

Shut up to belief as the meaning of faith in almost all its occurrences, Mr. Haldane says, on Rom. iii. 30, "*by faith and through faith.* —It is difficult to see why the prepositions here are varied. Similar variations, however, occur in other places, where there appears to be no difference of meaning, as in Gal, ii. 16." It is strange that he, and passing strange that his learned coadjutor, Dr. Carson, a man of unusual critical discernment, should never suspect that this word might bear another meaning than belief in these places. On their view of the meaning of the word here, and in Gal. ii. 16, there is, no doubt, a difficulty, and that an insuperable one, unless it be overcome by the supposition that various prepositions are construed with this word without giving any difference of meaning; thus they overcame the difficulty. According to them, the apostle used his prepositions indiscriminately, or at least, interchangeably, without design. Can any mind be satisfied with this view? When our view of a text of Scripture requires us to impute inconsiderateness or purposelessness to the writer in his choice of words, we ought to suspect the soundness of our judgment of his meaning. Let the word faith, construed with these different prepositions, in both these passages, be viewed as the name of a principle, then all difficulty will pass away, and the understanding will experience a satisfaction in the light of an interpretation that is as pleasing as it is clear. Let the verse be read and interpreted thus: "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision out of faith (as the principle from which the justification arises) and the uncircumcision through faith," (as the principle of procedure in the justification), and nothing will be left to be desired.

By a reference to six passages together, five of which have been already separately considered, an example may be seen of the confusion of thought which so lamentably prevails on this important subject in the minds of those that teach, and those that are taught alike. In Rom. iii. 22, we read, "The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ." In Rom.

v. 1, "Being justified by faith." In Gal. ii. 20, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." In Phil. iii. 9, "The righteousness which is of God by faith." In Heb. xi. 7, "The righteousness which is by faith." And in Rom. v. 2, "We have access by faith." Attention is solicited to the fact that the term "by faith" is found in all these passages. This noted, it will be readily admitted, it is presumed, that nineteen out of twenty, whether teachers or learners, will consider "faith" to mean believing, and "by" to indicate that the believing is the instrumental means of what is said to be, or to be done, in each of these passages. Many will not, of course, know that "by" in the first five of these quotations is made to do duty for five different Greek prepositions, and that the sixth simply represents the dative case. But their lack of this information, judging from the authoritative renderings we have, and from the expositions most in vogue, is not solely the veil which hides the truth from them, for the majority of those who know the most about these things are at a point, as to their interpretations, with those who know nothing. Learned and unlearned, as if by a common consent, are agreed that "faith" in all these instances means believing; and that "by" indicates the believing to be the instrumental means of what is said to be and to be done. It is no matter that one Greek preposition means *through*, another *out of*, another *in*, another *upon*, and another *according to*. As faith can have no other sense than believing, therefore all these prepositions, whatever differences of meaning they may represent, must be lengthened, or shortened, and shaped to the dimension and form of "by," as remorselessly as the guests of Procrustes were to his celebrated bed. Is this expounding the Word of God?

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## CHAPTER IX.

## OF FAITH CONSTRUED WITH VERBS.

IN entering on a consideration of the word faith when construed with verbs, no surprise will be felt from beginning with *justify*, and no apology need be offered.

The province of believing in the business of salvation is a matter of considerable importance. "Justification by faith," is a term of general acceptance, and is taken to represent a principle of common agreement among almost all Protestants. Perhaps there is no other term which, as representing a principle of common agreement, is so generally used, so strongly asserted, and so strenuously defended. Under banners emblazoned with this potent sign, almost all, on occasion, seem ready to rally, to march, and to fight; but, with all this unanimity and fervour, it is open to question whether, to the multitude, this term is anything more than a fetish; while to the few who have a meaning for the motto, it is doubtful whether, among an equal number of persons, any imaginable expression, not as certainly ambiguous as the celebrated oracle, could be more diversely, yea, more oppositely understood. Some, for instance, hold that it is the duty of every man to believe in Christ, in order to justification, and that every one that believes is justified by his believing. Justification by faith may be their motto, but nothing can be clearer than that justification by works is, nevertheless, their interpretation of it. Plainly as words can represent things, faith, in this view of it, is made a factor of the believer's justified state. Mr. Binney, indeed, openly avowed this notion. Speaking of the distinction of those to whom the gospel comes in word only, and those to whom it comes in power, he says, "both, therefore, have faith, in the true meaning of the term, as the reception of what is really before the mind; but that which is so, is infinitely different in each; and hence the difference in their character and state."

