

Finney Gold

Words that Helped Birth Revival

Charles G. Finney

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PREFACE

Charles Grandison Finney was born in 1792 and helped usher in the Second Great Awakening in the United States. A lawyer turned preacher, thousands upon thousands of souls entered into saving faith after listening to his preaching. Fiery and determined, Charles made waves of impact for the glory of God that can still be felt today.

I believe we can glean from this great man of God, regardless of our denominational background. He was a saint and these sermons are sharp swords waiting to pierce into hearts and minds. I pray that you as the reader will learn truth and be shot deeper into the heart of God after finishing this book.

May the Lord bless you and may you be used mightily for His eternal glory.

William Crockett

President of GodSounds, Inc.

Charles Finney

CH 1

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR HEART

"Make you a new heart, and a new spirit, for why will ye die?"

– Ezekiel 18:31

IN THE FORMER DISCOURSE upon this text, I discussed three points, viz.

1. The meaning of the command in the text.
2. Its reasonableness.
3. Its consistency with those passages which declare a new heart to be the gift and work of God.

In answer to the first question, "what are we to understand by the requirement to make a new heart and a new spirit?" I endeavored to show negatively,

1st. What is not the meaning of the requirement. That it does not mean the fleshly heart, or that bodily organ which is the seat of animal life.

2dly. That it does not mean a new soul. Nor,

3dly. Are we required to create any new faculties of body or mind; nor to alter the constitutional powers,

propensities, or susceptibilities of our nature. Nor to implant any new principle, or taste, in the substance of either mind or body.

I endeavored to show that a change of heart is not that in which a sinner is passive, but that in which he is active. That the change is not physical, but moral. That it is the sinner's own act. That it consists in changing his mind, or disposition, in regard to the supreme object of pursuit. A change in the end at which he aims, and not merely in the means of obtaining his end. A change in the governing choice or preference of the mind. That it consists in preferring the glory of God, and the interests of his kingdom, to one's own happiness, and to every thing else. That it is a change from a state of selfishness in which a person prefers his own interest above every thing else, to that disinterested benevolence that prefers God's happiness and glory, and the interests of his kingdom, to his own private happiness.

Under the second head, I endeavored to establish the reasonableness of this duty, by showing the sinner's ability, and the reasons for its performance.

And under the third head, that there was no inconsistency between this and those passages which declared a new heart to be the gift and work of God.

I come now to a fourth inquiry, to which the discussion of the above named topics naturally leads, viz. How shall I perform this duty, and change my own heart? This is an inquiry often made by anxious sinners, when they are commanded to change their hearts, and convinced that it is their duty to do so, and of the dreadful consequences of neglecting to obey. They anxiously inquire, HOW SHALL I DO IT? By what process of thought or feeling is this great chancre to be wrought in my mind? The design of this discourse is to help you out of this dilemma; to remove, if possible, the darkness from your minds; to clear

up what seems to you to be so mysterious; to hold the lamp of truth directly before you; to pour its blaze full upon your path, so that if you stumble and fall, your blood; shall be upon your own head.

I. HOW THE HEART CANNOT BE CHANGED.

1st. I observe, negatively, that you cannot change your heart by working your imagination and feelings into a state of excitement. Sinners are apt to suppose that great fears and terrors, great horrors of conscience, and the utmost stretch of excitement that the mind is capable of bearing, must necessarily precede a change of heart. They are led to this persuasion, by a knowledge of the fact, that such feelings do often precede this change. But, sinner, you should understand, that this highly excited state of feeling, these fears, and alarms, and horrors, are but the result of ignorance, or obstinacy, and sometimes of both. It often happens that sinners will not yield, and change their hearts, until the Spirit of God has driven them to extremity; until the thunders of Sinai have been rolled in their ears, and the lurid fires of hell have been made to flash in their faces. All this is no part of the work of making a new heart; but is the result of resistance to the performance of this duty. These terrors and alarms are, by no means essential to its performance, but are rather an embarrassment and a hinderance. To suppose that, because, in some instances, sinners have those horrors of conscience, and fears of hell before they would yield, [and] that, therefore, they are necessary, and that all sinners must experience them before they can change their hearts, is as unwarrantable an inference as if all your children should maintain that they must necessarily be threatened with severe punishment, and see the rod uplifted, and thus be thrown into great consternation, before they can obey; because one of your children had been thus obstinate, and had

refused obedience until driven to extremities. If you are willing to do your duty when you are shown what it is, fears, and terrors, and great excitement of mind are wholly unnecessary: God has no delight in them for their own sake, and never causes them only when driven to the necessity by pertinacious obstinacy. And when they are obstinate, God often sees it unwise to produce these great terrors, and will sooner let the sinner go to hell without them.

You cannot change your heart by an attempt to force yourself into a certain state of feeling. When sinners are called upon to repent, and give their hearts to God, it is common for them, if they undertake to perform this duty, to make an effort to feel emotions of love, repentance, and faith. They seem to think that all religion consists in highly excited emotions or feelings, and that these feelings can be bidden into existence by a direct effort of the will. They spend much time in prayer for certain feelings, and make many agonizing efforts to call into existence those highly wrought emotions and feelings of love to God of which they hear Christians speak. But these emotions can never be brought into existence by a direct effort to feel. They can never be caused to start into existence, and glow and burn in the mind at the direct bidding of the will. The will has no direct influence over the them [emotions], and can only bring them into existence through the medium of the attention. Feelings, or emotions, are dependent upon thought, and arise spontaneously in the mind when the thoughts are intensely occupied with their corresponding objects. Thought is under the direct control of the will. We can direct our attention and meditations to any subject, and the corresponding emotions will spontaneously arise in the mind. If a hated subject is under consideration, emotions of hatred are felt to arise. If an object of terror, of grief, or of joy, occupies the thoughts, their corresponding emotions will of course arise in the mind, and with a strength corresponding to the concentration

and intensity of our thoughts upon that subject. Thus our feelings are only indirectly under the control of the will. They are sinful or holy only as they are thus indirectly bidden into existence by the will. Men often complain that they cannot control their feelings; they form overwhelming attachments, which they say they cannot control. They receive injuries - their anger arises - they profess that they cannot help it. Now, while the attention is occupied with dwelling upon the beloved object in the one case, the emotions, of which they complain, will exist of course; and if the emotion be disapproved of by the judgment and conscience, the subject must be dismissed from the thoughts, and the attention directed to some other subject, as the only possible way of ridding themselves of the emotion. So in the other case, the subject of the injury must be dismissed, and their thoughts occupied with other considerations, or emotions of hatred will continue to fester and rankle in their minds. "If a man look on a woman, to lust after her, he has committed adultery with her already in his heart;" he is responsible for the feelings consequent upon suffering such a subject to occupy his thoughts.

II. THE EXERCISE OF THE WILL, AND THE PLACE OF THE EMOTIONS IN MAKING A NEW HEART.

Voluntariness is indispensable to moral character; it is the universal and irresistible conviction of men, that an action, to be praise or blame-worthy, must be free. If, in passing through the streets, you should see a tile fall from a building upon which men were at work, and kill a man, and upon inquiry you found it to be the result of accident, you could not feel that there was any murder in the case. But if, on the contrary, you learnt that the tile was maliciously thrown upon the head of the deceased by one

of the workmen, you could not resist the conviction that it was murder. So, if God, or any other being, should force a dagger into your hand, and force you against your will to stab your neighbor, the universal conscience would condemn, not you, but him who forced you to this deed. So, any action, or thought, or feeling, to have moral character, must be directly or indirectly under the control of the will. If a man voluntarily place himself under such circumstances as to call wicked emotions into exercise, he is entirely responsible for them. If he place himself under circumstances where virtuous emotions are called forth, he is praiseworthy in the exercise of them, precisely in proportion to his voluntariness in bringing his mind into circumstances to cause their existence.

Love, repentance, and faith, may exist in the mind, either in the form of volition or emotion. Love, when existing in the form of volition, is a simple preference of the mind for God and the things of religion to every thing else. This preference may, and often does exist in the mind, so entirely separate from what is termed emotion, or feeling, that we may be entirely insensible to its existence. But although its existence may not be a matter of consciousness, by being felt, yet its influence over our conduct will be such as that the fact of its existence will in this way be manifest. The love of family and friends may, in like manner, exist in the mind in both these forms. When a man is engaged in business, or journeying from home, and his attention taken up with other subjects, he exercises no sensible or felt love for his family; but still his preference remains, and is the mainspring that directs his movements in the business about which he is engaged, in order to make provision for them. He does not forget his wife or family, nor act as if he had none; but, on the contrary, his conduct is modified and governed by this abiding, though insensible preference for them; while at the same time his thoughts are so entirely occupied with other things, that no emotion or feeling of affection exists

in his mind.

But when the business of the day is past, and other objects cease to crowd upon his attention, this preference of home, of wife and family, comes forth and directs the thoughts to those beloved objects. No sooner are they thus bidden before the mind, than the corresponding emotions arise, and all the father and the husband are awake and felt to enkindle in his heart. So the Christian, when his thoughts are intensely occupied with business or study, may have no sensible emotions of love to God existing in his mind. Still, if a Christian, his preference for God will have its influence over all his conduct, he will neither act nor feel like an ungodly man under similar circumstances; he will not curse, nor swear, nor get drunk; he will not cheat, nor lie, nor act as if under the dominion of unmingled selfishness; but his preference for God will so modify and govern his deportment, that while he has no sensible or felt enjoyment of the presence of God, he is indirectly influenced in all his ways by a regard to his glory. And when the bustle of business is past, his abiding preference for God naturally directs his thoughts to him, and to the things of his kingdom; when, of course, corresponding feelings or emotions arise in his mind, and warm emotions of love enkindle, and glow, and happify the soul. He understands the declaration of the Psalmist, when he says, "While I mused the fire burned."

