

"wicked" and the "unrighteous man," in ver. 7, contrary to the Jew's thoughts, but according to God's thoughts, is a fact, perhaps, few doubt, and no one will care to disprove. This understood, therefore, if the passage be read *imperatively*, the idea of the Jews being exclusively privileged in the Messiah's kingdom, (Acts xxii. 21, 22,) is refuted. Christ then being published as God's salvation unto the ends of the earth, even the "thirsty," "wicked," and "unrighteous" Gentile is *encouraged* in gospel hope. But there is another fact in relation to this Scripture, as employed on this subject—a fact which has been many years before the public,—a fact, which if our author did not know, his ignorance is to be lamented; and which, if he did know, his perverseness must be incorrigible, or he would have submitted to it. It is simply this,—the two first verbs as well as the two last, in the Hebrew text, are in the *future tense*, and read thus, "The wicked *shall* forsake his way,—he *shall* return unto the Lord." Thus the passage presents simply a prediction and a promise to the Jewish church, of the salvation of her sister the Gentile church. *Jod* is truly a little letter; but if Mr. C. could not see it without some aid, he might plainly have perceived it through the spectacles of his neighbour. Let my reader read the remaining part of the chapter, and follow Paul's course, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" let him compare the things contained therein with Mr. C.'s positions raised upon the part in question, and he will find such a disparity, as that he will be necessitated to deny the consistency of the inspired truth of God, or those positions. The second passage is—

"How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at (or *to*) my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh:" Prov. i. 22—26.

Every Scripture has a *primary* application, which ought always to be prayerfully and diligently sought. To whomsoever or whatsoever any Scripture primarily relates, to him or them, that or those, that Scripture should have its unmodified weight, with this provision, namely, that a strict regard be paid to the laws and use of figurative language. Many Scriptures have a secondary application; and all such Scriptures in such respect, must be explained in a modified manner, with more, equal, or less force, as they will bear, according to circumstances and the analogy of faith. Psa. xxii., for instance, is true as the language of David, but many things must be understood figuratively. But this psalm has a secondary application with respect to Christ, and will bear a far more literal, and therefore a more forcible explanation. On the other hand, the question put by the Lord at Ezek. xviii. 31, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

primarily respects the Israelites exclusively, and regards their idolatry and the judgment of God upon them for it in their political and temporal death. It may bear some suitable secondary application, but certainly not such a one as that *God commands and invites all men* to live spiritually, for that would be cruel and nonsensical, and a violation of the laws of language. Yet such wretched perversions of the Word of God are frequently made, and in a manner outraging all common decency, and calculated to violate every hallowed feeling in the human mind concerning the great God. The Scripture in question is in precisely the same predicament as the one last mentioned. Primarily, it was a reproof to the Jews, as Jews, under that peculiar covenant, whereby they, as the seed of Abraham, were peculiarly privileged beyond their Gentile neighbours, connected with a promise of continuance under the performable conditions thereof. Solomon warned the people of their danger, admonished them of their folly, and seemed to prophesy the consequences. See also Isa. lxv. 11, 12; lxvi. 3, 4; Jer. vii. 13—16; xxv. 3—7; xi. 7—10; xiii. 10; xvi. 11—13; xviii. 11—17; xix. 15; xxii. 21—23; vii. 23—28; xxvi. 4—6; xxix. 16—19; xxxv. 14—17; 2 Kings xvii. 13—23. In all the above Scriptures similar language is used for a similar purpose. And after God had long warned the people by word and example to cease from folly, that is, idolatry, to regard his counsel and to keep his law, (of all which in the respect required they were capable,) he, being disregarded, righteously retaliated according to the tenor of that covenant: Isa. i. 19, 20; and brought upon them fear as a desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15—21. It may have a suitable secondary application to the Jews, in respect of their rejection of the Messiah, and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem; and perhaps otherwise also. But according to our author, it presents an impossible condition: John vi. 44; xv. 5; to be performed for an unappreciable good: 1 Cor. ii. 14; this condition is sanctioned under an awful threatening of destruction, and a rigorous severity is to be accompanied with insult and mockery in its execution! If fiendish malice itself can devise anything more deadly malefic than this, it is worse than I took it to be! O Christianity, if these are thy rules, let me rather be tried by the riddle of some new sphinx! If these are thy laws, let me find an asylum in the most perilous position of the kingdom of Draco! How awful a thing is error! It is alike detrimental to the character of the Most High and the interests of men, however "*honestly*" embraced; nor less so when, however "*honestly*," a gracious promise to a definite people is *twisted* into an impossible command to all men! The next scripture is—

“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:" Matt. xxii. 2—4.

