

POINTS FROM THEOLOGY

by Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow

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No. I - True Saving Faith Described

Nothing is more clearly taught in the Word of God than that without saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no salvation. The question of whether or not they have this faith is one which has exercised the souls of God's people in every age and generation. The following extract from *The Christian's Great Interest* by William Guthrie gives a helpful description of this most necessary grace: -

“This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernible, is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and gracious condescension, variously expressed in Scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after Him; so that everyone who hath it may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acts by a desire of union with Him in Christ; this is that *looking* to Him in Isaiah - “Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” (Isa. xlv: 22). This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actings of it at other times perhaps in that same person.

Men will look to what they dare not touch or embrace; they may look: to one to whom they dare not speak; yet God hath made the promise to faith in that acting, as the fore-cited Scripture shows: and this He hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernible way of the acting of faith in some. Such are the actings or out- goings of faith expressed in Scripture by ‘hungering and thirsting after righteousness’ (Matt. v:6) and that expressed by willing - ‘And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ (Rev. xxii: 27).

“Again, this faith goeth out sometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting-stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a stumbling-stone to others. (Rom. ix: 33.) This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of ‘trusting’ and ‘staying’ on God, so often mentioned in Scripture; and, precious promises are made to this acting of faith – ‘God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him; because such do trust in Him. ‘Trust in the Lord: for with Him is everlasting strength.’ (Isa. xxvi: 3, 4.) ‘They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion,

which abideth for ever.' (Psa. cxxv: 1.) I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it will often go out after Him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernible to them.

"It goeth out after God sometimes by an act of waiting. When the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not clearly discovered his mind concerning it, then faith doth wait; and so it hath the promise- 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.'" (Isa. xlix: 23.) Sometimes it acteth in a wilful way upon the Lord, when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin- 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' (Job xiii: 15.) The faith of that poor woman of Canaan (Matt. xv) so highly commended by Christ, went out in this way of wilful acting over difficulties: and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be at times called upon to exercise faith in that way, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoings after Christ - I may say, according to the various conditions of man.

And accordingly faith, which God has appointed to traffic and travail between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of His fullness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with Him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ: for faith is the very shaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of salvation by Christ Jesus, 'in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell.' (Col. i: 16); so that, let Christ turn what way He will, faith turneth and pointeth that way. Now He turns all ways in which He can be useful to poor man; and therefore faith acts accordingly on Him for drawing-out of that fullness, according to a man's case and condition.

As for example, the soul is naked, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath; Christ is fine raiment (Rev. iii: 17, 18); then accordingly, faith's work here is to put on the Lord Jesus (Rom. xiii: 14). The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy; Christ Jesus is 'milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna,' (Isa. lv: 1, 2; John vi: 48, 51). He is 'the feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees well refined' (Isa. xxv: 6): then the work and exercise of faith is to 'go, buy, eat, and drink abundantly.' (John vi: 53, 57; Isa. LV: 1).

The soul is pursued for guilt more or less, and is not able to withstand the charge; Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the high-priest there, during whose priesthood, that is, for ever, the poor man who escapes thither

is safe; then the work and exercise of faith is 'to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.' (Heb. vi: 18). In a word, whatsoever way He may benefit poor man, He declares Himself able to do. And as He holdeth out Himself in the Scriptures, so faith doth point towards Him. If He be a Bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation; if He be a Father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child; if he be a Shepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of His sheep; if He be a Lord, faith called Him so, which none can do but by the Spirit of Jesus; if He be dead, and risen again for our justification faith 'believeth God hath raised Him' on that account. (Rom. x: 9.)

Wheresoever He be, there would faith be; and whatsoever He is, faith would be somewhat like Him; for by faith the heart is laid out in breadth and length for Him; yea, when the fame and report of Him goeth abroad in His truth, although faith seeth not much, yet it 'believeth on His name,' upon the very fame He hath sent abroad of Himself (John i: 12)."

No. 2 - True Confession of Sin - Four Things Needful

Confession of sin is a part of true repentance and is, therefore, required of all. Sincere confession of sin, however, can only exist where the teaching of the Holy Spirit is granted. Such teaching produces certain convictions which lead to a broken-hearted acknowledgment of sin and transgression. John Bunyan outlines four of these for us in his work: *The Pharisees and the Publican*: -

"To right confession of sin, several things must go. As,

1. There must be found conviction of sin upon the spirit: for before a man shall be convinced of the nature, aggravation, and evil of sin, how shall he make godly confession of it? Now to convince the soul of sin, the law must be set home upon the conscience by the Spirit of God; 'For by the law is the knowledge of sin.' (Rom. iii: 20). And again, 'I had not known sin except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet' (Rom. vii: 7). This law, now, when it effectually ministereth conviction of sin to the conscience, doth it by putting of life, and strength, and terror into sin. By its working on the conscience, it makes sin revive, 'and the strength of sin is the law.' (Cor. xv: 56).

It also increaseth and multiplieth sin, both by the revelation of God's anger against the soul; and also by mustering up, and calling to view sins committed, and forgotten time out of mind. Sin seen in the glass of the law is a terrible thing, no man can behold it and live. 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died'; when it came from God to my conscience, as managed by

an almighty arm, 'then it slew me.' And now is the time to confess sin, because now a soul knows what it is, both in the nature and consequence of it.

2. To right confession of sin, there must be sound knowledge of God, especially as to His justice, holiness, righteousness, and purity: wherefore the Publican here begins his confession by calling upon, or by the acknowledgment of His majesty: 'God be merciful to me a 'sinner.' As if he should say, 'God, O God, O great God, O sin-revenging God, I have sinned against thee, I have broken thy law, I have opposed thy holiness, thy justice, thy law, and thy righteous will. O consuming fire! for our God is a consuming fire, I have justly provoked thee to wrath, and to take vengeance of me for my transgressions.

But alas! how few, that make confession of sin, have right apprehension of God, unto whom confession of sin doth belong! Alas, 'tis easy for men to entertain such apprehensions of God as shall please their own humours, and as will admit them without dying, to bear up under their sense of sin, and that shall make their confession rather facile, and fantastical, than solid and heart-breaking. The sight and knowledge of the great God is to the sinful man the most dreadful thing in the world; and is that which makes confession of sin so rare and wonderful a thing. Most men confess their sins behind God's back, but few to his face; and you know there is oftentimes a vast difference in one thus doing among men.

3. To right confession of sin, there must be a deep conviction of the certainty and terribleness of the day of judgment. This John the Baptist inserts, where he insinuates, that the Pharisees' want of sense of, and the true confession of sin, was because they had not been warned, or had not taken the alarm, to flee from the wrath to come. What dread, terror, or frightful apprehension can there be put into a revelation of sin, where there is no sense of a day of judgment, and of our giving there unto God an account of it. Mat. iii: 7; Luke iii: 7).

4. To right and sincere confession of sin, there must be a good conviction of a probability of mercy. This also is intimated by the Publican in his confession, 'God (saith he) be merciful to me a sinner.' He had some glimmerings of mercy, some conviction or a probability of mercy, or that he might obtain mercy for his pardon, if he went, and with unfeigned lips did confess his sins to God.

Despair of mercy, shuts up the mouth, makes the heart hard, and drives a man away from God; as is manifest in the case of Adam and the fallen angels. But

the least intimation of mercy, if the heart can but touch, feel, taste, or have the least probability of it, that will open the mouth, tend to soften the heart, and to make a very Publican come up to God into the temple and say 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

Then there must be this holy mixture of things in the heart of a truly confessing Publican. There must be sound sense of sin, sound knowledge of God: deep conviction of the certainty and terribleness of the day of judgment, as also of the probability of obtaining mercy."