I said also, that repentance may exist in the mind, either in the form of an emotion or a volition. Repentance properly signifies a change of mind in regard to the nature of sin, and does not in its primary signification necessarily include the idea of sorrow. It is simply an act of will, rejecting sin, and choosing or preferring holiness. This is its form when existing as a volition. When existing as an emotion, it sometimes rises into a strong abhorrence of sin and love of holiness. It often melts away into ingenuous relentings of heart; in gushings of sorrow, and the

strongest feelings of disapprobation and self- abhorrence in view of our own sins.

So faith may exist, simply as a settled conviction or persuasion of mind, of the truths of revelation, and will have greater or less influence according to the strength and permanency of this persuasion. It is not evangelical faith, however, unless this persuasion be accompanied with the consent of the will to the truth believed. We often believe things to exist, the very existence of which is hateful to us. Devils and wicked men may have a strong conviction of the truth upon their minds, as we know they often do; and so strong is their persuasion of the truth, that they tremble; but still they hate the truth. But when the conviction of Gospel truth is accompanied with the consent of the will, or the mind's preference of it, it is evangelical faith, and in proportion to its strength will uniformly influence the conduct. But this is faith existing as a volition. When the objects of faith, revealed in the Gospel, are the subjects of intense thought, faith rises into emotion: it is then a felt confidence and trust, so sensible as to calm all the anxieties, and fears, and perturbations of the soul.

Emotions of love or hatred to God, that are not directly or indirectly produced by the will, have no moral character. A real Christian, under circumstances of strong temptation, may feel emotions of opposition to God rankling in his mind. If he has voluntarily placed himself under these circumstances of temptation, he is responsible for these emotions. If the subject that creates these emotions is forced upon him by Satan, or in any way against his will, he is not responsible for them. If he divert his attention, if he flee from the scene of temptation, if he does what belongs to him to resist and repress these emotions, he has not sinned. Such emotions are usually brought to exist in the mind of a Christian by some false view of the character or government of God. So emotions of love to God may exist in the mind that are purely

selfish, they may arise out of a persuasion that God has a particular regard for us, or some vain assurance of our good estate and the certainty of our salvation, Now, if this love be not founded upon a preference for God for what he really is, it is not virtuous love. In this case, although the will may have indirectly produced these emotions, yet as the will prefers God, not for what he is, but for selfish reasons, the consequent emotions are selfish.

III. WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE HEART.

To change your heart, as I have shown in the former discourse, and repeated in this, is to change the governing preference of your mind. What is needed, is, that your will should be rightly influenced, that you should reject sin, and prefer God and obedience to every thing else. The question is, then, how is your will to be thus influenced? By what process is it reasonable to expect thus to influence your mind? Until your will is right, it is vain to expect felt emotions of true love to God, of repentance and faith. These feelings, after which perhaps you are seeking, and into which you are trying to force yourself, need not be expected until the will is bowed, until the ruling preference of the mind is changed.

And here you ought to understand that there are three classes of motives that decide the will:

First, those that are purely selfish. Selfishness is the preference of one's own interest and happiness to God and his glory. Whenever the will chooses, directly or indirectly, under the influence of selfishness, the choice is sinful, for all selfishness is sin,

A second class of motives that influence the will, are those that arise from self-love. Self-love is a constitutional dread of misery and love of happiness, and whenever the

will is influenced purely by considerations of this kind, its decisions either have no moral character at all, or they are sinful. The constitutional desire of happiness and dread of misery is not in itself sinful, and the consent of the will to lawfully gratify this constitutional love of happiness and dread of misery is not sinful. But when the will consents, as in the case of Adam and Eve, to a prohibited indulgence, it then becomes sinful.

A third class of motives that influence the will, are connected with conscience. Conscience is the judgment which the mind forms of the moral qualities of actions. When the will is decided by the voice of conscience, or a regard to right, its decisions are virtuous. When the mind chooses at the bidding of principle, then, and only then, are its decisions according to the law of God.

The Bible never appeals to selfishness. It often addresses self-love, or the hopes and fears of men; because self-love, or a constitutional love of happiness, or dread of misery, is not in itself sinful. By thus appealing to the hopes, fears, and conscience, the mind, even of selfish beings, is led to such an investigation as to prepare the way for the enlightened and powerful remonstrances of conscience. Thus the investigation is carried on under the influence of these principles; but it is not the constitutional principle of self-love that finally determines the mind in its ultimate choice of obedience to God. When, under the combined influence of hope, fear, and conscience, the mind has been led to the full investigation and consideration of the claims of God, - when these principles have influenced the mind so far as to admit and cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit, as that it becomes enlightened, and is led to see what duty is, the mind is then ripe for a decision; conscience then has firm footing; it then has the opportunity of exerting its greatest power upon the will. And if the will decide virtuously, the attention is not at the instant occupied either with hopes

or fears, or with those considerations that excite them. But at the moment when the decision is made, the attention must be occupied either with the reasonableness, fitness and propriety of its Maker's claims, or with the hatefulness of sin, or the stability of his truth. The decision of the will, or the change of preference is made, not mainly because, at the instant, you hope to be saved or fear to be damned, but because to act thus is right; [because] to obey God, to serve him, to honor him, and promote his glory, is reasonable, and right, and just. This is a virtuous decision: this is a change of heart. It is true, the offer of pardon and acceptance has a powerful influence, by more fully demonstrating the unreasonableness of rebellion against such a God. While in despair, the sinner would flee rather than submit. But the offer of reconciliation annihilates the influence of despair, and gives to conscience its utmost power.

Fourthly, You cannot change your heart by attending to the present state of your feelings. It is very common when persons are called upon to change their hearts, for them to turn their thoughts upon themselves, to see whether they possess the requisite state of feeling; whether they have conviction enough, and whether they have those emotions which they suppose necessarily precede a change of heart. They abstract their attention from those considerations that are calculated to decide their will, and think of their present feelings. In this diversion of their mind from the motives to change their heart, and fixing their attention upon their present mental state, they inevitably lose what feeling they have, and for the time being render a change impossible. Our present feelings are subjects of consciousness, they have a felt existence in the mind; but if they be made, for a moment, the subject of attention, they cease to exist. While our thoughts are warmly engaged, and intensely occupied with objects without ourselves, with our past sins, with the character or requirements of God, with the love or sufferings of the

Savior, or with any other subjects, corresponding emotions will exist in our minds. But if from all these, we turn our attention to our present feelings and attempt to examine them, there is no longer any thing before the mind to make us feel; our emotions cease of course. While a man steadily looks at an object, its image is painted on the retina of his eye. Now, while he continues to direct his eye to the object, the image will remain upon the retina, and the corresponding impression will be upon his mind; but should he turn away his eye, the image upon the retina would no longer remain; and should he direct his attention to the mental impression instead of the object that caused it, the impression would at once be effaced from his mind.

Instead, therefore, of waiting for certain feelings, or making your present state of mind the subject of attention, please to abstract your thoughts from your present emotions, and give your undivided attention to some of the reasons for changing your heart.

IV. THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED TO INDUCE THE STATE OF MIND WHICH CONSTITUTES A CHANGE OF HEART.

Remember, the present object is, not to call directly into existence certain emotions, but, by leading your mind to a full understanding of your obligations, to induce you to yield to principle, and to choose what is right. If you will give your attention, I will try to place before you such considerations as are best calculated to induce the state of mind which constitutes a change of heart.

Fix your mind upon the unreasonableness and hatefulness of selfishness. Selfishness is the pursuit of one's own happiness as a supreme good; this is in itself inconsistent with the glory of God and the highest happiness of his kingdom. You must be sensible that you

have always, directly or indirectly, aimed at promoting your own happiness in all that you have done; that God's glory and happiness, and the interests of his kingdom, have not been the leading motive of your life; that you have not served God, but have served yourself. But your individual happiness is of trifling importance, compared with the happiness and glory of God and the interests of his immense kingdom. To pursue, therefore, as a supreme good, your own happiness, is to prefer an infinitely less to an infinitely greater good, simply because it is your own. Is this virtue? Is this public spirit? Is this benevolence? Is this loving God supremely, or your neighbor as yourself? No, it is exalting your own happiness into the place of God; it is placing yourself as a center of the universe, and an attempt to cause God and all his creatures to revolve around you as your satellites.

Your success, in pushing your selfish aims, would ruin the universe. A selfish being can never be happy until his selfishness be fully gratified. It is certain, therefore, that but one selfish being can be fully gratified. Selfishness aims at appropriating all good to self. Give a selfish man a township, and he covets a state; give him a state, and he longs for a nation; give him a continent, and he cannot rest without the world: give him a world, and he is wretched if there is nothing more to gain. Give him all authority on earth, and while there was a God to rule the universe, his selfish heart would rankle with insatiable desire, until the world, the universe, and God himself were prostrate at his feet his ambition could not be satisfied, his selfish heart could not rest. If, then, you could succeed in your selfish aims, your success would subordinate and injure, if not ruin every body else.