Of course Mr. C. explains this passage according to its "*plain grammatical meaning*," and so founds a doctrinal position on a parabolical expression. This may serve his purpose, but perhaps nothing could be more prejudicial to his judgment, or more show a want of skill. We are, however, not left to guess at what is always required to a right understanding of a parable, namely, the scope, design, and doctrinal instruction thereof: our Lord has supplied these at ver. 14: "For many are called, but few are chosen." It is plain therefore, that whensoever, and wheresoever the Lord Jesus himself preached, or the truth in him is preached by his ministers, there and then there was, and is supplied, a full evidence of his being the promised Messiah, and that evidence challenges a *reasonable* regard, and acceptance of his person and ministry as such. As far and wide, and to as many as the gospel is preached; so far and wide, and to so many is the *word* of this salvation sent. It bids them by pre-eminence and precept to come, to listen, to try, and by indubitable and appreciable evidence, claims a reasonable acceptance. Beyond this its province and prerogative reach not. It is entirely and distinctly of God to make the word efficacious for the saving profit of the hearer. The hearing of the word cannot savingly profit any man in whom saving faith is not mixed with hearing: Heb. iv. 2; and saving faith is the gift of God: Eph. ii. 8. Hence, while all are *bidden* or *called* to hear the word and reasonably receive it so far as it extends, the *chosen* only are savingly called by the word. But this whole parable has in its primary application, direct reference to the Jews, in distinction from the Gentiles. Our Lord conveyed by this parable, though implicitly, a severe reproof to them; and took occasion from the enmity and perversity of them who are intended by the *bidden*, to publish parabolically the salvation of the Gentiles. Any other application of the whole or a part of this parable, must be according to the analogy of faith. The next scripture is—

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel:" Mark i. 14, 15.

Repentance in respect of a creature is a change of mind and manners; but it may have the quality of being reasonable merely, legal, or spiritual. A reasonable repentance upon conviction of wrong is within the power, and is the duty of all men; but a spiritual repentance, a "repentance unto life" is within the compass of no natural man's power, it is not his duty, and the not doing so is not his fault. The power of a spiritual repentance is the gift of God. Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted (*edoken*, given) repentance unto life: Acts xi. 18. This divine gift is always connected

with the remission of sins and eternal life : Acts v. 31. Jesus Christ announced in this passage what he called in another a *regeneration* : Matt. xix. 28 ; a change of divine manifestation, government, and worship : Heb. i. 1, 2. And he called upon the Jews to change their minds and manners accordingly. The faith also called for here, was a reasonable persuasion upon evidence produced, that the end of Judaism was come, and was to be succeeded by Christianity. Jesus Christ never commands the exercise of a spiritual principle where it is not. This conduct would make him an austere master, requiring to reap where he had not sown. The next scripture forced into this service, is—

“Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you ; for him hath God the Father sealed :” John vi. 27.

In all sciences, it is supposed, there are certain first principles, which are undeniable, because they are either self-evident, or established by irrefragable proof. These are the student's guide ; by these he makes his observations, shapes his course, and directs his way. Agreeably to these he forms his conclusions ; and without these he would run in uncertainty, and fight as one that beateth the air. System in divinity may be ignorantly decried, and the beauty and utility thereof perversely denied ; but while order is an established principle with God in all his ways, neither can be disproved. But there are certain first principles in divinity, of which, the following may be called one, namely, “*Salvation is of the Lord.*” The work of salvation is altogether and totally of the Lord, without any co-operation on the part of the saved ; the purpose, the promise, the kingdom, and the power, all are the Lord's. No truth can be published more fully and clearly than this is ; and no truth can appear more evident. While therefore this is an evident, undeniable, and fundamental first principle of divine truth, and while truth is always self-consistent, no explanation must be given or received of, and no doctrine must be raised upon, any part of the book of truth, which may in any way obscure, pervert, or contradict this fundamental first principle. This doctrine is irrefutable. But it is said, by the text above cited, *God commands sinners to act spiritually.* If God commands natural men *to act* spiritually, it is but a fair inference, that God commands them *to be* spiritual. Let us try this assumption by our doctrine. A man cannot *act* spiritually without *being* spiritual, he cannot be *spiritual* without being *regenerate*, but *regeneration* is a part of *salvation*, and *salvation is of the Lord.* No cause, no effect. No root, no fruit. The fruit depends on the branch, the branch on the trunk, and all on the root. Spiritual action depends on spiritual life, and spiritual life depends on Jehovah, the Spirit of life. It is a gift of love, a work of power, and a part of salvation ; but the love, the labor, and the salvation is of the Lord. This assumption then is contradictory of a fundamental first principle of