That a man's spiritual state arises from his faith is a

fundamental error, and a most pernicious one withal; it attributes to faith that which belongs to the righteousness of God only. It invests a man with the prerogative and power of God, and credits a sinner with his own justification. It makes a man's belief the factor of the quality of his state, instead of making his state the factor of the quality of his belief. It is a reversing cause and effect. But, against all contradiction, it is the radical qualities of a man's state which give a corresponding distinction to his faith; and not the radical qualities of his faith which give a corresponding character to his state. A man is either in the unregenerate or the regenerate state. If in the former, he, in the spiritual sense of the word, does not believe, nor hope, nor love, because he has not faith, is without hope, and is alienated in his mind; if in the latter, he has passed from death into life by the power of the Holy Ghost exerted on him as sovereignly and mysteriously as the blowing of the wind; and he will have, consequently, a corresponding faith, and hope, and love, and these will have their natural activities. State precedes faith, and not faith state. Perception and action follow state in the order of nature, and their quality will be according to what the state of the man is. The tree exists before the fruit. The fruit is not the factor of the quality of the tree, but the tree of the fruit. Fruit simply declares the quality of the tree which produces it. By their fruits trees are not made, but merely known. An unregenerate man is in the natural state under the fall; all his perceptions and actions do, and must, correspond therewith; and, as they never do, so they never can, rise higher. As justly might we look to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles, as to find spiritual perception and action in an unregenerate person.

It is immutably true that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and that "He cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He can have no spiritual perception; can engage in no spiritual action. He cannot, therefore, perceive the truth of the

Gospel, nor exercise faith in the truth. He cannot believe more than that the Gospel is true, systematically understand it, and assent to it. The spiritually remedial excellencies of the mediatorial character of Christ lie utterly beyond the range of his understanding, and, by consequence, of his faith. Before regeneration, in fine, whatever credit may be given to any truth concerning Christ, there can be no such belief of testimony as is united to trust with a view to advantage, because the remedial properties of the truth to be believed are unknown, unappreciated and unappreciable. How, then, shall a man's faith become the factor of his state? Moreover, it is alike immutably true, and to the same purport, that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The interpretation of the "natural man" here as that which is natural in a man, that is, of a principle, not of a person, is sanctioned by whatever great names, vicious, and cannot be too severely denounced. If, then, unenlightened by the Holy Ghost, a man's understanding is so darkened that he cannot know spiritual things, it is simple contradiction to the Divine testimony to say that he can; and if such a man cannot know them, it is pure insanity to say he can believe them. What place does the Holy Ghost hold in their view of the economy of salvation who make a man's faith the factor of his state, and who make faith the duty of all men?

Faith, as to its exercise, being such a reception of the divine testimony as is animated by a trust with a view to some advantage, the province of this faculty is simply to enable its subject to receive and rely on the word of God, and to realize the good of the testimony. It is not the province of faith to produce or to cause anything. It does not justify. God justifies in every sense, and he only. Faith is neither the matter nor the instrumental means of a sinner's justification, but only that faculty by which a sinner is enabled to rely on the testimony of God concerning the Lord our Right-