Is this right? But could you succeed in subduing the universe to yourself, then your happiness would not be obtained; for a selfish moral agent cannot be happy. Could you ascend the throne of Jehovah; could you wield the

scepter of universal government; could you appropriate to yourself the honor and the wealth of the entire universe; could you receive the homage, the obedience of God and all his creatures, yet the very elements of your nature would be outraged, and while in the exercise of selfishness, conscience would condemn you, the very laws of your moral constitution would mutiny; self-accusation and reproach would rankle in your heart, and, in spite of you, you would be forced to abhor yourself.

Again. While you are selfish, all moral beings must hate and despise you; and it is impossible for a moral being to be happy under the consciousness of being deservedly hated and despised. The love of approbation is a law of our nature, it is laid in the very constitution of the mind by the hand that formed it. It is, therefore, as impossible for us to be happy under the consciousness that we are deservedly hated, as it is that we should alter the very structure of our being. It is in vain, therefore, for you to expect to be happy in the exercise of selfishness. God, angels and saints, wicked men and devils, the entire universe of moral beings must be conscientiously and heartily opposed to you while you sustain that character - while conscience gives forth the verdict that you deserve their hatred, and pronounces you unfit for any other world than hell.

In the next place, look at the guilt of this. No thanks to you, if there is a vestige of virtue or happiness in the universe. If your example should have its natural influence, and not be counteracted by God, it would, like a little leaven, leaven the whole lump. If all your acquaintances copied your example, and their acquaintances theirs, and so on, you can easily see that your influence would soon destroy all benevolence, and introduce universal selfishness and rebellion against God. No thanks to you, if there is an individual in the universe that respects the government of God. You have never obeyed it, and all your influences

have been against it; and if God had not been constantly wakeful in using counteracting influences, his government had long since been demolished, and virtue and obedience, and love to God and man had been banished from the world.

Again, your influence has tended to establish for ever the dominion of Satan over men. Selfishness is the law of Satan's empire. You have hitherto perfectly obeyed it; and as example preaches louder than precept, you have used the most powerful means possible to induce all mankind to obey the devil. If God has a virtuous subject on earth, if all men are not in league with hell, and, by their example at least, shouting forth, "O Satan, live for ever!" no thanks to you, for the legitimate tendency of your conduct had been to produce this horrible result.

Again, no thanks to you, if all mankind are not for ever lost. You have done nothing to save them. Your whole life has had a natural tendency to destroy them. Your neglect and contempt of God have exerted the strongest influence within your power to lead them in the way to death. You have done nothing to save yourself, and, by neglecting your own soul, you have virtually said to all around you, your family and friends, to all who are near and afar off "let religion alone," "who is the Lord that we should obey him, or what profit should we have should we pray unto him?" You need not thank yourself, nor expect the thanks of God, nor of the universe, if any soul from earth is ever saved.

Now, look at the guilt of this. The guilt of any action is equal to the evils which it has a natural tendency to produce. Now look at this. Your selfishness has the natural, and, if unrestrained, the inevitable tendency to ruin the world, to destroy God's government, to establish Satan's, and to people hell with all mankind.

Next, look at the reasonableness and utility of

benevolence. Benevolence is good will. Benevolence to God, is preferring his happiness and glory to all created good. Benevolence to men, is the exercise of the same regard to, and desire for their happiness, as we have for our own. Benevolence to God, or the preference of God's happiness and glory, is right in itself, because his happiness and glory are infinitely the greatest good in the universe. He prefers his own happiness and glory to every thing else, not because they are his own, but because they constitute the greatest good. All beings, when compared with him, are less than nothing, and vanity. His capacity for enjoying happiness or enduring pain is infinite, not only in duration but in degree. If all the creatures in the universe were completely happy, or perfectly miserable to all eternity, their happiness or misery, though endless in duration, would be but finite in degree. But God's happiness is not only endless in duration but infinite in degree. His happiness is, therefore, just as much more valuable than that of all his creatures, as infinite exceeds finite. Then, is it not right - is it not according to the moral fitness of things, that all his creatures should value his happiness and glory infinitely above their own? Is it not right that he should do this, not because it is his own happiness, but because it is an infinitely greater good?

Does not moral fitness, does not the eternal law of right demand, that he should regard his own happiness according to its real value? Has he any right to prefer the happiness of his creatures above his own? Does not justice require that he should regard every thing in the universe according to its relative importance? and should he not regard his own happiness and glory infinitely above all things else; and should he not require all his intelligent creatures to do the same; would it not be a manifest departure from the immutable principles of right? Therefore, to have a supreme regard to your own happiness, to value it, and to desire it more than you do the happiness and glory of God, is to trample upon the

eternal principles of justice and moral fitness which God is bound to maintain; to array yourself in the attitude of open and outrageous war against God, against the universe, against heaven, against the principles of your own nature, and against whatever is right, whatever is lovely and of good report.

Again. That you should love your neighbor as yourself is agreeable to the immutable law of right. That you should regard your neighbor's happiness according to its real value, and the happiness of all mankind according to the relative importance of each one's individual happiness, and the happiness of the whole as much above your own as the aggregate amount of theirs is more valuable than yours, is right in itself. To refuse to do this, is at once to sin against God, to declare war with all men.

But again look at the utility of benevolence. It is a matter of human consciousness that the mind is so constituted that benevolent affections are the source of happiness, and malevolent ones the source of misery. God's happiness consists in his benevolence. Wherever unmingled benevolence is, there is peace. If perfect benevolence reigned throughout the universe, universal happiness would be the inevitable result. The happiness of heaven is perfect, because benevolence is there perfect. They love God with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and their neighbors as themselves; and who that knows the joy there is in holy love, does not know that the full tide of benevolence is but another name for the full tide of happiness? Perfect benevolence to God and man would at once give us a share in all the happiness of earth and heaven. Benevolence is good will, or willing good to the object of it. If we desire the happiness of others, their happiness will increase our own, according to the strength of our desire. If we desire their welfare as much as we do our own, we are made as happy by good, known to be conferred on them as upon ourselves; and

nothing but selfishness prevents our tasting the cup of every man's happiness, and sharing equally with him in all his joys. If we supremely desire the happiness and glory of God, the fact that he is infinitely and immutably happy and glorious, and that he will glorify himself, and that "the whole earth shall be full of his glory," will constitute our supreme joy. It will be to us a never failing source of pure, and high, and holy blessedness. And when we look abroad upon men, and see all the wickedness of earth; when, through the page of inspiration, we survey as with a telescope the deep caverns of the pit; when we listen to its wailings, and behold the lurid flashes of its fires, and contemplate the gnawings of the deathless worm; in all this we see only the legitimate results of selfishness. Selfishness is the discord of the soul: it is the jarring, and dissonance, and grating of hell's eternal anguish. Benevolence, on the other hand, is the melody of the soul. In its exercise, all the mental powers are harmonized, and breathe the sweetness of heaven's charming symphonies. To be happy, then, you must be benevolent. Selfishness, you see, is neither reasonable nor profitable. Its very nature is at war with happiness. It renders you odious to God, the abhorrence of heaven, the contempt of hell. It buries your good name, your ultimate self- esteem, your present and future happiness, in one common grave, and that beyond the hope of resurrection, unless you turn, renounce your selfishness, and obey the law of God.

But again, consider the reasons why God should govern the universe. Perhaps, in words or in theory, you have never denied his right to govern, yet in practice you have always denied it. Your having never obeyed, is the strongest possible declaration of your denial of his right to govern you. The language of your conduct has been, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey him?" "I know not Jehovah, neither will I obey his voice." But have you duly considered his claims upon your obedience? Have you not only admitted the fact that he has a right to govern, but

have you understood and thoroughly considered the foundation of this right? If you have never attended to this, it is not wonderful that you have refused obedience. The foundation of God's right to the government of the universe is made up of the three following considerations:

First, his moral character. His benevolence is infinite. Were he a malevolent being, and were his laws like himself, as they would be of course, he could have no right to govern. Instead of being under an obligation to love and obey him, it would be our duty to hate and disobey him. But his benevolence renders him worthy of our love and obedience. But his benevolence alone cannot qualify him for, nor give him a right to, the government of the universe. However benevolent he may be, if his natural attributes are not what they should be, he cannot be qualified to be the Supreme Ruler of all worlds. But a glance at his natural attributes will show that he is no less worthy to govern, in respect to these, than in respect to his moral attributes.

And, first, he has infinite knowledge, so that his benevolence will always be wisely exercised.

2nd. He has infinite power. However benevolent he might be, if he lacked either knowledge to direct, or power to execute his benevolent desires, he would not be fit to govern.

Again. He is omnipresent; in every place, at every time; so that nothing that benevolence desires, wisdom directs, or power can achieve, can be wanting in his administration.

Again. He is immortal and unchangeable. Could he cease to exist, or were he subject to change, these would be fundamental defects in his nature as supreme Ruler of the universe.

But, again. Neither his moral nor natural attributes,

when viewed separately or collectively, afford sufficient ground for his assuming the reins of government. For however good and great he may be, these constitute no sufficient reason for his taking upon himself the office of supreme magistrate, irrespective of the elective choice of other beings. But he is also the Creator, and holds by the highest possible tenure the entire universe as his own. Thus he is not only infinitely well fitted to govern, but by creation has the absolute and inalienable right to govern. He not only has this right, but it is his duty to govern. He can never yield this office, nor throw aside this responsibility.