divine truth, and therefore evidently false. God has not, and will not abdicate his kingdom, lay aside his power, forfeit his glory, and deny himself by commanding a sinner to act spiritually, because that is a fruit of his love and power, in, by, and for which he receives honor: Psa. cxv. 1; Zech iv. 6; Isa. xliii. 1, 7, 21; Psa. c. 3; Eph. ii. 10. We conclude therefore, whatever is meant by the passage, it cannot mean that a sinner ought to act spiritually. My cause requires no more. It is sufficient for me that I have entered a valid objection. The burden of proof lies on Mr. C. I may, however, gratuitously add, it is evident from the whole passage, that our Lord exhorted these sordid, belly-loving Jews to be employed in their minds about the evidences he supplied by his miracles of being God's Messiah, rather than to be serving their belly with them. While the preposition "*for*" in the text cannot affect the minds of some, to others it may be of importance; and to these therefore it may not be unacceptable to know, it is a supplied word, to complete the English reading. "*Be not employed about the meat which perisheth*, which I supply by miracle, in evidence of my person and mission, but (as though Jesus had said) about me, who am that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. I who am the bread of life, which giveth life to the world, am of more importance than the perishing bread I give by miracle; and it is of more importance that you know and receive me as such thereby, than that you may glut a low appetite thereon. Therefore employ yourselves only about my gifts as they declare me to be a gift of God to you, in distinction from the Gentiles, sealed by God the Father to preach, work miracles, and die among you. And if you ask me what you shall do to work the works of God, I answer, that you believe on him whom he hath sent; that is, that you, by the evidence produced in the miracles wrought, do reasonably acknowledge, receive, and honor him, as being whom he declares himself to be. The concluding portion produced to prop this insupportable Arminian theory is—

"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 iii. 19.

Mr. C. says the persons here addressed were unconvicted sinners. I object to the assertion, and hold the assertor to proof, though I shall not avail myself of the arguments against him. But, admitting they were unconvicted sinners, what then? In the way our author has introduced the passage, and made his observation, the blotting out of their sins is made to depend on their repentance and conversion, as the effect depends on the cause; whereas the Spirit, the Word, and experience teach, sins are only legally blotted out by the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, and experimentally by the efficacious application thereof. Repentance and conversion are not the causes of pardon in any sense, but the fruits of pardoning love manifested in, and justified in its acts by the vicarious sufferings, and blood-shedding

of incarnate God. Whether the persons addressed were unconvicted or not I decide not; and it is totally unimportant which hypothesis is correct. In either case the scope and design of the apostle are precisely the same here, as in the chapter preceding, when he said to those who were *pricked in the heart*, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Peter did not exhort those who were pricked in the heart to repent spiritually, he saw they did so already by their question; but Judaically. Nor does he exhort the people addressed in the passage in question, to repent, &c. spiritually, for he knew of themselves they could not. The repentance enjoined in both cases was reasonable and in respect of Judaism, the conversion in the latter was to Christianity, and their sins to be blotted out were national.

It is certain the above remarks are an *honest denial*, and it is hoped they are a sufficiently convincing *refutation* of the redoubtable position of our author; and especially of the two latter, according to the law and the testimony of the Word of God. It is hoped also the reader will find explanations of the Scriptures produced by our author, quite agreeable to the proportion of faith, and neither impeaching heavenly wisdom, nor violating common sense. In conclusion, let us ask,—

What is the testimony of experience in the matter? Mr. Cox himself shall be a witness again by another excellent passage he adopted from Charnock. "In ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, can bring forth nothing spiritually good and acceptable to God; a mere composition of enmity to good, of propensity to evil, of weakness and wickedness, of hell and death. A fardel of impotence and conceitedness, perversity, and inability, every way miserable, unless infinite compassion relieve us; we have no more freedom than a galley-slave, till Christ redeem us; no more strength than a putrified carcase till Christ raise us. An unlamented hardness, an unregarded obstinacy, an insensible palsy spread over every part, a dreadful *cannot* and *will not* triumphing in the whole soul." Mr. C. once seemed to receive this humbling testimony as the truth, but he now despises it without disproof. And what he only mentioned to despise, he now in effect says, and seems to prize without proof, namely—

"Rise, noble creature man arise,
And make yourself alive;
Prepare yourself to mount the skies,
For endless glory strive."