cousness, and to receive the righteousness therein testified. It is simply the subjective medium, as it has been called, through which a man comes to possess and enjoy a provision that was before made for him. By this medium he realizes righteousness; he possesses peace; he enters into rest. But he does not make the righteousness, peace, and rest by believing; neither, indeed, does he make them his own. They, together with all other spiritual blessings, were his as given to him in Christ Jesus before the world began, as acquired for him by his great Surety, and as specifically promised to him in the Word; but by the enabling of faith, itself the gift of God, and its exercise the fruit of Divine energy, he comes to enjoy all these things as his own. Faith is the eye that lets in the already shining light, and that apprehends the already presented object, the ear that receives the glad tidings, and the hand that takes the gift. Faith is not, and cannot be, in any sense, the cause of any one thing in the justification and salvation of a sinner.

It is commonly said that immediately a sinner believes in Christ he is justified. If this saying is intended to mean that immediately before believing in Christ a sinner is in a state of condemnation, and that immediately after he is in a state of justification, it is open to much objection. This notion makes the state of justification contingent on believing, and faith, in some sense, the factor of a sinner's righteousness. But, whatever may be said about its manifestation and realization, the state itself of justification is in nothing contingent on believing. Sinners are justified by Christ being made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. Apart from Christ there is no justification, and there is no condemnation to those who are in him. Whether, therefore, a man is in the justified state depends on his being in Christ. Whether he is in Christ depends on his having been chosen in him. Whether it is made manifest, and he is warranted to entertain the conviction that he is in Christ will depend on his being a

new creature; and this will have its evidence in the vital outcome of those distinguishing powers which spring into being at the new birth, and especially in that of faith. Perhaps it would be difficult to point out, from any other instance of a fallacious interpretation of Scripture, mistakes more misleading and mischievous than are those which have arisen from the term, "justified by faith," being expounded as justified by believing, and attributing to belief, in some sense, the quality of a cause.

Moreover, if when it is said that immediately a sinner believes he is justified, this saying is intended to mean that he realizes his justification, facts are often, if not invariably, utterly at variance with this notion. It is beyond question, and a thing that must be more or less known to every soul of man who has passed from death unto life, and who has any experience of personal religion, that reliance precedes realization; and reliance is the very soul of faith. Nor ought it to be supposed that this is a condition of things which, in every instance, speedily passes away. One of the most perplexing anxieties of some Christians has been, in their case, the continued lack of a specific realization of their personal justification. Dealing with tender-hearted Christians in this condition has proved to be one of the most troublesome difficulties of godly ministers of Christ. Not only may this state of things last for years, but he will be a bold man that will dare to say that in some instances it may not continue through life. Indeed, one such instance has fallen under our own notice; and the deep and painful anxiety experienced through a protracted affliction awoke such a corresponding interest in our mind as to make it likely that the case will never be effaced from memory. There was, so far as it is permitted to one to know another, every true appearance of an earnest hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and there was the prayerful reliance for the precious blessing; but of realization, so far as could be gathered, there was none in this world. The being "filled" was, in this case,

not only partly and perfectly, but altogether reserved for heaven.

But, if, when it is said that immediately a sinner believes he is justified, the saying is intended to mean that it may then be predicated of such a one that he is in a state of justification, no objection need be raised, excepting that the words are singularly inappropriate to express the intention. Are, however, these words ever employed simply as an affirmation respecting the state of a believer in Christ? This is doubtful. Rather, they seem to be generally used to assure unbelievers that if they would only believe in Christ they would be immediately justified. That nothing more is required in order for them to enter upon this distinguished state but that they should believe; and that there is nothing more within their competency, and nothing easier to be done than believing. From the way in which it is commonly said that immediately a sinner believes he is justified, nothing can be plainer than that the saying must be taken to mean that faith, in the subjective notion of it, has, in some sense, an acquiring power in the matter of justification. No doctrine can be more untrue, and, perhaps, none more pernicious. More never ought to be affirmed of faith, in the matter of a sinner's justification, than that it is the medium of reliance, of reception, and of realization; and it ought never to be forgotten that, as such, it is purely the gift of God. Let it be granted that there is any acquiring virtue in believing, or that faith is, in any sense, a factor of a sinner's righteousness, then we shall have belief converted into a work, and the essential truth of the justification of the ungodly being accomplished wholly upon the principle of grace will be altogether subverted.