No. 3 - Resting in Christ - (a) The Understanding and Will

To rest in the Lord is one of the sweetest and most delightful of the experiences of the Lord's people in Time, and is a foretaste of the eternal rest which awaits them when they are translated from a state of grace to a state of glory. Thomas Boston was well skilled, through Divine teaching, in experimental theology and in the following extracts shows how the faculties of the soul enjoy rest in the Lord. They are from his treatise *The Distinguishing Characters of True Believers*:-

"I proceed to show what is that rest in Christ, which they who do believe enter into.

They who have believed, do enter into spiritual rest, which is their initial or begun rest. Though they should get little more rest for their bodies, till they rest in the grave; they enter into soul rest (Matt. xi, 39) they get rest for their souls in Christ. And none that knows what soul-trouble is, but they will value it more than any rest out of heaven. And they can enter into:

1. A rest of the understanding. The mind of man is a restless thing; and though it is always seeking and searching, it can never find where to rest, till the soul come to Christ, and there it comes to the utmost point and so rests. Now, the minds of those that have believed, do enter into;

(1) A rest of persuasion and assurance of the truth of the gospel (I Thess. i, 5), "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. There is a root of Atheism and incredulity, in the minds of men by nature: the gospel is brought to them, but they cannot believe it (Isa. iii, 1). It is enforced upon them with many clear arguments, ready to captivate their assent: but still at best they remain fluctuating about it; sometimes they are almost persuaded, and anon the vain mind recoils.

Hence they are here and there in their resolution, course of life, etc. Thus they remain restless in their minds about it, till the Spirit demonstrating it, works faith in them: and then they rest assured of it, as of what they see and feel.

(2) A rest sufficient to make men happy. The whole blind world is in quest of that, and they are rambling up and down in great confusion seeking it; while they know not where it is. One runs to the profits, others to the pleasures of the world for it; but can never find it in the whole round of creation to which they go for it. But Christ being seen by the eye of faith, the mind is at rest from the weary search: the soul has found the one pearl, and cries out, I have found, I need seek no further (John i. 45); here is enough for me.

(3) A rest of the highest estimation (Psalm lxxvii, 25) forecited. Natural men are in a constant hurry this way, they never rest in this point. They will most esteem that to-day, which they will loath and think very little of to-morrow. What we had in the highest value for in infancy, we care not for in childhood; in childhood, we despise in youth, etc. In a word, natural men are all their days like children, that value the newest toy most. But when men believe, the highest estimation is fixed on Christ (I Peter, ii, 7). "Unto you which believe he is precious: and though thousands of objects came after him, he preserves his transcendent excellency in the believer's eye." His mind is at rest there, though the greatest hardships come with him, their highest value for him is not sunk.

2. The rest of the will. The will is a restless faculty of the soul; it goes hither and thither, and can never be brought to rest, till the soul comes to Christ. Unstable as water, may be its motto, for what he wills to-day, he will not tomorrow. But the will of those who have believed doth enter into:

(1) A rest full of liking to and contentedness with Christ (Psalm cx, 3). "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The unbeliever never saw the object in which he could so rest. However pleased he was with it, it wanted still some one thing or other to him: the creature, in itself; and Christ himself with respect to their mind. Hence, he could never find rest to his will. But they who believe do enter into this rest: they have at length fallen on an object that fully pleaseth them; there is nothing out of him that they would have in, Cant. v ult. He is altogether lovely.

(2) A rest of chief design and purpose, namely, so partake of Christ and enjoy God in him, which is man's chief end (Psalm lxxiii, 25). Unbelievers are still changing their particular chief designs, they alter their minds in them, and

cannot rest; but faith sets the soul to rest in one thing, which it will chiefly pursue while breath lasts (Psalm xxvii, 4) and what that is, the apostle tells (Phil. iii, 8 “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.”

(3) A rest of final choice. (Psalm lxxiii, 25). The soul that is out of Christ is light of conceit, and given to changes; but they have made their choice, and closed their eyes never to choose another, acquiescing in the choice of Christ for a portion. Hence they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, as a woman espoused to a husband can no more admit the addresses of former suitors. (Tit. ii, 12, 13).

No. 4 - Resting in Christ (b) The Conscience, Heart and Affections

Thomas Boston on The Distinguishing Character of True Believers: -

A rest of conscience. A disturbed conscience is a heavy companion, Prov. xviii: 14 and there is no sound rest for it, but in Christ. The consciences of some are asleep, yea those of some are seared; but that is no kindly rest for them. They will certainly be awakened sooner or later, and conscience makes some frightful starts in that sleep. The awakened conscience smarts sore as by a deep wound, Acts ii: 37, and that wound's becoming incurable, is the gnawing worm in hell. The first way men go for rest in this case is to the law, making a healing plaster of their duties to apply to their sore; but there is no rest there, the thunder of its curses being redoubled. But the consciences of those who have believed, do enter into:

(1) A rest of ease. Rom. xv: 13. The soul that was in a storm before, comes to enjoy a calm by believing, just according to the measure of believing. In the awakened fired conscience, guilt ferments, and casts it into a fever; by believing the soul gets the conscience purged. Heb. ix: 14, and so there is a cool of that fever, chap. x: 2. Faith brings the tossed soul to an anchor in Christ.

(2) A rest of refreshment, comfort, and establishment; there is not only peace, but joy in believing; according to the measure thereof. Rom. xv: 13. The same conscience that stung the man before, cheers him now; that brought dread of God as an enemy, brings in kindly thoughts of God through Christ, finding kindly rest in the righteousness of a Redeemer apprehended by faith.

Indeed, so far as faith is mixed without doubting, the rest will be mixed with inquietness. And if faith were perfect, the rest would be perfect too. But if the hand of faith tremble, taking and holding the grip, so much will be wanting of the ease and comfort of conscience.

A rest of heart and affections. Psal. cxvi: 7. This is the rest the soul can never find till it come to Christ: for still the heart of man is craving, at the rate the whole creation cannot answer it, and therefore is kept restless. But the hearts of those who have believed, do enter into:

(1) A rest of satisfaction. Phil. iv: 18. The soul being by faith set on the breasts of the divine consolations, has enough, Gen. xxx iii: 11. It finds Christ an object commensurable to its boundless desires, nothing to be desired without him, nothing beyond him, Psalm lxxiii: 25. The whole compass of worldly comforts could never match the heart; there was still something wanting which the heart desired. But now it is matched in a satisfying object .

(2) The rest of settled abode. Psalm xc; 1. So that it goes no more abroad, as it was wont, among the creatures for satisfaction. John iv: 14. Having Christ, it has enough within itself. Prov. xiv: 14, and therefore can rest satisfied even when the streams abroad are dried up, Hab. iii: 17, 18, Why? because the fountain is with Christ, as the husband of the soul, becomes a covering of its eyes.

(3) A rest of holy calmness. Matt. xi:29. While the soul is out of Christ, the heart and affections are like a troubled sea; un-mortified lusts and passions fight therein like contrary winds blowing; one passion drives the heart this way anon another comes and drives it that way. James iv: 1. But the soul believing in Christ, the turbulent rout of unruly lusts is cashiered, and the soul gets a cool of that fever. Rom. vi: 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you.' Then is fulfilled that promise, Isa. xi: 6. 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

(4) A rest of holy security as to the issue of all that concerns them. 2 Tim. i: 12. 'I know, (says Paul) whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' Faith brings the news from heaven, on all events, that we will be well in the end. Luther, when any cloud of troubles appeared to be gathering, used to say, 'Come let us sing the 46th psalm.' For faith can make a rest in the midst of trouble, building

its nest in the promise, John xvi. ult. 'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'

And thus the soul ceases from its own works. Heb. iv: 10; and hath a spiritual Sabbath begun.

No. 5 - Common grace and Saving grace differ not only in degree but in nature

The differences between Common grace and Saving grace is a subject only too seldom handled either in the pulpit or the religious press of the present day. Yet it is a very necessary subject lest sinners deceive themselves into thinking that they are the same thing. By common grace we mean those influences of the Holy Spirit common to the elect and none-elect by which sin is restrained and certain moral and religious attainments made.