I affirm without hesitancy, the little less than blasphemous sentiment of this verse, is precisely the doctrine of Mr. C.'s *positions*. And what is the legitimate effect of its proclamation to a broken-hearted sinner? Is it the joy of good news to him?—news of his debts being all cancelled, his crimes all atoned, his sins all blotted out, the law on his behalf magnified, justice satisfied, truth established, faithfulness exemplified, holiness righted, peace made, and

mercy's opened fulness flowing freely in richest effusions to meet his gnawing, craving, soul-wasting necessities, as a self-ruined, self-condemned, and righteously damnable delinquent? Nothing of the kind! It is utterly contrariwise, it is the ministry of condemnation—it is worse than either the Egyptian task-master's cruelty, or Rehoboam's folly,—it is a putting caustic to a sore—it is a threatening to miserable impotence—it is a taunt to the tortured—it is a wound to a wounded spirit—it is a mockery of the pungent and deep pangs of a broken heart—it is a death-knell to the dying! Command a broken-hearted sinner to believe! The character of God, and the catalogue of his deep crimes; the claims of the law, and the clamour of his conscience raise, enhance, and confirm a tormenting fear in his heart that his ruin is irremediable, and his destiny is destruction! Rather pursue that *more ancient way*, though almost antiquated, the apostolic way, preaching "Christ and him crucified." Exhibit how the holy excellencies of the Most High are vindicated, and how sin is punished in the sinless substitute for the penitent sinner's exemption, exoneration, and exculpation. Let it be fully set forth that through the divinely-sealed and voluntarily self-sanctified sacrifice of that divine victim, the raised-up ire of inflexible justice is appeased, a finishing end is made of sin, death is swallowed up in eternal victory, the policy of hell nonplussed, and its power vanquished, life immortal is brought to light, and the sanctified are perfected for ever. Let also those sweet encouragements be trumpeted forth which arise from the permanent purposes, precious promises, glorious precedents, omnipotent power, and from the unmeritable, full, free, and everlasting grace and mercy of Jehovah to the worthless and miserable penitent criminal. And thus, though the profane will scoff, and the proud professor sneer, the gospel will be preached, the Holy Ghost will bear witness to his own truth, Christ will be exalted, God our Father in covenant will be endeared, the case will be met, the poor sinner will be prostrated in humility and absorbed in love, sin will be hated, spirituality promoted, and the church of God gladdened.

What are the legitimate consequences of the doctrine of those positions in the minds of the unconverted? Are they awed by the representations of God glorious in holiness, and themselves weak in wickedness? No! but a delusive conceit is raised in their minds, that they are rich in will to choose, in wisdom to direct to, and in power to obtain the salvation of God. That it *is* of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and *not* of God that sheweth mercy, working all in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. They are told they are commanded of God to repent, &c.; "therefore we can repent," say they, "when we please, and we intend to do so; but not yet." It is in the nature of the doctrine to foster that self-sufficient vanity, in the minds of the people. They are not awed by the declarations of the majesty and justice of God rigorously holding them by an inflexible equity to indiminishable obligations connected

with the testimony of their vileness and weakness; but are bloated with the braggart conceit of possessing a power with God whenever they choose to exercise it; and as though the great God waited in his ways to be regulated by the nod of their caprice. They are not told thereby that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and that those who are in the flesh cannot please God; but are indirectly, however honestly, bolstered up in their lust by the insane and mischievous notion that they possess a power to repent, &c. It is useless to declare to men their sins, without declaring their sinfulness; that is, their weakness, perversity, and death in sin. They will live in their sins with no other notion about them, than that they can, and shall repent of them. He who declares not to sinners their perversity in their sins, and their weakness in their wickedness, or tacitly or indirectly speaks otherwise, doctrinally robs God of that of which he is in the highest degree jealous, deceives men in that which is of the very utmost importance, and cannot say "I am pure from the blood of all men."