How then, it may be asked, are the terms justify and justified by, or through, faith to be interpreted? The answer to this question will vary according to circumstances. When no preposition is employed, and the dative case only is used, as in Rom. iii. 28, the noun must be taken, not as the *instrumental* dative, but the *local*, that is, as the sphere within which the action of



the verb is begun and completed. *A man is justified in faith, without works of law.* That is, a man is justified wholly within the sphere of the principle of faith and, therefore, entirely apart from (*chōris*,) that of works of law. The local meaning of *chōris* fixes this sense to *pistei*, faith, here. A like example is found in verse 24. Here Jews and Gentiles are said to be "justified freely by his grace." "Grace," in the dative case, is not the instrumental or efficient cause of what is said to be done, but the sphere in which the action of the verb is begun and finished. The cause is mentioned in the words immediately following. They were justified "through (*dia*) the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This points, without doubt, to the meritorious cause. A similar example is also found in Eph. ii. 8; only that we have here, not a single branch of salvation spoken of, as justification, but the whole of it. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." "Grace," in the dative case, is here, not the cause by which, but the sphere in which the whole action of the word saved is begun and finished. "The faith" is that great scheme of favour of which Christ is the Beginner and the Perfecter, which is founded on the principle of the same name, and represents the precise opposite order of things to that which proceeds upon the principle of "works" mentioned in the following verse. "Through (*dia*) the faith" will mean, therefore, the principle of procedure, according to which the action of the verb is begun and completed.

Belief, then, is not the interpretation of *faith* when construed with *justify* either with or without a preposition. This is said with the full knowledge that it is to impugn the judgment of the greatest of theologians and the best of men, and that too, so far as is known to myself, without a single exception. But it is nevertheless said with the fullest confidence, and it is declared further, that to suppose that the action of this verb, *justify*, arises (*ek*) out of the belief of believers as its ground or principle, that it is contained (*dative case*) within this belief as its sphere, and that it

is completed (*dia*) through this belief as its instrumental cause, is, taken as a whole, one of the most extraordinary assumptions that ever usurped and held the place of theological truth in intelligent minds.

Perhaps it may not be improper to remark that it is felt that this interpretation of Eph. ii. 8, destroys a fondly cherished notion of not a few who have regarded this text as affording an unanswerable argument against those who contend that it is the duty of everybody to believe in Christ unto salvation. They have thought that "the faith" mentioned here is the power of belief, and that this is the gift of God. Their argument about faith and duty is safe enough; but they cannot rely on this text, in the sense in which it is commonly interpreted by them, for the confirmation of their doctrine.

Our next example shall be Paul's testimony, before Agrippa, of the mission he received from the Lord Jesus.

When Jesus gave Paul his apostleship, he said to him, "I send thee to open their (the Gentiles') eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," (Acts xxvi. 17, 18.) All seem to be agreed that faith here means belief, but a considerable divergence of opinion exists as to with which of the verbs in the text it is to be construed. Some decide for "sanctified," some for "receive," and others for "turn"; but not one, so far as I know, for "open." How is this? Is it some theological conclusion, so far foregone, that everything must of necessity bend to the decision? Is there any grammatical reason why "to open" should not have as good a claim to this connection as any of the others? If it be thought that "to open" is too far off, may it not be answered that it is inseparably linked with the nearer terms? But is there any grammatical reason why any one of the preceding terms of the text should be cut off from this connection? Have we not an inseparable whole here, and this a synoptical account of the designs to be accomplished by Paul's mission? Yea,