Saving grace on the other hand means those influences of the Holy Spirit which are peculiar to the elect alone and which secure a change of nature and saving assistance to carry out the exercises of this new nature. The important point is that common grace is not a mere degree of saving grace and can thus be expected to grow up to saving grace. Saving grace is entirely different in its *nature*. But let us listen to the eminent Jonathan Edwards on this subject in his *Treatise on Grace* in his *Unpublished Writings*: -

"That special or saving grace is not only different from common grace in degree, but entirely diverse in nature and kind, and that natural men not only have not a sufficient degree of virtue to be saints, but that they have no degree of that grace that is in godly men, is what I have now to shew.

1. This is evident by what Christ says in John iii: 6, where Christ, speaking of Regeneration, says- 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Now whatever term Christ intends by the terms flesh and spirit in the words, yet this much is manifested and undeniable, that Christ here intends to shew Nicodemus the necessity of a new birth, or another birth than his natural birth, and that, from argument, that a man that has been the subject only of the first birth, has nothing of that in his heart which he must have in order to enter into the kingdom. He has nothing at all of that which Christ calls spirit, whatever that be.

All that a man (has) that has been the subject only of a natural birth doesn't go beyond that which Christ calls flesh, for however it may be refined and exalted, yet it cannot be raised above flesh. 'Tis plain that by flesh and Spirit, Christ here intends two things entirely different in nature, which cannot be one from the other. A man cannot have anything of a nature superior to flesh that is not born again, and therefore we must be 'born again.' That by flesh and spirit are intended certain; moral principles, natures, or qualities, entirely different and opposite in their nature one to another, is manifest from other texts, as particularly: Gal. v: 17- 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and they are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things which ye would'; ver. 19, 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication,' etc., ver. 22- 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,-' etc.; and by Gal. vi: 8 - 'For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Rom. viii: 6-9 - 'For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,' etc., I Cor. iii: 1- 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.'

So that it is manifest by this, that men that have been the subjects only of the first birth, have no degree of that moral principle or quality that those that are new born have, whereby they have a title to the kingdom of heaven. This principle or quality comes out then no otherwise than by birth, and the birth that it must come by is not, cannot be, the first birth, but it must be a new birth. If men that have no title to the kingdom of heaven, could have something of the Spirit, as well as flesh, then Christ's argument would be false. It is plain, by Christ's reasoning, that those who are not in a state of salvation cannot have these two opposite principles in their hearts together, some flesh and some spirit, lusting one against the other as the godly have, but that they have flesh only.

2. That the only principle in those that are savingly converted, whence gracious acts flow, which in the language of Scripture is called the Spirit, and set in opposition to the flesh, is that which others not only have not a sufficient degree of, but have nothing at all of, is further manifest, because the Scripture asserts both negatively, that those that have not the Spirit are not Christ's. Rom. viii: 9 - 'But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His'; and also (positively) that those that have the Spirit are His. I John iii: 24

‘Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.’ And our having the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts is mentioned is mentioned as a certain sign that persons are entitled to heaven, and is called the earnest of the future inheritance, (II Cor. i: 22, and v 5, Eph. i: 14) which it would not be if others that had no title to the inheritance might have some of it dwelling in them.

Yea, that those that are not true saints have nothing of the Spirit, no part or portion of it, is still more evident, because not having any particular motion of the Spirit, but a being of the spirit is given as a sure sign of being in Christ. I John iv: 13 – ‘Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.’ If those that are not true saints have any degree of that spiritual principle, then though they have not so much, yet they have of it, and so that would be no sign that a person is in Christ.

If those that have not a saving interest in Christ have nothing of the Spirit, then they have nothing; no degree of those graces that are the fruits of the Spirit, mentioned in Gal. v: 22 – ‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ Those fruits are here mentioned with that very design, that we may know whether we have the Spirit or no.

3. Those that are not true saints, and in a state of salvation, not only have not so much of that holy nature and Divine principle that is in the hearts of the saints, but they do not partake of it, because a being ‘partakers of the Divine nature’ is spoken of as the peculiar privilege of true saints. (II Pet i: 4). It is evident that it is the true saints that the Apostle is there speaking of. The words in this verse with the foregoing are these: ‘According as his Divine power hath given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ The ‘Divine nature’ and ‘lust’ are evidently here spoken of as two opposite principles in man.

Those that are in the world, and that are the men of the world, have only the latter principle; but to be partakers of the Divine nature is spoken of as peculiar to them that are distinguished and separated from the world, by the free and sovereign grace of God giving them all things that pertain to life and godliness, giving the knowledge of Him and calling them to glory and virtue,

and giving them the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, and that have escaped the corruption of the world of wicked men. And a being partakers of the Divine nature is spoken of, not only as peculiar to saints, but as one of the highest privileges of the saints.

4. That those that have not a saving interest in Christ have no degree of that relish and sense of spiritual things or things of the Spirit, of their Divine truth and excellency, which a true saint has, is evident by I Cor. ii: 14 - '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.' A natural man is here set in opposition to a spiritual one, or one that has the Spirit, as appears by the foregoing and following verses.

Such we have shewn already the Scripture declares all true saints to be, and no other. Therefore, by natural men are meant those that have no other than the natural birth. But here we are plainly taught that a natural man is perfectly destitute of any sense, perception, or discerning of those things of the Spirit. We are taught that by the words 'he neither does nor can know them, or discern them,' so far from this they are 'foolishness unto him'; he is a perfect stranger, so that he does not know what the talk of such things means; they are words without a meaning to him; he knows nothing of the matter anymore than a blind man of colours.

Hence it will follow, that the sense of things of religion that a natural man has, is not only not to the same degree, but nothing of the same nature with that which a true saint has. And besides, if a natural person has the fruit of the Spirit, which is of the same kind with what a spiritual person has, then he experiences within himself the things of the Spirit of God; and how then can he be said to be such a stranger to them, and have no perception or discerning of them.

No. 6 - Jesus on the Authority of Scripture

There is widespread disbelief in the inspiration of the Bible in the present age. This rejection of one of the clearest doctrines of Scripture extends not only to the world which lies in wickedness, but is boldly advanced by many who claim at the same time the right to be recognised as Christians, and others who have the impertinence to profess to be ministers of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is abundantly plain, however, that these professed followers of the

Lord do not follow Him when He speaks about the divine oracles, and if they fail to follow Him here, they cannot follow Him at all.

In the following piece from his article on *The Biblical Idea of Inspiration*, Professor Warfield demonstrates how the Lord viewed the Scripture: -

“How far the supreme trustworthiness of Scripture, thus asserted, extends may be conveyed tonus by a passage in one of Our Lord’s discourses recorded by John (John x: 34-35). The Jews, offended by Jesus 'making himself God,' were in the act to stone Him, when He defended himself thus: ‘Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified (margin ‘consecrated’) and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?’

It may be thought that this defence is inadequate. It certainly is incomplete: Jesus made Himself God (John x: 33) in a far higher sense than that in which ‘Ye are Gods’ was said of them 'unto whom the word of God came': He had just declared in unmistakable terms. ‘I and the Father are one.’ But it was quite sufficient for the immediate end in view – to repel the technical charge of blasphemy based on His making Himself God: it is not blasphemy to call one God in any sense in which he may fitly receive that designation; and certainly if it is not blasphemy to call such men as those spoken of in the passage of scripture adduced gods, because of their official functions, it cannot be blasphemy to call Him God whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world.