But again. Look at the reasonableness of his requirements. They are not arbitrary but such as it is his bounden duty to enforce. The laws of God have not their foundation in his arbitrary will, but in the nature, and relation, and fitness of things. To love God and our neighbor, is not our duty simply because God requires it; but it is our duty antecedently to any expressed requirement. He requires it, because it is right in itself. He is not therefore at liberty to dispense with our obedience if he please. He cannot good-naturedly humor his creatures and let them have their own way - let them run into sin and rebellion, and then let them go unpunished. He is solemnly pledged and bound by the rules of his own government. If, therefore, you go on in sin, it is not at his option, when you come to the judgment, to punish you or not. The laws of his empire are fixed, eternal principles, which he can no more violate, without sin, than any of his creatures. Do not hope then, if you persevere in sin, to escape "the damnation of hell."

But perhaps, like many others, you have made this excuse for your rebellion; that, upon the whole, God desires you to sin; that, as he is almighty, he could prevent sin if he pleased; and because he does not, you infer that he prefers the existence of sin to its non-existence; and the

present amount of rebellion to holiness in its stead. To say nothing of his word and oath upon this subject, you have only to look into his law to see that he has done all that the nature of the case admitted, to prevent the existence of sin. The sanctions of his law are absolutely infinite; in them he has embodied and held forth the highest possible motives to obedience. His law is moral, and not physical; a government of motive, and not of force. It is vain to talk of his omnipotence preventing sin; if infinite motives will not prevent it, it cannot be prevented under a moral government, and to maintain the contrary is absurd, and a contradiction. To administer moral laws, is not the object of physical power. To maintain, therefore, that the physical omnipotence of God can prevent sin, is to talk nonsense. If to govern mind were the same as to govern matter - if to sway the intellectual could be accomplished by the same power that sways the physical universe, then, indeed, it would be just, from the physical omnipotence of God, and from the existence of sin, to infer that God prefers its existence to holiness in its stead. But as mind must be governed by moral power, as the power of motive is the only power that can be brought to bear upon mind to influence it, it is unjust, unphilosophical, illogical, and absurd, to infer from the existence of sin, and God's physical omnipotence, his preference of its existence.

If the motives to obedience are infinite, well might he challenge the universe, and inquire, "what more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?" And will you, in the face of all these moving considerations, continue your rebellion? and when required to turn, will you profanely reply: If God be Almighty, why does he not turn me? O, sinner, why provoke your Maker? "Your judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and your damnation slumbereth not."

But, again. When the law was broken, and all mankind exposed to its fearful penalty, behold at once the justice to

the universe, and mercy to sinners displayed in the atonement. To make an universal offer of pardon, without regard to public justice, were virtually to repeal his law; but a due regard to the public interest forbade the lawgiver to forgive and set aside the execution, without some expedient to secure a veneration [love] for and obedience to the precept [law]. So great, therefore, was his compassion for man, and his regard to law, that to gratify his desire to pardon, he was willing to suffer in the person of his Son, a substitute for its penalty. This was the most stupendous exhibition of self-denial that ever was made in the universe. The Father giving his only begotten and well beloved Son; the Son veiling the glories of his uncreated Godhead, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might never die.

Now, if you are an impenitent sinner, you have never, in a single instance, obeyed your Maker. Every breath that you have breathed, every pulse you have told [of your heart], has but added to the number of your crimes. When God has fanned your heaving lungs, you have breathed out your poisonous breath in rebellion against the eternal God; and how ought God to feel towards you? You have set your unsanctified feet upon the principles of eternal righteousness; you have lifted up your hands, filled with poisoned weapons, against the throne of the Almighty; you have set at nought the authority of God and the rights of man. You have spurned, as with your feet, every principle of right, of love, and of rational happiness. You are the enemy of God, the foe of man, a child of the devil, and in league with hell. Ought not God then to hate you with all his heart?

But in the midst of your rebellion, behold the long suffering of God. With what patience has he borne with all your aggravated wickedness! All this you have done, and he has kept silence. Dare you think that he will never reprove?

But look for a moment at the conditions of the Gospel, Repentance and faith. To repent, is to hate and renounce your sin. This requirement is not arbitrary on the part of God. It would neither be just to the universe, nor beneficial to you, to exercise pardon until you comply with this requirement. Can a sovereign forgive his subjects while they remain in rebellion? Can God forgive you while you persevere in sin? No. This would be to give up his law, and, by a public act, to confess himself wrong and you right, to renounce the stand he has taken, to condemn himself and justify you. But this would be the publication of falsehood, it would be a proclamation that sin is right and holiness wrong. Not only so, but to forgive you, and leave you in your sin, would render your happiness impossible. You might as well proclaim a man in health who is dying with the plague.

Nor is faith an arbitrary appointment of God. God has no means of getting you to heaven unless you believe his word, and walk in the path he points out to you. If you will not believe What he tells you of heaven and hell, of the way to avoid the one and gain the other, your salvation is impossible in the nature of the case. You cannot find heaven at the end of the road that leads to hell, nor hell at the end of the road that leads to heaven, and nothing but faith in what he tells you, can influence you to take the path that leads to heaven. And now, sinner, what have you to say? Why the sentence of his law should not be executed upon you? You have never cared for God, and why should he be under obligation to care for you? You have never obeyed him, what good then do you deserve at his hand? You have always disobeyed him, and what evil do you not deserve? You have broken his law, despised his grace, and grieved his Spirit. "You have cast off fear and restrained prayer." The tendency of your selfish conduct has been to ruin the universe, to dethrone God, to build up the throne and establish the dominion of Satan, to damn yourself and all mankind. This you cannot deny. Let

conscience pass sentence upon you. Let it give forth its verdict. Do you not, even now, hear it in the deep recesses of your soul cry out, guilty, guilty, and worthy of eternal death?

But, sinner, you have seen, in the progress of this discourse, the reasonableness of benevolence, and the hatefulness of selfishness. The right and the duty of God to govern you, and your obligations to obey. You have seen the reasonableness and utility of virtue; the unreasonableness, the guilt, and evil of sin. And now what say you? What is your present duty? Is it right? Is it reasonable? Is it expedient longer to pursue your selfish course? Is it not best, and right, and manly, and honorable, and time, to turn and obey your Maker? Look at the consequences of your present course, to yourself, your friends over whom you have influence, to the church, and to the world. Will you continue to cast firebrands, arrows, and death, - to throw all your influence, your time and talents, your body and soul, into the scale of selfishness! Shall all your influence continue to be upon the wrong side, to increase the wickedness and misery of earth, to gratify the devil and grieve the Son of God? Sinner, if you go to hell, you ought to be willing to go alone; company will not mitigate, but increase your pain. Ought you not then, instantly, to throw all your influence into the other scale; to exert yourself to roll back the tide of death, and save your fellow- men from hell? Do you see the reasonableness of this? What is your judgment in the case? Do not stop to look at your emotions, nor turn your eye in upon your present state of mind; but say, will you cease your rebellion, throw down your weapons, and enlist in the service of Jesus Christ? He has come to destroy the works of the devil, to demolish his empire, and re- establish the government of God in the hearts of men. Are you willing that he should govern the world? Is this your choice? If allowed to vote, would you elect him as supreme Governor of the world? Will you obey him yourself? But

do you reply, "Oh! I am so great a sinner, I fear there is no mercy for me?" That is not the question. The question is not, whether he will pardon you, but whether you will obey him. If he saw it not wise to pardon you, if the circumstances of his government require your damnation, is it not on that account the less your duty to obey him. The question for you to settle is, whether you will obey him, and leave the question [matter] of your salvation for him to settle, in view of all the circumstances of the case. He is infinitely wise, and as benevolent as he is wise. You ought, therefore, cheerfully to submit your final destiny to him, to make your duty the object of your attention, and obedience your constant aim. The atonement is full and perfect. The presumption is, that nothing is in the way of your salvation but your impenitence and unbelief; and indeed you have the promise, that on condition of submission to his will, you shall have eternal life. Do you see what you ought to do, and are you willing to do it? "Choose this day whom you will serve." To choose God and his services - to prefer these to your own interest and to every thing else, is to change your heart. Have you done it? Do you still ask, how shall I do it? You might with much more propriety ask, when the meeting is dismissed, how shall I go home? To go home would require two things, first, to be willing; secondly, to put your body in motion. But here, no muscular power is needed. But one thing is requisite, that is a willing mind. Your consent is all that is needed. Be willing to do your duty, [and do it,] and the work is done.

INFERENCES AND REMARKS.

From this subject you see why many complain that they cannot submit to God. They do not give their attention to the consideration necessary to lead them to submission. Many occupy their thoughts with their state of feeling, are

looking steadily at the darkness of their own minds and the hardness of their own hearts. They are anxiously waiting for the existence of certain feelings in their minds, which they suppose must precede conversion. In this way they will not submit of course. Their mental eye is turned away from the reasons for submission. In this state of mind it is impossible that they should submit; it would be a counteraction of all the laws of mind. Others, instead of attending to the reasonableness and fitness of their Maker's claims, give their whole attention to their own danger, and try to submit while they are only influenced by fear. This is acting under the influence of self-love. It is not responding to the voice of conscience; it is not submission to the laws of right; and, actuated by such motives, the mind may struggle till the day of judgment, and still the considerations that must lead the soul to a right submission are not before the mind, and the soul will not submit. It is the rightness of the duty, and not the danger consequent upon the non-performance of it, that must influence the mind, if it would act virtuously. I have already said, that both hope and fear bear an important part in leading the mind to make the requisite investigation. But neither the one nor the other are the object of the mind's attention at the instant of submission. He, therefore, who does not understand the philosophy of this - who does not understand the use and power of attention, the use and power of conscience, and upon what to fix his mind to lead him to a right decision, will naturally complain that he does not know how to submit.