ought not, therefore, the whole to be connected? There can be but little doubt that the sole reason why "to open" has never found a friend adventurous enough to give it a connection with "by faith that is in me," is the foregone conclusion generally formed that faith here must mean belief, and that it would be a little too much to predicate of believing the opening of the eyes of the blind. Because it would be presumptuous to call into question the accepted theology of the text, grammar, therefore, must be sacrificed, and common sense hoodwinked. Only let faith here be understood as the name of that great scheme of favour which takes in everything comprehended in Paul's description of the mission he had received from his Saviour, and then there will need no learned disquisition about which of the words preceding the expression "by faith that is in me," should be connected with it, nor which should not; neither will grammar need to be violated by leaving out any one of them, and we shall have, moreover, a theology that will be under no necessity to make ever so many conciliatory explanations of the terms it is pleased to employ.

The faith that is in Christ is so designated from its express connection with him, and to distinguish it from all others. He, in his mediatorial character, is the centre to which every line of the great scheme of favour so designated converges, and the circumference within which everything contemplated thereby is originated, carried on, and consummated. In him all the good of this wondrous scheme is purposed, in him promised, in him given, and in him received. It bears this name too as a distinction from everything else that in terms, or by just inference, may be so called. It is distinguished, for instance, from "the faith of God," in connection with either the Noachian or the Abrahamic covenant, just as the Lord Jesus discriminated between believing in God, and believing in himself, (John xiv. 1.)

As there is a considerable diversity of opinion about the words of the Saviour just alluded to, I am tempted

to a digression in order to offer a remark on them. It so happens that the Greek verb in the second person plural is formed exactly alike in the indicative and the imperative moods, and this is one of the sources of variance. Is the word "believe" in both instances indicative, or both imperative? Or does it take both these moods? If so, which does it take first, and which last? In other words, have we here two assertions or two exhortations? Or have we an assertion and an exhortation? If so, which of these stands first and last? Every difference represented by these questions has its advocates, who severally agree more or less in the divinity they found thereon. Bengel makes the verb imperative in both instances, and says that the emphasis in the second clause should fall on the words *in me*; and adds, "So that the ancient faith in God may be as it were seasoned or dyed with a new colour by their believing in Christ." Erasmus, Beza, and Grotius, it is said, take "believe" in the first instance as indicative, and the second as imperative. "This view," says Olshausen, "gives the fine sense that true faith in God is accompanied by faith in the Redeemer, because in him God perfectly reveals himself, so that faith in Christ appears to be only a development of general faith in God." It is to us passing strange that any thoughtful mind can find satisfaction in such interpretation and such divinity. Gill, in the last of his alternative meanings, comes provokingly near to the mark without hitting it.

We accept the grammar of those who teach us that we have here an assertion in the first clause, and an exhortation in the second; but not their divinity. Nothing can be clearer to our own mind than that to rightly understand these simple and sweet utterances of the Saviour, it must be taken that he was discriminating between his disciples having believed in God respecting earthly things, and their believing in himself respecting heavenly things. Divine promises of temporal good, as we have seen, have been made to fallen man under a dispensation of favour wholly apart from

the mediatorial headship of Christ. For such good, God, through his promises, entirely apart from Christ as Mediator, has been in all ages with much advantage man's object of faith. Men have believed in God, and they may, yea, ought to believe in him as the Governor of the world, in his good pleasure doing them good, giving them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling their hearts with food and gladness, or withholding all these things in his displeasure: as forming light and creating darkness: as making peace, and creating evil. The disciples of Christ did believe thus in God as ruling all things in the physical world, and as the Observer and Judge of all moral actions. But Jesus had, to use his own words, told his disciples of "heavenly things," and it was about these that he directed them to believe in himself, because all the promises of these things were made in him, in him given, and in him received. Having instructed them that he and his Father are one, he presented himself to them as the object of their faith and the ground of their confidence respecting heavenly things, just as God, irrespective of mediation, was already all this to them concerning earthly things. In effect, Jesus said to his disciples, I and the Father are one. I came from the Father to tell you of heavenly things. Having almost finished my work, I shall shortly go to the Father. But let not this trouble you. As you have given God your confidence about earthly things, give me your trust about the heavenly things of which I have spoken.