The point for us to note, however, is merely that Jesus’ defence takes the form of an appeal to Scripture; and it is important to observe how He makes this appeal. In the first place, He adduces the Scriptures as law; ‘It is written in your law’ He demands. The passage of Scripture which He adduces is not written in that portion of Scripture which was more specifically called ‘the Law’, that is to say, the Pentateuch; nor in any portion of Scripture of formally legal contents. It is written in the Book of Psalms; and in a particular psalm which is as far as possible from presenting the external characteristics of legal enactment (Psalm lxxxii: 6). When Jesus adduces this passage, then, as written in the ‘law’ of the Jews, He does it, not because it stands in the psalm, but because it is a part of Scripture at large.

In other words, He ascribes legal authority to the entirety of Scripture, in accordance with a conception common enough among the Jews (cf. John xii: 34), and finding expression in the New Testament occasionally, both on the lips of Jesus Himself, and in the writings of the apostles. Thus, on a later occasion (John xv: 25) Jesus declares that it is written in the 'law' of the Jews, 'They hated me without a cause,' a clause found in Psalm xxxv: 19. And Paul assigns passages both from the Psalms and from Isaiah to 'the Law' (1 Cor. xiv: 21; Rom. lii: 19), and can write such a sentence as this (Gal. iv: 21 f.): 'Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written...' quoting from the narrative of Genesis.

We have seen that the entirety of Scripture was conceived as 'prophecy'; we now see that the entirety of Scripture was also conceived as 'law'; these three terms, the law, prophecy, Scripture, were indeed, materially, strict synonyms, as our present passage itself advises us, by varying the formula of adduction in contiguous verses from 'law' to 'scripture.' And what is thus implied in the manner in which Scripture is adduced is immediately afterward spoken out in the most explicit language, because it forms an essential element in Our Lord's defence. It might have been enough to say simply, 'It is not written in your law?'

But our Lord, determined to drive His appeal to Scripture home, sharpens the point to the utmost by adding with the highest emphasis: 'and the Scripture cannot be broken.' This is the reason why it is worthwhile to appeal to what is 'written in the law,' because 'the Scripture cannot be broken.' The word 'broken' here is the common one for breaking the law, or the Sabbath, or the like (John v: 18; vii: 23; Matthew v: 19), and the meaning of the declaration is that it is impossible for the Scripture to be annulled, its authority to be withstood, or denied. The movement of thought is to the effect that, because it is impossible for the Scripture—the term is perfectly general and witnesses to the unitary character of Scripture (it is all, for the purpose in hand, of a piece)—to be withstood, therefore this particular Scripture which is cited must be taken as of irrefragable authority.

What we have here is, therefore, the strongest possible assertion of the indefectible authority of Scripture; precisely what is true of Scripture is that it 'cannot be broken.' Now, what is the particular thing in Scripture, for the confirmation of which the indefectible authority of Scripture is thus involved? It is one of its most casual clauses—more than that, the very form of its

expression is one of its most casual clauses. This means, of course, that in the Saviour's view the indefectible authority of Scripture attaches to the very form of expression of its most casual clauses. It belongs to Scripture thorough and through, down to its most minute particulars, that it is of indefectible authority.

"It is sometimes suggested, it is true, that our Lord's argument here is an *argumentum ad hominem*, and that his words, therefore, express not His own view of the authority of Scripture, but that of His Jewish opponents. It will scarcely be denied that there is a vein of satire running through our Lord's defence: that the Jews so readily allowed that corrupt judges might properly be called 'gods,' but could not endure that He whom the Father had consecrated and sent into the world should call Himself Son of God, was a somewhat pungent fact to throw up into such a high light.

But the argument from Scripture is not *ad hominem* but *e concessu*; Scripture was common ground with Jesus and His opponents. If proof were needed for so obvious a fact, it would be supplied by the circumstance that this is not an isolated but a representative passage. The conception of Scripture thrown up into such clear view here supplies the ground of all Jesus' appeals to Scripture, and of all the appeals of the New Testament writers as well. Everywhere, to Him and to them alike, an appeal to Scripture is an appeal to an indefectible authority whose determination is final; both He and they make their appeal indifferently to every part of Scripture, to every element in Scripture, to its most incidental clauses as well as to its most fundamental principles, and to the very form of its expression.

This attitude toward Scripture as an authoritative document is, indeed, already intimated by their constant designation of it by the name of Scripture, the Scriptures, that is 'the Document,' by way of eminence; and by their customary citation of it with the simple formula, 'It is written.' What is written in this document admits so little of questioning that its authoritativeness required no asserting, but might safely be taken for granted. Both modes of expression belong to the constantly illustrated habitudes of our Lord's speech. The first words He is recorded as uttering after His manifestation to Israel were an appeal to the unquestionable authority of Scripture; to Satan's temptations He opposed no other weapon than the final 'It is written'! (Matthew iv: 4, 7, 10; Luke iv: 4, 8).

And among the last words which He spoke to His disciples before He was received up was a rebuke to them for not understanding that all things ‘which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and psalms’ concerning Him—that is (v. 45) in the entire ‘Scriptures’— ‘must needs be’ (very emphatic) ‘fulfilled’ (Luke xxiv: 44). ‘Thus, it is written,’ says He (v. 46), as rendering all doubt absurd. For, as He had explained earlier upon the same day (Luke xxiv: 25 ff), it argues only that one is ‘foolish and slow at heart’ if he does not ‘believe in’ (if his faith does not rest securely on, as a firm foundation) ‘all’ (without limit of subject-matter here) ‘that the prophets’ (explained in v. 27 as equivalent to ‘all the Scripture’) ‘have spoken.’

“The necessity of the fulfilment of all that is written in Scripture, which is so strongly asserted in these last instructions to His disciples, is frequently adverted to by our Lord. He repeatedly explains of occurrences occasionally happening that they have come to pass ‘that the Scripture might be fulfilled’ (Mark xiv: 49; John xiii: 18; xvii: 12; cf. xii: 14; Mark ix: 12, 13). On the basis of Scriptural declarations, therefore, He announces with confidence that given events will certainly occur: ‘All ye shall be offended (literally ‘scandalized’) in me this night: for it is written...’ (Matthew xxvi: 31; Mark xiv: 27; cf. Luke xx: 17).

Although holding at His command ample means of escape, He bows before on-coming calamities, for, He asks, how otherwise ‘should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?’ (Matthew xxvi: 54). It is not merely the two disciples with whom He talked on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv: 25) whom He rebukes for not trusting themselves more perfectly to the teaching of Scripture. ‘Ye search the Scriptures,’ he says to the Jews, in the classical passage (John v: 39), ‘because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life?’ These words surely were spoken more in sorrow than in scorn: there is no blame implied either for searching the Scripture; approval rather.

What the Jews are blamed for is that they read with a veil lying upon their hearts which He would fain take away (II Cor. iii: 15 f). ‘Ye search the Scriptures’—that is right; and ‘even you’ (emphatic) ‘think to have eternal life in them’—that is right, too. But ‘it is these very Scriptures’ (very emphatic) ‘which are bearing witness’ (continuous process) ‘of me; and’ (here is the marvel!) ‘ye will not come to me and have life!’ —that you may, that is, reach

the very end you have so properly in view in searching the Scriptures. Their failure is due, not to the Scriptures but to themselves, who read the Scriptures to such little purpose.”

No. 7 - Jesus on the Necessity of the Atonement

The idea that the Lord Jesus Christ did not teach the necessity of the atonement is one dearly loved by such as desire as to attribute to Paul alone the teaching about the atonement. By this means they seek to allege that Paul altered the teaching of Christ on this and on other subjects. This allegation is so flimsy that it could only be believed by such as really wish to believe it, and the fact that it has no foundation is shown by Professor Smeaton in his book *Our Lord's Doctrine of the Atonement*:

“But we pass now to the enquiry, What express is there from the mouth of Christ in regard to the necessity of the atonement? There are various allusions explicitly or indirect to the necessity of his atoning death.