You see the way in which the Spirit of God operates in the conversion of men; it is through the medium of attention and conscience; he gets and keeps the attention of the mind, and, through the influence of hope, and, fear, and conscience, conducts the sinner along the path of truth, till he has given conscience the requisite information to exert its utmost power; that when it gives forth its verdict, the will may respond. - Amen.

This is the experience of every Christian. He knows that in this way the Spirit of God exerted its influence to change his heart. His errors and refuges of lies were swept away. He can tell you that his attention was arrested and fixed, that his conscience was enlightened, and the subject pressed upon his mind until he was induced to yield.

You see how unphilosophical it is, while pressing the sinner to submission, to divert his mind and turn his attention to the subject of the Spirit's influence. While his attention is directed to that subject, his submission is impossible. He can only submit when his entire attention is directed to the reasons for submission. Every diversion of his attention is but multiplying obstacles in his way. Hence we never find the inspired writers, when calling upon sinners to repent, directing their attention to the subject of divine influence. Begin with Joshua - when he assembled the people of Israel and laid their duty before them, and said, "choose you this day whom ye will serve," he did not unphilosophically remind them at the same time of their dependence upon the Spirit of God; but held the single point upon which they were to choose before them, till their choice was made. So on the day of Pentecost, and in the case of the jailer, and indeed in every other case where prophets, and Christ, find the apostles called men to immediate repentance, we find them keeping close to their text, and not going off to drag in the subject of divine influence to divert the attention and confound their hearers.

You see the importance of understanding the philosophy of conversion, and why it is that so many sermons are lost, and worse than lost, upon the souls of men. First, the sinner's attention is not secured; and, secondly, if it is secured, it is often directed to irrelevant matters, and the subject embarrassed with extraneous considerations that have nothing to do with the sinner's immediate duty. Often the subject is not cleared up to his

mind; or if he understands it, he does not see its personal application to himself; or if he sees this, he is not made to feel the pressure of present obligation, and not infrequently - 'O tell it not in Gath, ' the impression is distinctly left upon his mind that he is unable to do his duty. The preaching that leaves this last impression is infinitely worse than none.

From this subject you can see that there are two classes of evidence of a change of heart; one is, those vivid emotions of love to God, repentance for sin, and faith in Christ, that often follow the change of choice. These constitute happiness, they are most sought, and usually the most depended upon, but not deservedly the most satisfactory. Highly wrought emotions are liable to deceive, for, as they cannot be the subject of a present distinct examination without ceasing to exist, they are the least to be depended on as an evidence of a title to the inheritance of the saints in light. The other kind of evidence is an habitual disposition to obey the requirements of God; that abiding preference of God's glory, over every thing else, that gives a right direction to all our conduct.

You see, from this subject, the philosophy of self-examination. Many persons will set apart days of fasting and prayer, and spend the day in trying to examine their present mental state, in trying to catch a glimpse of their present emotions. In this way they are sure to quench whatever of right feeling they have. Their past thoughts and feelings, their past actions and motives, may be the subject of present examination and attention; but whenever they make their present emotions or state of feeling the subject of attention, they cease to feel. If, then, you would try your hearts in regard to any object, bring that object before your mind, consider it intensely, and if there be any moral affinity between your state of mind and this object of attention, while you are musing the fire of emotion will burn.

From this subject you perceive the error of those persons who suppose themselves to have much more religion than others, merely because they have more emotion. Multitudes of minds seem not to be influenced by principle, but are carried hither and thither by every gust of feeling, by whatever consideration these feelings may be produced; and while they tell of their raptures, their love and joys, they have so little regard to principle as to be guilty of Christ-dishonoring conduct. Others, who much less frequently evince deep emotion, are influenced by a sacred regard to right. They have much more of the consistency of the Christian character, but perhaps complain of the absence of religious joy.

From what has been said, it is manifest, that where sinners continue to neglect the means of grace, their case is hopeless. Many seem to think, that if they are to be saved, they shall be saved, and if they are to be lost, they shall be lost; and look upon religion as some mysterious thing, for the implantation of which, in their minds, they must wait the pleasure of a sovereign God. They pay attention to every other subject, and occupy their thoughts with every thing that is calculated to banish religion from their minds, and still hope to be converted. This is as irrational as if a man, desiring to obtain the perfection of Christian sobriety, should continue to riot and drink, and stupefy his powers, and expect that, in some mysterious way, he should by and by become a sober man.

From this subject you see the importance of giving a convicted sinner right instruction. Great care should be taken not to divert his mind from fundamental truths. His attention should be abstracted, if possible, from every thing irrelevant, from every thing that regards merely the circumstantial of religion, and brought to bear intensely upon the main question, that of unconditional submission to God.

You see the necessity of addressing the feelings, or

hopes and fears of men, as a means of awakening them, and securing their attention. Very exciting means are often indispensable, to awaken and secure sufficient attention to lead the way to conversion. When there are so many exciting topics almost continually before the mind, so many Lo! heres, and Lo! theres, to call and fix the sinner's thoughts to worldly objects, we must, of necessity, ply him with the most moving considerations, and that in the most affectionate and earnest manner, or we shall fail to interest his thoughts, and get the subject upon his mind for consideration. One important design of his constitutional susceptibilities is, to afford a medium of access to the attention, and through the attention to the conscience. Many persons seem averse to addressing the feelings of men on the subject of religion, they fear to excite animal feeling, and consequently they in general excite no feeling at all. The reason is obviously this; they overlook some of the most striking peculiarities of the mental constitution. They strive to arouse the conscience, but fail for want of attention. The attention will not ordinarily be secured but by addressing the hopes and fears of men.

We should carefully distinguish between a convicted and an awakened sinner. When the sinner is once thoroughly awakened, there is then no need of creating further alarm; and indeed in this situation all appeals merely to hope and fear are rather an embarrassment and a hinderance to the progress of the work. When his attention is thoroughly secured, the favorable moment should be seized upon fully to enlighten his mind, and lead him to a right understanding of his responsibilities and the claims of his Maker. If there is any flagging of the attention, such appeals should instantly be made to the feelings as to arouse and fix the thoughts; and an anxious watchfulness should be constantly kept up to preserve attention, and enlighten the mind as fast as possible. In this way you will most effectually aid the operations of the Holy Spirit, push matters to an issue, and secure the

conversion of the sinner to God.

Neglecting to distinguish between awakening and conviction has been the cause of many sad failures in securing sound conversions. Often, when sinners have been merely awakened, they have been treated as if they were convicted: their spiritual guides have neglected to seize the opportunity to force home conviction upon them; they have called on them to submit, before they duly understood the reasons for submission, or the nature of the duty. But, as might be expected, instead of truly performing it, they have imagined themselves willing to do so, till their awakenings have subsided, and the chill apathy of death has settled down upon them.

You see that preaching terror alone is not calculated to effect the conversion of sinners. It is useful to awaken, but, unless accompanied with those instructions that enlighten, will seldom result in any good.

You see why those that preach alone to the hopes of men, seldom, if ever, effect their conversion. Some go to one extreme and some to the other. Some appeal to fear, and others again to hope, while they seldom reason with the sinner of temperance, of righteousness, or of a judgment to come. They often excite much feeling and many tears; but, after all, such appeals, unaccompanied with that discriminating instruction which the sinner needs, in regard to his duty and the claims of his Maker, will seldom result in a sound conversion.

You see the philosophy of special efforts to promote revivals of religion. Why it is that protracted meetings, and other measures which are new, are calculated to promote the conversion of sinners. Their novelty excites and fixes attention. Their being continued from day to day, serves to enlighten the mind, and has a philosophical tendency to issue in conversion.

Lastly. I remark, that from this subject it will be seen

that a death-bed is but a poor place for repentance. Many are expecting, that if they neglect repentance until they come upon a bed of death, that then they shall repent and give their hearts to God. But alas! how vain the hope! In the languor and exhaustion, the pain and distraction, the trembling and the anxiety of a death-bed, what opportunity or power is there for that fixedness and intensity of attention that are requisite to break the power of selfishness and change the entire current of the soul? To think, is labor; to think intensely, is exhausting labor, even to a man in health. But, oh! upon a bed of death, to have the intricate accounts of life to look over, the subject of the soul's character and destiny to ponder and understand; to hold the agonized mind in warm and distressing contact with the great truths of revelation, until the heart is melted and broken, rest assured, is ordinarily, if not always, too great an effort for a dying man. Be it known to all men, that, as a general truth, to which there are but few exceptions, men die as they live, and no dependence can be placed upon those waverings, and flickerings, and gleamings forth of the struggling mind, while the body, all weakness and pain, is breaking down to usher it into the presence of its Maker. Now is your time, in the wakefulness and strength of your powers, while the command to make to you a new heart and a new spirit, and the reasons for the performance of this duty lie fully before you; while the gate of heaven stands open, and mercy, with bleeding hands, beckons you to come; while the pearl of great price is tendered to your acceptance, seize the present moment, and lay hold upon eternal life.