In resuming our main argument, it may be next remarked that "faith" is found construed with "contend for" in Jude 3; and although it may not exactly fall in with my main purpose here, seeing that an objective sense is commonly allowed, yet it will not be foreign to my general design to make an observation or two. Jude says, "It was needful for me to write unto you, and to exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

From this exhortation we may learn that the doctrine of faith, for some reasons, either is not self-evidently

true and excellent, or that men are by nature incompetent to apprehend its truth and excellence ; and that such is the condition of things that, whatever may be the beneficial importance of the gospel of salvation to human interests, this is to be preserved among men by their earnest contention for it who have received it. Although Christ himself, the very Word of life to dying men, had before met with the same treatment, it will appear strange at first sight that the doctrine of faith, the very word of salvation in a world of lost men, should meet with rejection, and that with scorn, coming, as it does, with self-evidence of its truth and worthiness of all acceptation. Equally strange, too, will it appear that the distinctive truth of the gospel should require to be perpetuated among men by a continual earnest contention that has been often sustained by the self-sacrifice, and always by the self-denial of its advocates. But this surprise may be yet further increased if we will call to remembrance how we ourselves originally received this doctrine. Is it not absolutely true, and profoundly humiliating, that we originally received the truth of the gospel of our salvation in its distinctiveness with a reluctant obedience and submission ? We *obeyed* this form of doctrine ! We *submitted* to the righteousness of God ! While, however, the feeling of humiliation may well enough remain with us, the sense of the strangeness of this fact may be abated if it is remembered that man was created with a constitutional fitness to live in a condition only and wholly suited to the doctrine of works, and that his descendants, though they now are fallen, and utterly unqualified to raise and sustain themselves in acceptance with God on the original grounds, are nevertheless born with this element of the human constitution. The doctrine of faith is of things purely supernatural ; and man, therefore, needs a new constitutional fitness to live in a condition suited thereto. Before a man can so much as cross the border line that separates the old state of things from the new, he needs to be radically changed. Before he can set foot upon the kingdom of heaven, he

must be born again. Nothing, therefore, can be done in personal religion that is spiritual, not so much as an acceptance of the doctrine of faith in any true and real sense, until a man is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and has received a natural fitness for this new state of things. Even then, as all experience and observation prove, in consequence of the old constitutional element asserting itself against the new one within him, the newborn man receives this new doctrine only with sentiments of obedience and submission. No doubt fallen man is proud, and certain it is that the doctrine of faith is intolerant of human pride, and that it necessitates whomsoever receives it to humble himself low enough to acknowledge that he is guilty, and vile, and miserable, and helpless. This, it is freely admitted may have a vast subsidiary influence in producing the universal opposition prevailing against the doctrine of faith ; but the root of all is to be sought in the original constitutional element.

As, therefore, this element is inborn, and is as the spots in the leopard's hair, and the colour in the Ethiopian's skin, it is not more evident that material things will follow the law of gravitation than that the propagation of the doctrine of faith must be by a perpetual aggression, and that its maintenance must be by a continual contention. Self-evident as the doctrine may be, and commonly appreciable as may be its evidence, a special power is required to value its excellence. Lost in the sense that man is under the fall, he requires a new heart to understand appreciatively the very word of his salvation. Yea, more, this qualification is necessary to him not to reject with positive scorn this counsel of God against himself, and not, unless divinely restrained, to oppose the promulgation of it among his neighbours. It will be an entire mistake if it is supposed that this opposition to the doctrine of faith proceeds mainly on moral rather than on religious grounds. Profane men would resist the enforcement of any moral code that prohibited with equal stringency and condemned with like severity