“John iii: 14: ‘So MUST the son of Man be lifted up.’ As this text must be considered by itself, we limit our attention at present to the import of the *must* here uttered by Christ. Plainly, the necessity is not to be referred to the fact that the prophets had foretold it. Though the faithfulness of God must needs be maintained on account of the type, there was a further reason, which must be traced up to the divine decree, and to the divine justice. It was not a mere necessity to fulfil the type, but had its ground in the purpose of redemption, and in the end to be attained. Some, toning down the language, would represent it as arising from the present condition of the world, as if the cross were only an occurrence befalling Him in a world of rebels, and where all was out of course.

But that does not approach the meaning; and the history of Jesus shows that, except in so far as He chose to subject Himself to the course of things, He was exempt from their power, and beyond their reach. They could not touch Him till His hour was come. The words here uttered mean, that in order to heal and save, He must needs be crucified, the *must* indicating a necessity flowing from God's justice, and from His decree, if men were to be saved.

“There are other utterances of Christ not less emphatic, though spoken from another point of view.

“Matt. xxvi: 42: ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.’ The argument from this utterance of Christ for the necessity of His atoning work is of the strongest. There can be no reason assigned why the cup did not pass from Him, except that the diving claims required the endurance for the expiation of sin. The only-begotten Son, notwithstanding this request to the Father, who always heard Him, must drink the cup. And to say that the impossibility of removing it did not spring from the divine justice, is plainly untenable. It cannot be supposed that, except on the ground of indispensable necessity, God would be so inflexible as to visit His Son with all that was comprehended in that cup. The suffering was indispensable—the atonement was necessary—that cup of suffering might pass from His people.

“The same thing is proved by passages which describe the irremediable consequences of neglecting the atoning work of Christ. The result of not believing on the crucified Christ is condemnation (John iii: 18).

“Mark viii: 37: ‘What shall a man give in exchange (better, what ransom shall a man give) for his soul?’ These words occur in connection which contains an allusion to the rejection or denial of Christ, and are intended to teach that there is a ransom attainable through the reception of Christ, but no ransom to such as neglect the opportunity, or depart this life without finding the only sacrifice. He virtually says, There is no more sacrifice for sin, since they have denied Me, the only ransom or means of deliverance. But this indisputable allusion to a ransom takes for granted its necessity, implying that it is only found in Jesus, who has expiated sin, and paid the ransom in the sinner’s place.

“The whole question of the necessity of the atonement is also taken for granted in the INTERCESSION of Christ. He pleads on a ground of justice as well as mercy, recognising a demand which had been made, and pleading a satisfaction which had been rendered.

“John xvii: 25: ‘O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,’ etc. Our Lord bases His intercession on the rectitude or justice of God, when He prays that they who had been given Him might be with Him in His glory. Though there is a gracious reward conferred upon the saints for every work done, these words of Christ cannot refer to any recompense of that nature, because it is not of strict justice. But our Lord can appeal to justice when He asks the eternal glorification of His redeemed and their fellowship with Him where He is; for He merited eternal life for them, and at the costly price of His passion. It is righteous that the people of Christ should reign in life with Him and through

Him. As the justice of God was displayed on Christ and satisfied by His atonement; as He had met the demand, 'This do, and thou shalt live'—He can appeal to the rectitude of God that His people may be put in possession of the reward. And this presupposes on the part of God the necessary demand of an atonement."

No. 8 - The Eternity of God

By the incommunicable attributes of God we mean those attributes which belong to Himself ad God and cannot be communicated to any creature. These attributes are usually termed His Eternity, Immutability, and His Infinitude. These attributes are predicated of the Divine nature and represent a great deep in the Divine glory, although the finite mind cannot grasp them in all their fullness, yet since much has been revealed in the Word of God in connection with them, it is our privilege as well as our duty to seek prayerfully to study them.

Stephen Charnock was one of the greatest of the Puritans and his best-known work is his *Discourses on the Existence, and Attributes of God*. Concerning the Eternity of God he writes: --

1. God is Without Beginning

"In the beginning God created 'the world,' Gen. i: 1. God was then before the beginning of it; and what point can be set wherein God began, if he were before the beginning of created things? God was without beginning, though all other things had time and beginning from him. As unity is before all numbers, so is God before all His creatures. Abraham called upon the name of the 'everlasting God,' Gen. xxi: 33, the eternal God. It is opposed to heathen gods, which were but of yesterday, new coined, and so new; but the eternal God was before the world was made.

In that sense it is to be understood: Rom. xvi: 26, "The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.' The gospel is not preached by the command of a new and temporary God, but of that God that was before all ages. Though the manifestation of it be in time, yet the purpose and resolve of it was from eternity.

If there were decrees before the foundation of the world, there was a decree before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world He loved Christ as a mediator, John xvii: 24; a foreordination of Him was before the foundation of the world. Eph.i: 4. A choice of men, and therefore a chooser before the foundation of the world; a 'grace given in Christ before the world began,' 2 Tim.i: 9, and therefore a donor of that grace. From those places, says Crellius, it appears that God was before the foundation of the world; but they do not assert an absolute eternity. But to be before all creatures, is equivalent to His being from eternity.

Time began with the foundation of the world, but God being before time, could have no beginning in time; before the beginning of the creation and the beginning of time, there could be nothing but eternity, nothing but what was uncreated, that is, nothing but what was without beginning. To be in time, is to have a beginning; to be before all time, is never to have a beginning, but always to be; for as between the Creator and creatures there is no medium, so between time and eternity there is no medium.

It is as easily deduced that he that was before all creatures is eternal, as he that made all creatures is God; if he had a beginning he must have it from another, or from himself. If from another, that from whom he received his being would be better than he, so more a God than he. He cannot be God that is not supreme, he cannot be supreme that owes his being to the power of another. He would not be said 'only to have immortality' as he is 1 Tim.vi: 16, if he had it dependent upon another; nor could he have a beginning from himself. If he had given beginning to himself, then he was once nothing, there was a time when he was not; if he was not, how could he be the cause himself? It is impossible for any to give a beginning and being itself; if it acts, it must exist, and so exist before it existed.

A thing would exist as a cause before it existed as an effect. He that is not cannot be the cause that he is. If therefore God doth exist, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity. Therefore, when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood, that he hath no cause of existence without himself.

Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called 'the Ancient of days.' Dan. vii: 9, as being before all days and time, and

eminently containing in himself all times and ages. Though indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh, but no creature can find out any beginning of God. It is impossible there should be any beginning of him.

2. *God is Without End*

He always was, always is, and always will be what he is. He remains always the same in being; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch Him, James i: 17. He will continue in being as long as He hath already enjoyed it; and if we could add ever so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end as from a beginning, for 'the Lord shall endure for ever,' Ps. lx: 7. As it is impossible He should not be, being from all eternity, so it is impossible that He should not be to all eternity. The Scripture is most plentiful in testimonies of this eternity of God, *a parte' post* or after creation of the world. He is said to 'live for ever' Rev. iv: 9, 10.

The earth shall perish, but God shall endure for ever, and His years shall have no end. Ps. cii: 27. Plants and animals grow up from small beginnings, arrive to their full growth, and decline again, and have always remarkable alterations in their nature; but there is no declination in God by all the revolutions of time. Hence some think the incorruptibility of the Deity was signified by the Shittim or cedar wood, whereof the ark was made, it being of an incorruptible nature. Exod. xxv: 10.

That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, or any interruption in it. Since God never depended on any, what should make Him cease to be what eternally He hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of His perfections? He cannot will His own destruction; that is against universal nature in all things to cease from being, if they can preserve themselves. He cannot desert His own being, because He cannot but love Himself as the best and chiefest good. The reason that anything decays, is either its own native weakness, or superior power of something contrary to it.