If evident facts were allowed the authority they might justly have in this case, they would unequivocally condemn the doctrine of universal invitations (if I may use that term) as the most inducing premium for vice. Canvass the sentiments of the people, and it will be found, from the most fashionable circles of the nobility, to the very lowest grade of society, while they all in their several spheres are revelling in every species of iniquity, that they each conclude from the tuition they have received, they *CAN* repent, they *can make their peace with God*; and resolving so to do at a convenient season, drink deeper still. This conceit defeats all reproof, deadens the heart to all creature responsibility, and is an ever present and unfailing panacea for any and every transient consciousness of guilt. Ball-rooms, operas, theatres, taverns, pot-houses, and every other hot-bed of vice teem with their thousands of dreadful examples of the consequences of the doctrine of universal invitations. Some *can* and *do repent*, and so cancel their sins as they contract them; others *can*, but will defer payment until some little time before they die. It is true their minister urges them to an early repentance, alleging the uncertainty of life among other reasons; but they are young perhaps, and if not, they are strong, and well in health, and however it may be, *there is time enough yet*. Sometimes in a dying sickness, as the result of their religious education, they cover themselves in the cloak of self-righteousness; and as in life they made lies their refuge, so in death they comfort themselves with the fire they have kindled. With what blood-chilling horror I have left the room of a dying sinner wrapt in the self-righteous delusion, I will not attempt to describe; neither will I harrow the feelings of my reader by a description of what I have known to take place, when in the last sickness the detestable charm has been broken, and the dreadful reality of a just God, inflexible in his claims, unmoved by misery, and unap-

peasible by the tears of a criminal, has appeared in full view. In one word,

Universal invitations and commands of a spiritual nature are without Bible precept, without Bible precedent, without propriety, without profit, without prudence.

Without Bible precept. They have no tenable standing upon any one fairly explained text of the whole book of God. They form no part of the law, nor of the gospel. They by just consequence lower the claims of the former, are a satire upon the power of the latter, and miserably mangle the whole. They are a monstrous inconsistency, flatly contrary to the whole revealed manner of divine operation in the accomplishment of salvation, and to the whole testimony of the experience of the saved.

Without Bible precedent. However ancient their use may be, certainly that use has not been taken up from any rightly understood custom of inspired men recorded in the Scriptures. Their use may indeed be ancient, and so is a great deal besides; but all old sentiments are not true, nor are all old customs commendable. As early as the second century, if Alstedius may be credited, persons were found who worshipped and adored the serpent which seduced Eve, *tanquam is fuisset Christus*, as though it was (as I suppose believing it to be) Christ! Indeed I think there is no blasphemy, however blasphemous, no superstition, however stupid, no folly, however foolish, and no will-worship, however extraneous, but which might easily obtain the suffrages of antiquity. But when men shall become subject to the decisions of sovereignty, and the dictations of Scripture, universal invitations, (however much the use of them may now be venerated for its age) with all their Arminian kindred, will die a violent death by the hand of those who have nurtured them, unregretted, and reprobated. "*What saith the Scripture?*" The sentiments and usages of no good men can form a rule of action, nor plea of justification for us in the fear of, and before God. Paul required to be followed only as he followed Christ: 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Without propriety. What might be justly thought of a person directing a blind man by visible signs, or a deaf man by audible sounds, may fairly be concluded of him who indiscriminately invites men to things spiritual. He who *commands* a bad tree to bear good fruit, had better if he can first *make* the tree good, and then the fruit will be good by consequence. Nothing, naturally, can act above itself. Surely there is, there must be an apprehensible propriety in the will, the work, and the Word of the all-wise God!

Without profit. All Bible promises are made and confirmed in Christ to specified characters only: hence also their propriety. Accordingly Peter encouraged those who were pricked in their heart, saying, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even as many as the Lord our God shall call:*" Acts ii. 39. He who makes a promise to any one in the name of

the Lord, that is not a promisee by the will of God, exceeds his commission, misrepresents his Master, and raises a vain expectation. It is a solemn thing for a man to rush into the marriage feast without having on the wedding garment: Matt. xxii. 11—13. Ministers, be sure by a devout reverence of, and a rigid adherence to *the proportion of faith*, that you keep yourselves pure from the blood of such a man!

Without prudence. Universal invitations, if those who use them are not satirical, are, indirectly, an imprudent bolstering of men in the deceitful conceit, that unto them belong the issues from death, whereby also they are by just consequence indirectly licensed to continue in sin, because they *can* change their condition when they please. Universal commands also are an imprudent saddening sound to a broken heart. And perhaps the word of the Lord by Ezekiel may be considered a severe reproof of both,—“Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall no more be in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:” Ezek. xiii. 20—22.

FINIS.