their lawless gratifications. Moral men, whose sense of right and wrong owes, excepting in a very indirect way, little or nothing to the doctrine of faith, are more opposed to it than their immoral neighbours, but on different grounds. But it is the religious enemies of this doctrine that have ever been its most active, determined, and indefatigable opponents: These are keenly sensible that neither their moral virtues, their alms-deeds, their prayers, their penances, nor the whole of their costly and self-denying religious observances, which give them so proud a distinction among men, count for anything, according to this doctrine, for their acceptance with God. This truth, and the doctrine that teaches it, are alike revolting to them; these are their most offensive offences, and as they feel towards them all the bitterness of a religious hatred, they act accordingly.

Nor is this a new thing. When the Saviour preached the sermon on the mount, a not disagreeable sense of admiration seems to have been the result. It is said simply that "the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." But afterwards, when he advanced in his teaching beyond the moral principles of that sermon, and explicitly taught the doctrines of the faith, the result was far different. When in effect, he plainly told the people that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; that is, when he asserted that God was his Father; that he was before Abraham; and that he and the Father are one, they attempted to stone him. When he taught the doctrine of divine sovereignty and a particular salvation, by a reference to the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian, the people of his own city sought to destroy him. When he taught the doctrine of atonement by the sacrifice of himself, and that a personal participation of his flesh and blood is essential to eternal life, the people murmured, and some of his disciples deserted him. When he expounded the doctrine of substitution by referring to himself as the Good Shepherd who would lay down



his life for the sheep, many said he had a devil and was mad. It is now, therefore, as it was of old ; moral principles may be laid down, enforced, and exalted with a very general acceptance. But if any man will advocate the distinguishing doctrines of the faith, pure and simple, preserving their harmony, as the gospel of the grace of God, he must lay it to his account to be reckoned ignorant, bigoted, proud, and whatever else may go in public estimation to make him "the off-scouring of all things."

If, then, the promulgation of the doctrine of faith is opposed by natural and acquired forces so strong, it will be no wonder that its maintenance can only succeed by a continual contention. The Saviour of sinners in bringing peace, brought a sword that, in the nature of things, can never be left to rust in its scabbard. The doctrine of the cross was to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness, and, in different respects, it is an offence to the natural man of every nation. Generally the nominal Christian is its most active enemy. For though ignorant of its excellence he knows its antagonism to his opinions and he will hate it and dogmatize accordingly. Stung by a pretence to religious knowledge offensively advanced, a man who was venerable as a faithful minister of long standing, as a capable theologian, and as deeply versed by personal experience in the things of God, once said, "I wish men would not meddle with religion until religion meddled with them." If it would be difficult to justify this saying absolutely, no difficulty need be felt about doing so in reference to teaching religion.

Of all the branches of human knowledge, there is no one whose importance can be mentioned in comparison with religion, and there is no subject of enquiry about which men, generally, assume to themselves a competence to pronounce, and none which they affect to teach more readily and positively. But the singular thing about this is that men, who confessedly know nothing of the power of religion, will affect to expound the

divine testimonies concerning it. Like some that desired to be teachers of the law in the apostles' day, they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm; but they will teach. Now if they do not handle the word of God deceitfully—their motives are between themselves and their Judge—they must do so ignorantly; and it will not need a prophetic inspiration to foretell the result. It is just a case of the blind leading the blind. Not only they may, they must go and lead wrong. Not having "obtained precious faith" themselves, they will not only not teach the doctrine of faith, but they will infallibly teach its opposite. Being alien by nature from the principle of faith, their teaching must be antagonistic to its doctrine. This has been and is so in fact. Yea, to such an extent is the old constitutional element in force, even in those teachers that seem to have obeyed and submitted to the doctrine of faith, that it is rare that one can hear or read any of their teachings without finding a large admixture of works with faith. In some instances, these naturally diverse and incompatible doctrines are jumbled together in painful confusion, and in others the whole matter from beginning to end is all of works. Hence the necessity for an earnest contention,

We may now pass to a brief consideration of some few examples of faith construed as a governing word.