There is no weakness in the nature of God that can introduce any corruption, because He is infinitely simple, without any mixture. Nor can He be overpowered by anything else; a weaker cannot hurt Him, and a stronger than He there cannot be. Nor can He be outwitted or circumvented, because of His

infinite wisdom. As He received His being from none, so He cannot be deprived of it by any. As He doth necessarily exist, so He doth necessarily always exist. This is indeed is the property of God; nothing so proper to Him as always to be. Whatsoever perfection any being hath, if it be not eternal it is not divine. God only is immortal, 1 Tim. vi: 16; He only is so by a necessity of nature. Angels, souls, and bodies too, after the resurrection, shall be immortal; not by nature but grant; they are subject to return to nothing, if that word that raised them from nothing should speak them into nothing again.

It is as easy with God to strip them of it as to invest them with it; nay, it is impossible but that they should perish, if God should withdraw His power from preserving them, which He exerted in creating them. But God is immovably fixed in His own being, that as none gave Him His life, so none can deprive Him of His life, or the least particle of it. Not a jot of the happiness and life which God infinitely possesses can be lost; it will be as durable to everlasting as it hath been possessed from everlasting.

No. 9 - The Immutability of God

From Charnock's *Discourses on the Existence and Attributes of God*: --

1. The immutability of God is a perfection. Immutability considered in itself, without relation to other things, is not a perfection. It is the greatest misery and imperfection of the evil angels, that they are in immutable in the malice against God. But as God is infinite in essence, infinitely good, wise, holy; so it is a perfection necessary to His nature, that He should be immutably all this; all excellency, goodness, wisdom, immutably all that He is; without this He would be an imperfect being.

Are not the angels in heaven, who are confirmed in a holy and happy state, more perfect than when they were in a possibility of committing evil and becoming miserable? Are not the saints in heaven, whose wills by grace to unalterably cleave to God and goodness, more perfect than if they were as Adam in paradise, capable of losing their felicity as well as preserving it? We count a rock, in regard to its stability, more excellent than the dust of the ground, or a feather that is tossed about with every wind. Is not also the perfection of the body to have a constant tenor of health, and the glory of man not to warp aside from what is just and right, by the persuasions of any temptation?

2. Immutability is a glory belonging to all the attributes of God. It is not a single perfection of the diving nature, nor is it limited to particular objects thus and thus disposed. Mercy and justice have their distinct objects and distinct acts; mercy is conversant about a penitent, justice is conversant about an obstinate, sinner. In our notion and conception of the divine perfections, His perfections are different; the wisdom of God is not His power, nor His power His holiness, but immutability is the centre wherein they all unite.

There is not one perfection but may be said to be, and truly is, immutable; none of them will appear so glorious without this beam, the sun of immutability, which renders them highly excellent without the least shadow of imperfection. How cloudy would His blessedness be if it were changeable; how dim His wisdom if it might be obscured; how feeble His power if it were capable to be sickly and languish; how would mercy lose much of its lustre if it could change into wrath, and justice much of its dread if it could be turned into mercy, while the object of justice remains unfit for mercy, and one that hath need of mercy continues only fit for the divine fury? But unchangeableness is a thread that runs through the whole web, it is the enamel of all the rest; none of them without it could look with a triumphant aspect.

His power is unchangeable: Isa. xxvi. 4 "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength"; His mercy and His holiness endure for ever; He never could, nor ever can, look upon iniquity. Hab. i. 13: "He is a rock in the righteousness of His ways, the truth of His word, the holiness of His proceedings, and the rectitude of His nature. All are expressed: Deut. xxii. 4, "He is a rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." All that we consider in God is unchangeable, for His essence and His properties are the same, and therefore what is necessarily belonging to the essence of God; none of them can receive any addition or diminution. From the unchangeable-ness of His nature the apostle James, chap. i. 17, infers the unchangeable-ness of His holiness, and Himself in Mal. iii. 6, the unchangeableness of His counsel.

3. Unchangeable-ness doth necessarily pertain to the nature of God. It is of the same necessity with the rectitude of His nature; He can no more be changeable in His essence than He can be unrighteous in His actions. God is a necessary being; He is necessarily what He is, and therefore is unchangeably

what He is. Mutability belongs to contingency; if any perfection of His nature could be separated from Him, He would cease to be God; what did not possess the whole nature of God could not have the essence of God; it is reciprocated with the nature of God. Whatsoever is immutable by nature, is God; whatsoever is God, is immutable by nature. Some creatures are immutable by His grace and power; God is holy, happy, wise, strong, and good by qualities and graces.

The holiness, happiness, and wisdom of saints and angels, as they had a beginning, so they are capable of increase and diminution, and an end also; for their standing is not from themselves, or from the nature of created strength, holiness, or wisdom, which in themselves are apt to fail and finally to decay, but from the stability and confirmation they have by the gift and grace of God. The heaven and earth shall be changed, and after that renewal and reparation they shall not be changed. Our bodies after the resurrection shall not be changed, but for ever “made conformable to the glorious body of Christ,” Philip. iii. 21; but this is by the powerful grace of God; so that, indeed, those things may be said afterwards rather to be unchanged than unchangeable, because they are not so by nature, but by sovereign dispensation; as creatures have not necessary beings, so they have not necessary immutability.

Necessity of being, and therefore, immutability of being, belongs by nature to God; otherwise, if there were any change in God, He would be sometimes what He was not, and would cease to be what He was, which is against the nature, and, indeed, against the natural notion of Deity.

No. 10 - Justification by Faith Alone

The root question at the time of the Reformation between the Reformers and the Romanists was over whether the justification of a sinner was by faith alone. The Romanists maintained that this was not the case while the Reformers maintained that it was. Dr. William Cunningham in his book *Historical Theology* comments as follows: -

“Whether faith alone justifies; or whether there be anything else in men themselves that is represented in Scripture as the cause, in any sense, why men individually receive forgiveness and acceptance at the hand of God? It was the unanimous doctrine of the Reformers, and one to which they attached

very great importance, that men are justified by faith alone; not meaning that the faith which justified them existed alone, or solitarily; but, on the contrary, maintaining that this faith 'is ever accompanied with other saving graces': not meaning that nothing else was required of men in order to their being forgiven; for they believed that, in order that we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin God requireth of us repentance unto life as well as faith in Jesus Christ; but meaning this, that there is nothing else in men themselves to which their justification is in Scripture ascribed—nothing else required of them and existing in them, which stands in the same relation to justification as their faith does, or exerts any causality, or efficiency, or instrumentality in producing the result of their being justified.

"The Council of Trent openly denied this fundamental doctrine of the Reformers, and maintained that there were six other virtues, as they call them, which are concurred with faith in obtaining for men the grace of justification. They did not indeed assign to these virtues, or even to faith itself, any power of justifying, properly so called, but only that of preparing or disposing men to justification.

They did, however—and that is the only point with which we have at present to do—deny the Protestant doctrine, that faith is the only thing in men themselves by which they are justified; and they denied this, in the way of ascribing to these six other virtues the very same relation to justification, and the very same kind of influence in producing or procuring it, which they ascribe to faith. These six virtues are: fear, hope, love, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and a purpose of leading a life of obedience; and Bellarmine, and other defenders of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, labour to prove from Scripture that these qualities, or states of mind and feeling, are represented there as procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of sins, and the enjoyment of God's favour.

It is certain that there is not one of them which is ever, in express terms, said in Scripture to justify men, or by which are said to be justified, while men are frequently and most explicitly said to be justified by faith; and this single consideration may be fairly regarded as by itself a proof that at least they do not stand in the same relation to justification as faith does—that it holds a place, and exerts an influence, in the justification of sinners, which do not belong to any of them. All that can be proved from Scripture about these things, speaking of them generally, is, first, that they all exist in, and are

wrought upon by God upon, those men whom He justifies; and, secondly, that they are all duties which He requires of men; and that, of course, upon both these grounds they are in some sense pleasing and acceptable to Him. These positions can be proved; but the proof of them affords not ground whatever for the conclusion that men are justified by these graces, or that they exert any influence in procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour; for it is a matter of grace, what may exert no influence, and have no real efficient bearing upon other gifts which He also bestows."