CH 2

TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS

“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect, by your tradition.”

– Matthew 15:6

THE GOVERNMENT WHICH GOD exercises over the universe of mind is a moral government, it is not, of course, administered by direct physical agency; compelling mind to act, in the same manner, in which the physical laws of the material universe operate in the world of matter. Motives are the grand instruments of moving mind.

God's moral government is made up of considerations, and inducements designed and calculated to influence the minds of intelligent creatures, to pursue that course of conduct, which will in the highest manner, promote the glory of God, their own interest, and the happiness of the universe. It lays down a definite and perfect rule of feeling

and of action. Its precept marks with the clear light of sunbeams, the exact course of duty. Its sanctions hold out on the one hand, all the blessedness of everlasting life; and on the other denounces against offenders, all the pains of everlasting death. Thus holding before the sinner's feet, the clear lamp of truth, and in its awful penalty, gathering around him on every hand, over his head, and beneath his feet, all the moving considerations that heaven, and earth, and hell can present, to hold his mind in an exact course of obedience. The law of God was clearly revealed to the Jews, but its power was often broken, its influence over mind paralyzed and destroyed, by a variety of oral traditions, which were handed down from one generation to another; which were held as of equal authority with the written law. They were often the corrupt glosses of the Jewish doctors, and not unfrequently mere-evasions of the spirit, and meaning of the written law. We have an instance of this, in the verses connected with the text.

The Jewish doctors had a tradition, that it was unlawful to eat without first washing their hands. To this tradition, Christ's disciples paid no regard. But as these traditions were held in great veneration by the multitude, the Scribes and Pharisees, made the disciples' misregard of them the occasion of reproaching Christ, and demanded of him "why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the Elders?" Christ rebuked them by answering, "why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? for God commanded, saying, honour thy father and mother, and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death; but ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honoureth not his father and mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." The commandment to honour the father and mother, included the duty of providing for them, in case they were in necessitous circumstances; but the tradition of the elders evaded this

requirement, and taught, that if the child would give his property to God, or dedicated it to religious purposes, and made no provision for his aged parents he was blameless. Thus, by this evasion, nullifying the requirement, and absolutely setting aside the commandment of God.

It has always been the policy of Satan, since the world began, to break the power of moral government over mind; to introduce confusion, rebellion, and damnation, into the universe of God.

The influence of motive over mind, is in some respects analogous to the law of gravitation in the material universe. It does not indeed operate by physical force, as does the law of gravitation; but still, motive is designed to hold the same place in the world of mind, that gravitation holds in the world of matter. And as in the material universe, universal desolation would be the consequence of breaking the power of gravitation; so in the world of mind. Destroy the power of motive and universal anarchy, and misrule, will fill the universe. Every thing therefore which tends to hide the truth, to becloud the minds of men in ignorance, to give them erroneous notions of duty, and of the requirements of God; all evasions and misrepresentations of the true nature and tendency of his commands, are calculated to make them void, to subvert their tendency, and to defeat the very object for which they were enacted. Thus the corrupt glosses, and traditional evasions of the Jews had entirely blinded the Jewish nation. Their carnal interpretation of the law, their traditional explanations of the prophets, and of the commandments of God, had so shaped and modified the views, and doctrinal sentiments of the nation, that they had entirely misapprehended the nature and design of the Messiah's kingdom which they had so long expected. Notwithstanding the typical sacrifices of the ceremonial law, and all the institutions that were designed to point out the nature, and design of the advent of Christ; still these traditional delusions had been

so great, and their expectations and views of what the Messiah would be, were so entirely erroneous, that when he came, they did not know him; his doctrine they considered as heresy, his claims to the Messiahship, as blasphemous. Hence the nation rose up, and rejected, and persecuted, and murdered him. But after his resurrection, and the pouring out of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the traditions of the Jewish doctors were discarded by the Christian Church. For a short time, the clear, unadulterated truth of God shone upon the world. Its power was instantly manifested. When separated from error, it poured its steady lustre in upon the darkness of the moral world, like the mid-day sun. Converts to Christianity were multiplied, as drops of the morning dew. Judaism gave way before it; the multiform systems of pagan idolatry shrunk away before its glories; and earth caught and echoed back the hallelujahs of heaven. But in the midst of this bright day, and while some of the inspired penmen were yet alive, the corrupt philosophy of men, began to introduce new traditions to break the power of truth. Men began to interpret the Scriptures by the corrupt standards of the erroneous philosophy. The truth became obscured, its power was broken, its influence over mind less and less manifest; until a day of darkness came, which spread the pall of midnight over ages of the world's history, and peopled hell with millions of our race.

When it was seen that the gospel had lost its power, instead of ascribing it to the fact that it was corrupted, that human glosses, and the traditions of men, had broken its influence over mind; instead of understanding that the various manifest inconsistencies with which their traditions had encumbered it, had palsied the arm of its power, and blighted the prospects of the church, they went on with their speculations, sat quietly down and very learnedly endeavoured to account for the fact that its glory was departed, by ascribing it to the mysterious sovereignty of God.

These traditions became multiplied to an enormous extent in the popish church, until such a thing as true conversion to God was hardly known among them. Many of these traditions were rejected by the reformers, and light enough broke in upon the world, once more to break its slumbers, and there is reason to believe, to bring many souls to Christ. But still the effects were limited. The reformation was but partial. The gospel had not yet its primitive effect. Something was manifestly wanting, to uncloud the glorious sun of righteousness, that through the gospel, he might shine in his full strength.

The systems of mental philosophy that still prevailed, and by which standards, men were continually interpreting the word of God; introduced embarrassments and contradiction, mystery, and absurdity into the gospel; perplexed and confounded the human mind, and has to the present day clogged the chariot wheels of his mercy, and in a great measure, set aside, and destroyed the power of the commandment of God.

I will now mention a few of the most apparent designs of the moral law, together with some of the traditions and dogmas of men that have broken its power. The following are among the manifest designs of this law.

To exhibit the benevolence of God. A law is the expressed will of the lawgiver. It is a declaration of his disposition towards his subjects, embodying, and holding forth his real sentiments and feelings concerning them. It is the exact portraiture of his heart. We have only to look into the two great precepts that comprise the whole law and the prophets to learn that God is love. These two precepts enjoin pure and perfect love; supreme love to God, and the same love to our fellows as we bear to ourselves; this is a universal rule of right, for the government of his kingdom. Universal obedience to this law would of course result in universal happiness. Mind is so constituted, that benevolent affections are the sources

of happiness. If the benevolence, therefore, which the law requires were universally exercised, and in the degree which the law prescribes, universal good-will, and peace, and joy would fill the earth.

The justice of God is also strongly exhibited in this law. It requires of man, just that love towards himself which is reasonable and right; and just that perfect regard in heart and life to the welfare of our fellow-men, and nothing more nor less than is perfectly right.

Another design of the moral law is to convince men of sin. This it does by putting in their hand a perfect rule of action; by holding strongly before their eyes, a pure moral mirror that reflects the exact moral character of every thought, word and deed. It is the rule by which every action must be measured;--the delicate scale of the sanctuary, in which every thought and affection must be weighed.

Its design is also to promote humility. By comparing the life, thought and affections with this holy law, the sinner finds that all is wrong. On being weighed in this balance he finds himself wanting. His self-complacency is destroyed, and his pride is humbled.

Another design of the law is to destroy self-righteousness, and to teach men their need of atonement, and a Saviour.

A further design is to promote holiness and happiness among men. To show them the impossibility of being happy without being holy; and that without perfect holiness no man shall see the Lord. To press every where upon the hearts and consciences of men their obligation to universal and perfect benevolence; and to convict them of sin in every instance in which they come short of it.

In short, it is manifestly designed and calculated to declare the perfection of God, and the total depravity of

man. For as it is a faithful portrait of the perfection of God's moral character on the one hand; so it is a faithful witness of the entire depravity of man on the other.

But all these designs have been defeated in multitudes of instances by the traditions of men. Pharisees, both of the ancient and modern stamp, have defeated these designs, by virtually altering the precept. Some of them have made obedience to consist in mere outward conformity to the law of God, regardless of the state of the heart but the law principally regards the heart. It is the heart, or the design with which an action is performed, of which the law takes cognizance. It gives no credit for the outward action unless it proceed from a right design. It must be the promptings of love, that gives existence to the action. It must be at the bidding of holy principle that the action is performed to be recognized as virtue by the law of God. Does the man pray, or preach, or give alms to the poor, or read his bible, or go to church? unless these or any other actions are prompted by the love of God in the heart, they are not obedience, they are not virtue, for still the law thunders forth its claims, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself. No outward conduct then however sanctimonious or precise, is to be regarded as obedience to the law of God, unless it flow from love. It must be manifest, therefore, that to make outward morality constitute obedience to this law, is to defeat one of its principal designs. Instead of convicting of sin, it is calculated to foster pride. Instead of exhibiting the true character of God, it holds him forth merely as the promoter of cold, dry morality. Instead of making men humble, showing them their need of a Saviour, it leads to self-complacency; to stumble at the doctrine of atonement; to misunderstand, and reject the gospel.

