of his prayer for Israel in those circumstances of evil into which they might possibly fall through sinning against God. It was on this ground that this people were exhorted in every age by all the prophets to repentance and obedience. “ Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I,” said

God by Jeremiah, "have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them;" and the burden of the Divine message to them was, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword." To Jesus, the Son of the great Householder, sent "last of all," the last and greatest of all the prophets of Israel, it was reserved to pronounce their national doom. When about to take his departure from their temple for the last time, he uttered that doom in the memorable words:—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that 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! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Having thus spoken he went to Mount Olivet, and there uttered the last prophecy to Israel. It was the prediction of national ruin, and the word is fulfilled. After holding their inheritance in ever varying conditions through a period of about fifteen centuries and a quarter, Israel, for their manifold sins, were cut off, and the Jewish polity and nation became for ever defunct.

Here, a convenient opportunity presents itself to make some observations on what seems to me, and what, as I think, must on a very slight reflection, appear to be to others, an astounding misapprehension and preposterous misapplication of the Word of God. No one can reasonably question that "the law is not of faith;" and no one, especially if a teacher, ought to be in doubt that the gospel is not of works. But who does not know that words addressed to the Jews, as such, in the typical economy, that are wholly and unalterably the language of the law of works, are used by preachers and writers, as the utterances of grace and of the law of faith when preaching or writing of the Gospel of Christ? Nor is this perversion chargeable only upon a few individuals who may be quietly regarded as un-



lettered and bigoted persons—men of no name, no position, and no weight, and such that the wisest course to take respecting them is contemptuously to ignore them. In fact the truth lies in precisely the opposite direction. In general estimation, they are the few and the ignorant that refuse to employ the language of law to express the mind of grace. The many, the men of letters, of position, of weight, and whose known opinions on this point are as surely believed as oracular decisions, are just those who sin the most egregiously in this misapplication and perversion.

Specifically, what we mean as being so perverted is that large class of Scriptures of which we may take for a sample such a remonstrance as, “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Ezek. xviii. 31. Such a rebuke as “Why should ye be stricken any more?” Isa. i. 5. Such an exhortation as, “Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.” Ezek. xiv. 6. Or such an invitation and threatening as, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isa. i. 18—20. Can any man, having given this matter the slightest consideration, doubt for a moment that all this is the language of the law of works? Can any man have the boldness to say that, even when usurping the utmost latitude of accommodation that he may desire, the language of the law of works is suited to express a truth that has for its basis the law of faith? Does God express his mind in the law of works and the law of faith in the same terms?”

No truth can be more axiomatic than that the language of the law of works can never express the mind of God in any matter that is governed by the law of faith. No demonstration can be clearer than that the language of the law of works in the typical economy can never

be the voice of the law of faith in the anti-typical. With a due regard to the differences of things, the testimonies of God spoken according to the law of works and to the law of faith, respectively, in the typical economy may be employed to express his mind about the things that are governed by these laws, which belong to the anti-typical. This is a course that should be pursued. But to employ the language of the law of works, belonging to the former economy as the voice of the law of faith proper to the latter, is not dividing the truth rightly, is not interpretation, is not warrantable appropriation; but it is mischievous misinterpretation, it is preposterous confusion, and it is work of which any workman ought to be ashamed.

Some of the best writers on this subject have not quite hit the white on this particular point, respecting these Scriptures. They have said that what was required of the Jews was a natural, as opposed to a supernatural and spiritual, repentance. This is true, but it is only a part of the truth. A *Jewish* repentance was required. For had they practised all the social virtues, so long as the temple of Jehovah was neglected, and their hearts were the sanctuaries of idols, they would have been required to repent. Idolatry as much as, perhaps more than, anything else was the ruin of the Jews.

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## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE LAW OF FAITH AND THE LAW OF WORKS AS THEY OBTAIN IN THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY.

BOTH these laws hold a place in this economy, each in its proper and appropriate sphere. If it were desired to fix on any one word as a designation of the design of this economy, salvation perhaps, would be considered the one most eligible. Now salvation is altogether of grace, and, consequently, is wholly provided, bestowed, and enjoyed according to the law of faith. Neither in the acquisition nor in the possession of salvation has the law of works any place whatever.

Salvation is so of grace that it is by no means a due from God to the sinner. As there was no due from the Creator to elevate the unfallen creature above his original standing, so it is certain that salvation can in no wise be a due to him under his fall, fallen as he is by his own fault. Equally, also, salvation is so of grace that it has never been made the duty of any sinner to save himself, nor to contribute anything in the least degree towards his salvation. From the inception, so to speak, of the design, to the consummation of this chief of the works of the Most High, "Salvation belongeth to the Lord," and is altogether of grace.

It is without doubt that men are "chosen to salvation," and that, therefore, election is an important factor of this great matter. We say, without doubt, advisedly, for it can hardly now be thought worth while to notice those, or the arguments they use, who affect still to deny this Scripture truth. It will, however, be wholly outside of our purpose to say anything about the truth of this doctrine further than that it is taken for granted.

But election is of grace. This fact of itself settles the dispute of some whether the act of election proceeded on any foreknowledge of the faith, repentance, and sincere obedience of the chosen. Men, if they are saved by grace, and if election is a constituent element in the business of their salvation, were not chosen to this wonderful deliverance and advancement as a favour, on the ground of any foreseen belief in the the Lord Jesus unto righteousness, of repentance toward God, and of sincere obedience to him as of so many duties discharged; for, in the very nature of things, this could not be. If election is by grace, no imaginable discharge of any duty foreseen of God can have prompted, and no failure can have hindered, the act of election in any case. If the foreseeing of the discharge of any supposable duty on the one hand could have led to, or in the slightest degree promoted the act of election in one instance; or, on

the other hand, the foreseen failure of any obedience could have prevented it in another, grace would have been wholly excluded. In that case, the principle of faith would have had no place, and that of works would have been the established order. The elect would then have been chosen on account of a due to them according to the law of works. That is, according to this law, they would have been entitled to their election. Can a more egregious absurdity be imagined?

The purpose of election comprehended, moreover, the possession of salvation, which, also, like the actual inheritance of Canaan by the Jews, is altogether of grace. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain" (that is, to the possession of) "salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." The appointment and the execution are of grace. Had any obedience been prescribed by any precept in order to the possession of salvation, this would have been an introduction of the law of works. Were any such obedience for this object rendered and accepted, possession would be given and taken as a due to those that obey; but this would wholly shut out the law of faith and principle of grace in the actual inheriting of salvation, and establish their precise opposites. But it is certain that, originally, God did not owe it to them that are saved that he should put them in possession of the salvation they inherit; and it is equally certain that they did not owe it to God, by any rule prescribed for this object, to possess themselves of their precious inheritance. The whole is of pure grace, according to the law of faith. God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Redemption, too, is a constituent element of salvation. It is not within our purpose now to discuss the extent of redemption. We simply take it for granted that this great work is in design and merit, and that it will be ultimately in effect, co-extensive with election. Our present business lies in aiming to