No. 11 - Scriptural Nature of the Doctrine of the Covenant of Grace

Federal Theology is the name given to that system of setting forth Divine revelation in which God is represented as dealing with the human race in terms of covenants. In the Covenant of Works, Adam is regarded as the federal head or representative of his seed, while in the Covenant of Grace the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam and the Lord from heaven, is considered as the federal head or representative of His people. It is sometimes said that there is no Scriptural warrant for this conception of the Covenant of Grace. Dr. Hugh Martin in his book on "*The Atonement*" thinks differently: -

"It may seem unnecessary to say that this is a doctrine which has express verbal warrant in Holy Scripture. We have been led to this topic in connection with the doctrine of the Atonement; and it may be in point, therefore, to call to mind the significant phrase, 'The blood of the everlasting covenant' (Heb. xiii: 20). Surely that single Divine form of speech is sufficient to set forth an organic connection between the Covenant of Grace and the sacrifice of Jesus. Take again the memorable promise: 'As for thee also, by the blood of the covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water.' (Zech. ix: 11); and our Lord's own affecting utterance in instituting the sacrament of the Supper; 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.'

Surely these Divine expressions are very express; and they are sufficient to show that no man discusses the doctrine of Christ's death who severs it from the considerations presented by the Covenant of Grace. It is the 'blood' that maketh 'atonement;' but in this case the 'blood' is the 'blood of the Covenant.' Men may therefore discuss as long as they please an abstract theory, of an abstract atonement; but if they give not heed to *this* atonement which the Covenant of Grace conditions and explains, they are not any more dealing with true theology, than men should deal with real astronomy who should

speculate on central forces in the abstract and pretermitt the actual law of gravitation—the law of the inverse square of the distance—which rules in the starry heavens.

“It is scarcely necessary to refer to the express assertion of the covenant between the Father and the Son in the proposition: ‘The council of peace shall be between them both’ (Zech. vi:13). Our Lord is designated at once the ‘Mediator of the Covenant; (Heb. viii:6; xii:24) and ‘the Surety of the Covenant’ (Heb. vii: 22). Nay, He is represented as the *substance* of the Covenant: ‘I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep Thee in righteousness, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles.’ (Isa. xlix: 8). The work of Christ is thus in express terms affirmed to be a covenant of work—a work having immediate respect to a covenant.

The work of the Spirit is spoken of in similar connection with a covenant. ‘As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that are in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth not out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.’ (Isa. lix:21). When the Lord invites lost sinners to Himself, it is in terms like these: ‘Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David.’ (Isa. lv:3). When, moved by such entreaties, sinners ask the way to Zion, with their face thitherward, it is with the mutual exhortation: ‘Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten (Jer. i:5).

When, after entering on this blessed relation with God, they would express their full satisfaction with it in the midst of all life’s troubles and afflictions, they are wont to say: ‘Though my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire.’ (2 Sam. xxiii:5). For in the midst of all troubles by which their sins are chastised and their spirits chastened, the Lord sustains their faith by the gracious declaration: ‘My covenant will I not break, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth’ (Ps. lxxxix:34). And when grieved in view of the ‘cruelty’ that obtains in the ‘dark places of the earth,’ the Church’s strongest appeal to God in their behalf is this: ‘Have respect unto Thy covenant’ (Ps. lxxiv:20).

“These are some of the more express verbal assertions of the reality and fact of a Covenant of Grace. Intelligent piety is familiar with them as with

household words; and we quote them simply to show that the federal theology is no product of mere human ingenuity—no merely artificial structure—but a Scriptural theme, the terminology of which is directly furnished by Scripture itself. It is no roundabout result of mere theologising, but one of the immediate data of Divine inspiration.

“But apart even from such direct verbal sanction from the Divine word, the federal theology may be justified as the inevitable result of a large and complete induction of particulars from Scripture. It is possible to systematise accurately concerning the work of Christ and of His Spirit, in the redemption and salvation of men, without landing in substantial the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace. Even although Holy Scripture did not lead the way so expressly and verbally as we have seen that it does, scientific or Baconian induction of particulars would bring us substantially to the great scheme of the federal theology. The many instances which Scripture gives of intercommunion between the Father and the Son, are found, when combined, to carry in them all the elements and characteristics of a covenant.

“The closing chapters of the ‘Gospel according to Isaiah’ are particularly rich in passages which cannot be intelligently appreciated without leading to this conclusion. The authority of the Father appoints certain duties to the Son: the Father’s love and faithfulness guarantee to the Son certain promises of support, countenance, comfort, victory. The Son undertakes the duties assigned, and appeals to the promises relating them. The Father re-stipulates to bestow certain rewards in return for the obedient and faithful discharge of the duties enjoined: and ‘for the joy therein set before Him, the Son endures the cross, despising the shame.’

What could be more definite in this light that the closing verses of the memorable fifty-third chapter of Isaiah? ‘When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.’

“It is not possible to read passages like these without seeing that there are far more abundant Scriptural elements from which to conclude the existence of a

Covenant of Grace between the Father and the Son, than even of a covenant of works between God and Adam. In fact it is more from what is partly the analogy and partly the antithesis of the two covenants, when set forth in the mutual light which they reflect on each other, that the covenant of works becomes manifest, than in any very express or abundant evidence of its own alone. So certain is this that it will be uniformly found that the theology which is meagre in reference, to the Covenant of Grace, is still more so as to the covenant of works.

The first Adam was but 'the type of him that was to come,' the shadow of the 'last Adam.' And where the 'last Adam' is little recognised as a covenant head, there can be little reason or inducement to recognise the 'first' in that light either. It is in Christ pre-eminently that the doctrine of covenant takes fullest shape; and apart even from express verbal affirmations of it, we find that it is continually subsumed in Holy Scripture's descriptions of His work in the days of His flesh, and of His reward in His risen glory.

"On no scheme whatever that shall be true to the leading contents of Scripture, concerning the work of the incarnate Redeemer, can we possibly avoid coming to the conclusion that He acts according to a covenant with the Father. Whatever Christ did, He designed to do; and whatever He designed to do, He designed because He had been designated to do it. He had been 'sanctified,' and 'sealed' and 'sent' into the world. He continually averred, in this view, that He 'did *nothing* of Himself.'

He was acting by commission; and that not merely in general, but by commission reaching to every detail of speech and action alike. He did the 'works of His Father.' He spake his 'Father's words.' '*Whatsoever* He spake, and *whatsoever* He did,' it was 'as the Father had given Him commandment.' He had been designated therefore by no isolated decree, by no individual or separate oracle, but by regular, full, complete covenant. Under no other category or instrument than that of compact, focus, covenant, is it possible to bring the fullness, circumstance, detail, history, order, and fruit of His work. We are simply shut up to the theory of an 'everlasting covenant.' Such a covenant is, indeed, in terms averred; and that is a great satisfaction to the reverential theological mind. But even if it had not been averred, we are, on principles of induction precisely analogous to those of true Baconian philosophy, simply shut up to the theory of the federal theology.

“Nor does this result fail with us in subsequent application. Whether we make use of it analytically or synthetically, we find it to be the largest category of Christology that is either necessary or possible. We find it embracing all Christ’s work, and all inspired expositions of it. It accounts for all the phenomena which it professes to explain. It explains all Christ’s history, as the incarnate Son of God; all His interposition, as the Saviour of men. It embraces alike the impetration of redemption and the application of it. It expounds Christ’s complete office, and work of the Spirit. It gives doctrinal significance to what were otherwise more external history; for it places the outward movements of Christ’s career on earth in their true relations with the eternal purpose of the Godhead, and the eternal destinies of men.