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## CHAPTER X.

### OF FAITH CONSTRUED AS A GOVERNING WORD.

*Pistis*, (faith) is sometimes construed as the governing word. We read, for instance, of the "Faith of God" in Mark xi. 22, and Rom. iii. 3. Respecting this latter example, if the almost, perhaps quite, universal consent of expositors is to decide, nothing remains but to bow and to accept fidelity or faithfulness as the meaning of the word faith in this expression. When so very general a consent obtains in the interpretation of any part of the Word of God, it requires some strength of

conscientious conviction to entertain, and some courage to express, a different judgment. We, however, do differ from the common judgment and are convinced that our view is the true one, and, therefore, that it has the importance of the truth on this particular subject. At the risk, therefore, of being charged with affectation or presumption, we will briefly show our opinion.

We are convinced that the word *faith* in this term here stands for that divine *scheme* of favour according to which the seed of Abraham were put in possession of the promised land. That scheme was God's. With him it originated. He put it into action. Against all opposition he carried it into effect. It receives the designation of "faith" because the good designed to be brought to pass by it was promised, given, and received as a pure favour. Faith, therefore, was a most appropriate designation. Had there been some "work of God" (John vi. 29) to do to give effect to the scheme, it would have been otherwise designated, and we may be sure that failure would have been the result. But it is designated the "faith of God," and was, therefore, to receive effect from the power of Him whose goodness originated it. This scheme presented no good to be possessed as a reward for the discharge of some duty, but one that was to be had by the pure favour of God. Hence it was not made without effect by all the opposition that was offered against it.

We may add, moreover, for what it is worth, that, so far as our limited reading extends, the Greek word represented by "make without effect," is never found having a moral virtue for its object nor for its subject. If the nullification of a law, a rule, a promise, or, as in the passage we are now considering, a scheme is to be spoken of, then this is the word to be employed; or, perhaps, *kenoun*, which would represent the same effect under another idea. Had it been intended to represent the failure of a moral virtue, such as fidelity, then, we speak with submission, *ekleipein*, or *ekpiptein*, would have been the word employed.

But, if the digression may be forgiven, because we reject the common interpretation of the term "faith of God," we are not to be understood as asserting that the word faith nowhere means fidelity. So far from this, it is perfectly clear to us that this word takes this meaning, not only in Tit. ii. 10, where it is so translated, and in some other places where it is so commonly understood, but also in Gal. v. 22, where it does not generally receive this sense. Here we have the fruit of the Spirit set in opposition to the works of the flesh, and faith, in the sense of fidelity, belongs to the former. But, seeing that this, as also every other subject in the category, is simply a moral virtue, it may be very pertinently asked, how can it be the fruit of the Spirit? Moreover, as moral virtues, all these may be, and are, found in those who could not, and do not, make any pretension to the Holy Ghost living in them; or that this moral excellency in them is to be specially predicated of that divine Person; or that their virtuousness should be designated a "walking in the Spirit." The observation is true, and often pertinently made, that there may be a high moral sense, inducing a corresponding virtuous action in a very eminent degree, where there is no profession of spiritual religion; but that whoever truly names the name of Christ will certainly be virtuous. This, however, does not relieve us of our difficulty here. What will? Motive seems to be the true solution. Why a man is virtuous must be the rule to settle whether or not his virtue is the fruit of the Spirit. Joseph was a chaste man because he dreaded and abhorred to sin against God. Nehemiah avoided extortion and unjust usury, because of the fear of God. Paul delighted in the law of God. His virtue is the fruit of the Spirit who is virtuous from the fear of the Lord. His virtue is the fruit of the Spirit who, from believing with his heart in the Lord Jesus Christ unto righteousness, dreads and abhors to sin against God, and delights in the law of God after the inner man.

If this view be a correct one, it is as an axe at the root of all that very extensively patronised divinity