It was this view of the moral law, so extensively

embraced and promulgated by the Pharisees, that led the Jewish nation to reject and crucify the Saviour. They rejected the righteousness of God, and went about to establish their own righteousness, by an outward conformity to the law; and thus supposing themselves to yield obedience to the law, how should they understand the necessity of an atonement, the righteousness of Christ, and justification by faith alone. So it is with the Pharisees of the present day; overlooking the spirituality of God's law, and supposing their cold dry, outward morality to be good in the sight of God, and what the law requires; they wrap the filthy garments of their own righteousness about them, walk in the light of their own fire, warm themselves with sparks of their own kindling, and must lie down in sorrow.

Again there are others, who make the law of God of no effect, by regarding it simply as of a negative character, as designed to prohibit the outbreakings of positive selfishness, rather than as requiring the existence and practice of all positive benevolence and virtue. These, content themselves with declaiming against out-breaking sins, regarding the law, simply, as prohibitory, they employ themselves in resisting the tide of corruption as it flows from the deep fountain of the heart, without enjoining and insisting upon the positive character of the law, as requiring every creature of God to devote all his powers to his service and giving himself up to doing good and promoting the interest of Christ's kingdom.

The religion of these individuals, of course, corresponds with their view of the law. It is of a merely negative character; inasmuch as they do nothing very bad, as they abstain from those outbreaking sins that would disgrace them in the eyes of men; they imagine themselves to be Christians. They are aware that they do not give themselves up to acts of benevolence, that they do not deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow

Christ; that they do not hold all their possessions as stewards, account their time and talents and all they have and are as belonging to Christ, and to be used only for his glory. They know that they effect little or no good in the world, but that they content themselves with doing nothing very bad. Now this imagination that this is true religion, and that they are Christians, is founded upon their sad and fundamental mistake of the nature of the law of God. Right views of the law, would annihilate these false hopes, would at once sweep away their refuge of lies, and bring them to a better acquaintance with God and with themselves. But it is manifest that much of what is called religion in the present age, is this spurious negative kind of piety, that contents itself with doing nothing openly wrong, without doing what is right. Ask such a professor whether he is doing any good, he will tell you no, not that he knows of--but that he is doing nothing very bad. Thus the high claims of the law are set aside, its design is perverted and the hypocrite rests quietly in his sins.

Again, the Antinomians make void the commandment of God, by setting it aside as a rule of action. Antinomian is a compound word signifying without law. The sect originated in the days of the apostles. Their peculiarity lies in supposing that the gospel was designed to release Christians from their obligation to obey the moral law, it grew out of a perversion of the doctrine of justification by faith. The Jewish doctors had taught that men were to be saved only by yielding a perfect outward conformity to the moral and ceremonial laws. In opposition to this, Paul taught, that by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified; for two reasons, first, because all men had broken the law already, and secondly, because no subsequent obedience however perfect, could make restitution for past disobedience. That all men are, therefore, already condemned by the law. Justification, in the New Testament, is synonymous with pardon and acceptance. The atonement of Christ, is therefore, the only ground of

pardon, and those who are saved, are justified, solely, by faith in Christ, irrespective of any real righteousness of their own. This sentiment was soon perverted by the Antinomians who maintained that if men are justified by faith alone without the works of the law, that good works were unnecessary, that faith in Christ is substituted for obedience to the law of God; overlooking the fact, that without personal holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Multitudes of this sect, have existed in different ages of the world, and in almost all parts of the Church; they have not indeed always been known by this name, but thousands have and still do manifest their peculiarities of belief, and practice. They may in general be known by the fact, that when holiness of heart and life are strongly insisted on, they complain that they are not fed, that this is legal preaching, that it is not the gospel, but that it is going back to the law. They seem to entertain the vain imagination, that the gospel is designed to repeal the moral law; not only to set aside the execution of its penalty, in the case of believers in Christ; but also to discharge them from the obligation to obey the law, they render the commandment of no effect. They array Christ, and his gospel against the moral government of God, settle down in their self-righteousness, render it impossible for either law or gospel to sanctify them, and "utterly perish in their own corruption." For it is manifest, that if a person professing faith in Christ, do not live as holily and unblameably as if he expected to be saved by his works. In other words, if he is less strict in life, and indulges in more sin than if he were to be saved by the law, he is turning the grace of God into licentiousness, making Christ the minister of sin--perverting and abusing the gospel, and is virtually, and in heart, an Antinomian This is making the gospel a license to sin and to break the law, and thus Christ is set forth as the apologist for sin, as saving those who make his gospel the ground of encouragement for committing those sins which they would not dare to

commit did they depend upon their own obedience for justification.

Again, others make void the law of God, and render it of no effect, by denying its penalty. There are two kinds of Universalists, who hold traditions that nullify the power of moral government. The penalty of a law, is the motive held out by the lawgiver, to induce obedience to the precept; the greater the penalty, the more weighty, and influential is the motive to obedience. The less the penalty, the feebler, and the more inoperative are the motives. Destroy the penalty entirely, and you destroy all motive to obedience, except what is contained in the nature of the precept. If indeed the penalty is destroyed or taken away, it is no longer a law; it is a virtual repeal of the law, for the precept without a penalty is only advice, which may be received or rejected at pleasure.

The two kinds of Universalists, to which I have adverted, are, no hell-ites, and limitarians, or restorationists. The former maintain, that men neither deserve, nor receive, any other punishment for sin, than what they receive in this life. The latter, that there will be a limited punishment in a future world; that when they have been punished according to their sins, they will be translated from hell to heaven. Both sects, agreeing in the alleged fact, that all mankind will be saved. The no hell-ites set aside entirely the penalty of the law of God, and regard the sufferings of this life as the natural and only evil consequences of sin to man. The latter fritter away the penalty, and reduce it to an indefinable something, the amount or duration of which they do not pretend to know. If it be not eternal, however, it is but a finite, instead of an infinite sanction. However long it may be, if it has an end, it is infinitely less than eternal. If it be but temporary, it is infinitely less solemn, awful, impressive, commanding, and influential, than an eternal penalty.

The sanctions of moral law, I have said, are designed to

hold the same place in the moral, that the law of gravitation does in the material world. The mode of their operation is not the same, for gravitation acts by force, it is the law of matter, and can only be administered by force. Moral law is the law of mind; its sanctions act not by force, but are designed and calculated, to secure a voluntary obedience; and as the law of gravitation holds the sun, moon, and planetary system in their stations and courses; so the motives of moral government are designed to preserve in their stations and in obedience, the voluntary agents under the government of God. Thus while the reality of the threatened penalty was kept steadily before the mind of Adam, he persevered in obedience; he stood like the stars and planets in their station, balanced by the universal law of gravitation. But as soon as his confidence in that was lost, he fell. Annihilate the law of gravitation, and suns, and moons, and planets, rushing from their orbits, would run lawless through the universe; universal disorder, and confusion would be the instantaneous consequence; wave after wave of desolation would roll over the universe of God. So Adam, standing at the head of moral beings, as it regards this world, stood fast, while the deep conviction of the threatened penalty weighed upon his mind. But, alas, in an evil hour, the penalty was doubted, and lost its influence; and like the sun rushing from his orbit, and filling the universe with dismay and death; so, he, as soon as the force of moral government was broken, rushed from the orbit of his obedience, and filled the world, with crimes, and groans, and desolation.

The Universalists, seem desirous to relieve the world of its anxieties, either by wholly denying or infinitely mitigating the penalty of the law of God. But it is most manifest that could they succeed in producing universal conviction of the truth of their sentiments, they would completely annihilate the power of moral government. Could they convince the world, that God never threatened men with eternal death; that the sufferings of this world

are all, or nearly all that sin deserves; that God never designed to punish in a future world; is this sentiment calculated to promote obedience to the law of God? As well might you say, that to take away the penalties of human laws is calculated to secure obedience to their precepts. Is annihilating the motives to obedience, calculated, as a matter of philosophy, to secure obedience? Suppose a statesman should go through the country, maintaining that penalties attached to laws were wholly unnecessary, that it was quite as well or better not to threaten men with evil in case of disobedience. That to exhibit the amiableness of virtue, the mildness and humanity of the government, was all that was required. That the penalty against murder was entirely unnecessary; and that the accusations of his own conscience, and the pains, and trouble, and distresses, that the remembrance of a crime would bring upon its perpetrator, were as much as the crime deserved: that to exhibit other penalties was wholly unnecessary, inexpedient, and unjust.

Would he not be regarded as a madman, as a fit subject for bedlam? Would not every man regard his doctrine as dangerous, or, if innocent, only so, because it was incredible and ridiculous? Would he do the world a favour by persuading them to act upon this principle; to strike out the penalties of all their laws? Would he not rather be regarded as the common enemy of man, as aiming to open the flood-gates of iniquity, and inundate the world with crime.