And in its completeness—involving, as it does, its aspects and bearing towards the covenant clients, as well as towards the covenant head—it is the formal, definitem tangible instrument and charter by means of which faith comes into sure and plead-able possession of Christ Himself, and of all the benefits of His redemption.

“Alike in reference, therefore, to doctrine and to spiritual life, it is suicidal to sever the Atonement of Christ from the Covenant of Grace. The demands alike of theology and of faith require a different treatment. Against an Atonement isolated from the Covenant, endless objections may be brought, and endless work laid to the hands of theology in answering them. The abstract doctrine of an abstract atonement, it may be found difficult, perhaps impossible, to defend against the keen-witted opponents with whom we have in these days to deal.

But it is a most instructive fact that the vast multitude of these objections derive their plausibility, if not their power, just from overlooking those characteristics of the actual atonement which the Covenant of Grace attributes to it; and the defenders of truth should learn from this the lesson, to decline, as a matter which in no respect concerns them, the defence of any doctrine of atonement, save the Atonement of the Son’s Covenant with the Father. The presentation of it in this, its own true light, will carry it clear, without a conflict, of the greater number of assaults that are made upon it, and will immediately reveal, without an argument, the hollowness and shallowness of the many pitiful theories of Christ’s death which litterateurs would substitute in its room.”

No. 12 - The Personality of the Holy Spirit

It has generally always been recognized by all professing the Christian name that the Holy Spirit is at least a divine influence, but it has not always been acknowledged that He is a Divine Person within the God-head. There is a great danger at the present time in the fact that, although much is said about the Holy Spirit, many deny His personality

Professor Smeaton puts the position very clearly in his book on *The Holy Spirit*:

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“The Scriptures distinctly recognize the Spirit as a Person. We have only to recall the language used in reference to THE COMFORTER to be convinced of this. To compensate for the loss incurred by the departure of the Lord Jesus to the Father, He promised that He would send another Comforter, who should take His place as their immediate Teacher, Helper, and Protector, and thus supply the want of His own presence, the anticipated loss of which filled them with trouble and dismay. When we look at the Persons referred to in that promise, it would be a perversion of language to suppose that a mere quality or influence is meant in any of the personal allusions.

The sender is certainly different from the person who is sent: for we do not speak of sending a quality on an errand. Nor does ANYONE SEND HIMSELF FROM HIMSELF, as the Sabellian must put it when he interprets the words: “When THE COMFORTER is come, whom I WILL send to you from the Father” (John xv. 26). Whether we accept one rendering or another of the word Comforter, whether we make it TEACHER with Ernesti, or HELPER, or Advocate, or PATRON with others, it is obvious to every mind that He who was to compensate the disciples and the Church, of which they were the first-fruits, for the loss of Christ’s visible presence, was certainly a Person. The refusal to accept the Spirit’s personality in that text compels the interpreter, if consistent with himself, to DENY THE PERSONALITY OF CHRIST in whose room He came.

That is the alternative before him which no ingenuity can evade. And the absurdity is not less obvious of identifying the title Comforter or Paraclete with the impersonal gifts which the apostles subsequently received. That such a comment is untenable, is clear from the explicit announcements that the Spirit should teach them all things (John xix. 26); guide them into all truth (xix. 13); bring all things to their remembrances (xix. 26); glorify Christ by receiving of His, and showing it to His disciples (xix. 14). It is not possible more explicitly to distinguish a person from the works which he performs. Nor ought we to omit a noteworthy peculiarity in the THREE passages which refer to the Comforter.

A change of gender is the use of the masculine demonstrative pronoun (*'ekeinos*) forestalls the possibility of putting any other sense than a personal reference upon the words. Thus, it is said: "The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He (*'ekeinos*) shall teach you all things" (John xix. 26); "When the Comforter is come, whom whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, (*'ekeinos*) shall testify of me"; "Howbeit, when He (*'ekeinos*), the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: For He shall not speak of (better: from) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He (*'ekeinos*) shall glorify me" (xvi. 13: 14).

The unbiased sense of unlettered men, who are beyond the influence of the theological currents, is alive to the fact that the meaning of many passages is lost, unless we think of the Holy Ghost as a Person, and not a mere influence or energy. To lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts v. 3), to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. iv. 30), are expressions which, as every reflecting mind perceives, imply a Person who is pleased or displeased; and they cannot, with any propriety or fitness, be referred to what is impersonal.

The Book of Acts, specially prepared, as we have seen, to exhibit historically the Spirit's operations in the Church after the Lord's ascension, contains allusions to the personal leading of the Spirit on the mind of all Christ's servants, and in the formation of the various Churches. Thus, He said to Philip, who had been directed to the way along which the chamberlain of the Ethiopian Queen was returning: "Go near and join thyself to the chariot" (viii. 29); and after that mission was successfully accomplished, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip (viii.39). To Peter, when the deputation for Cornelius arrived at Joppa, the Spirit said: "Behold, three men seek thee" (x. 19). When Saul of Tarsus was set apart to his great Gentile commission, which made him in a peculiar sense the apostle of the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost said to the prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord in the Church of Antioch: "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (xiii.2).

When Paul and Timothy attempted to go into Bithynia, the Spirit suffered them not (xvi.7). When the members constituting the council at Jerusalem gave forth the result of their deliberations for the guidance of the Churches in reference to the observance of the Jewish rites, they said: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (xv. 28)—language which could not have been used if the

Holy Ghost were nothing but an influence. When He commissioned the apostles, and either directed or forbade them to do this or that according to His will, the language attests a free and sovereign agent, unless we are prepared to abandon the literal sense of words and the style of historic narrative. Fritzsche, in his learned treatise on the Spirit, correctly maintains—though the treatise is unsatisfactory as a statement of ecclesiastical doctrine—that it is clear as noonday that the Scripture speaks of a Person or subsistence, not of a divine influence or energy; and the Christian Church from the beginning, notwithstanding the deflections of individuals, may be said to have asserted the Spirit's personality, and to have based it on the Scriptures. Collecting the evidence supplied by the survey of Scripture, we may put the arguments for the personality of the Spirit under the six following heads: --

1. The personal actions ascribed to him abundantly prove it. (John xiv. 26; 1 Cor. xii. 11).
2. His distinction from the Father and the Son, and His mission from both, prove it. (John xv. 26).
3. The co-ordinate rank and power which belong to Him equally with the Father and the Son prove it. (Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14).
4. His appearance under a visible form at the baptism of Christ and on the day of Pentecost proves it.
5. The sin against the Holy Ghost implying a Person proves it.
6. The way in which He is distinguished from His gifts proves it. (1 Cor. xii. 11).

The glorification of the Holy Ghost in connection with the Church is still future. Passage after passage might be adduced to show that He occupies a co-ordinate rank with the other Persons. But the completion of the Church opens a vista into the future. The appearance of Christ among men ushered in a full historical revelation of the Son in word and deed; and the abasement to which He stooped was followed by and equally conspicuous exaltation. With the Holy Ghost it is not so yet. He dwells in redeemed hearts bought with a price. He occupies a co-ordinate rank. *But His work is still unseen.*

The personality and Deity of the Spirit are, however, one day to be displayed in conspicuous glory in connection with His work upon the Church, when He shall have completed the marvellous transformation. The final issue in the glory reflected from every redeemed and perfected saint, and from the entire body of Christ now scattered over every country, and visited from hour to hour with

new communications of wisdom, grace, and power, but then seen to be united to their glorious Head, will be worthy of the divine workman who is carrying on His transforming work, raising up a temple in which the Godhead shall dwell forever. At present the divine personality of the Spirit is less perceptible, because it is not beheld in connection with the accomplished work. The redeemed are not yet perfect; the Church is not yet complete. There is still another stage of revelation, when the Spirit shall be glorified in connection with the work which He shall have finished and brought to its destined completeness.”