It is a notorious fact that even the penalty of death is not in all cases sufficient to prevent the perpetration of murder; and is it philosophy, is it common sense, is it to be believed, is it possible, that to do away this penalty, or to mitigate its pain, or to substitute a less motive in its place, would be sufficient to prevent the crime? So it is seen to be a naked matter of fact, that the penalty of eternal death, does not, in those cases where it is admitted to be eternal,

restrain from sin. This infinite penalty has not sufficient weight and power to counteract the selfishness of the human heart. And now by what mad logic of earth or hell, do these men arrive at the sage conclusion, that to do away this penalty, would have a tendency to promote obedience to God? It is in vain to say, that the excellence and blessedness of the precept, is a sufficient motive to secure obedience; this is not only contrary to fact, but contrary to all philosophy. It is admitted that there is a high and powerful motive, held out in the precept itself; the happiness of virtue is of itself a great inducement to be virtuous; but still this is only one part of the sanction of the law; from the nature of mind it is indispensable, not only that rewards to obedience should be offered, but that evil should be threatened to disobedience; and especially is this most manifest in a universe, where virtue is to be tested by temptation. Is it not certain, then, that could they succeed in establishing the doctrine of the old serpent, that the wicked shall not die; they would make the commandment of God of no effect, and introduce universal rebellion and misrule into the empire of Jehovah. If an infinite penalty does not sufficiently restrain the selfishness of the human heart; what delirious babble is it to say, that a finite one would do it. If the threatened pains of eternal death, be not sufficient to stay the overflowings of sin; shall the simple consideration of the pains of this short life, roll back the insurgent waves of rebellion against high heaven, and beget peace on earth, and good-will to men? It cannot be.

Will it here be said, that the penalty of eternal death, only appeals to the fears of men; that men cannot be frightened into obedience to God? The truth is, that both fear and hope, are innate in the human mind, and are both implanted there as principles upon which moral government can act. Self-love, or the love of happiness, and dread of misery, differs entirely in its nature from selfishness. To these, to both hope and fear, both law and

gospel continually make their appeals.

We have before us a striking illustration of the death-blow given by Universalist sentiments to the law of God. Their preaching universal salvation never makes men holier and better; never convinces of sin and promotes revivals of religion; never engages men in prayer, and effort for the enlightening of the world, and the salvation of immortal souls. Who ever knew the law of God, robbed of its penalty as exhibited by the Universalists, to reform a drunkard, rebuke and reclaim a debauchee; to bring the high-handed sinner upon his knees, and humble him as a little child. Who has not seen a case of this kind. A member of an orthodox church had been a praying man; attended church, was sober, honest, virtuous, and apparently religious. But by-and-by, he absented himself from the meetings for prayer, next he fled the sanctuary on the Sabbath; on inquiry, it was found that he neglected prayer in his family; on further search it was found he drank too much; he began to doubt whether there was an eternal hell; and on being excommunicated he became a Universalist.

Now who ever saw the reverse of this? A Universalist, a man of prayer? of sober, prayerful, religious life, who attended Universalist prayer meetings, and tried to promote revivals of religious among them, who kept up family, and closet prayer, to by-and-by relax in his exertions, grow cold in zeal, neglect their prayer meetings, stay away from the house of God, drink too much, embrace the sentiment of an eternal hell, and on being excommunicated from the Universalists, join the orthodox? I say who ever saw this? not one. There is no tendency in their sentiments to reform mankind. This is plain in philosophy, and abundantly established by facts. They may exhibit their traditions till the day of judgment, and so far from promoting holiness among men, they will only open the flood-gates of iniquity.

But 2dly. The GOSPEL has been made of no effect by the traditions of men. This has been done by overlooking its two-fold design.

It is designed first to establish the law. It lays down the same rule of action, requires the same holiness of heart and life, and aims at restoring men to perfect obedience to the moral law. It does not abrogate or repeal the law, but enforces obedience, by exhibiting not only the original sanctions of the law, but by adding the peculiar, solemn, moving, melting ones of the gospel.

Its second design is, to provide a substitute for the execution of its penalty, to offer pardon on terms that are consistent with the honour of the moral governor, and calculated to promote the stability and influence of his government. To lose sight of either of these designs, is manifestly to render the gospel of no effect.

Some have viewed the gospel, as merely a system of mercy, as offering a pardon for sin, irrespective of its design and tendency to make men holy. They have talked, and preached and prayed about the mercy of God; they have exhibited it as a remedy, without convincing the sinner that he was diseased; have urged him to accept a pardon without convincing him of sin; and thus by overlooking the holiness which the gospel inculcates, and enjoins; exhibiting the pardon of the gospel without requiring its duties, they have made the gospel of no effect. The gospel, thus perverted, has no tendency to save mankind, overlooking its morality, its mercy and its pardon can never save the souls of men; justification without sanctification, forgiveness without holiness, is not only absurd, but salvation upon such conditions is impossible. These, to be sure, lay great stress upon the atonement, admit the divinity of Jesus Christ, and exalt a dead faith even above obedience to the law of God. This class of professors may in general be known by their great zeal for what they term sound doctrine, and at the same time a

manifest reluctance to hearing the self-denying duties of the gospel forcibly inculcated. The doctrines of God's sovereignty, the perseverance of the saints, and their kindred doctrines, are the only truth which they relish, and only a distorted and perverted view of these can feed them. They lay much more stress on doctrine than on that practice which it is the sole object of doctrine to produce. It is clear that they rest on the shadow and reject the substance. They are only hearers, but not doers of the word, deceiving their own selves, who shall utterly perish in their own corruption.

There is another tradition over and against this, that professes to recognize the morality of the gospel, but denies, and nullifies its most moving motives to obedience. They preach good works, but deny the power of faith, and the atonement of the Son of God. But here, the power of the gospel is as sadly marred as in the other case, professedly admitting its morality, but denying its sanctions, annihilates its power. The most moving motive of the gospel is presented in the doctrine of atonement. Blot out this, and the gospel has no power to save and reclaim, as facts abundantly testify. The fact is, that these parties, are at an equal remove from the truth. The one denies the morality, and the other rejects the leading motives, and thus the power of the blessed gospel is destroyed, and the abettors of both these systems are yet in their sins. That which admits the morality, but rejects the atonement, is a system of self-righteousness. While on the other hand that which admits the atonement, but overlooks the necessity of personal holiness, turns the grace of God into licentiousness.

3dly. Others have nullified and broken the power of the gospel by introducing traditions, having a direct tendency to prevent its being accepted. One of these is, the doctrine of physical depravity. This tradition inculcates that depravity is constitutional; that it enters into the very

substance of the human soul. Something created in them. A natural appetite or craving for sin, like the appetite for food in the body.

Immediately attached to this, growing out of it, and founded upon it, is the tradition of inability on the part of the sinner to accept the gospel. These maintain that the sinner is not more able to embrace the gospel, than he is to make a world. Some of this class call on sinners to repent, but are careful to tell them they cannot repent: call on them to believe, but are sure to remind them that they are unable to believe: and thus as some have humourously and truly said, they preach

You can, and you can't.

You shall, and you shan't

You will, and you won't.

You'll be damned if you don't.

Tacked on to this, is the dogma of physical regeneration, another death dealing tradition of the elders. This is a necessary part of the same system, for if the nature itself be depraved; if depravity is constitutional, and something created with the mind itself; then regeneration must be physical. It must remedy the defect in the constitution. It must be the destroying of the constitutional craving for sin, and such an alteration of the powers of moral agency, as, to say the least, will render obedience, and holiness possible. Now it is clear, that no greater obstacles could be presented to the reception of the gospel than are found in these three dogmas just named viz. physical depravity, consequent inability and constitutional regeneration. They all lead inevitably, and logically to the exercise of a spirit of self-justification. A man has no right to blame himself for his depravity if it be constitutional. If it be something created in him, and born with him, the irresistible inference is, that it is something

for which he is not to blame. If this notion of depravity be true, he must, and ought to justify himself. To repent of such depravity is impossible. A man might as well be called upon to repent of the colour of his skin, of the colour of his eyes, or for any of the bodily senses which he possesses. Nor if his depravity be constitutional, is it any more just, reasonable or possible for him to repent of his actual transgressions. If they are the natural results of a depraved and defective constitution, he is no more to blame for them, than for the effects of any bodily disease, with which he may be born. Now in what light must the gospel be regarded, that calls upon man to repent of constitutional depravity under pain of eternal death; and to complete the absurdity, and the insult, informs him at the same time, that he has no power to repent. To suspend salvation upon impossible conditions; at once insults his understanding and mocks his hopes. Is this the gospel of the blessed God? Impossible! It is a libel upon Almighty God!

But, another inevitable tendency of these traditions is, to lead those who embrace them, to adopt the waiting system. If he is really unable to obey God, of what use are his efforts; while he believes himself unable, he must regard it as of no use to try; efforts are idle, and worse than idle. That he must quietly wait for God to change his heart, is both the logical, and irresistible inference from such premises, and God alone is to blame for his continued impenitence.

Again, Universalism is another logical, and irresistible inference from these dogmas. Assuming as a fact, that men are constitutionally depraved, unable to obey the gospel, under the necessity of waiting for a physical regeneration, one must either adopt the conclusion that God is an infinite tyrant, or that all will be saved.

Again, these traditions have a manifest tendency to conduct a thinking mind into the regions of infidelity.

What! exclaims a man of thought, am I to believe that a book containing such absurdities as these, is from God. That God has made men sinners; incapable of serving him, suspended their salvation upon impossible conditions, made it indispensable that they should have a physical regeneration, and then damns them for being sinners, and for not complying with these impossible conditions, monstrous! blasphemous! Believe this who can! Thus having neither inclination, or perhaps time, for examining the Bible for himself, and hearing incessant changes rung upon these dogmas he becomes disgusted, and very naturally concludes that if these are the doctrines of the Bible, its religion is but a dream.

Once more. These dogmas, are calculated to beget and often have produced the most high handed and dreadful rebellion against Almighty God. Sinners, supposing these to be true, and supposing that God would damn them if they did not repent, and yet were unable to repent; that he had made them sinners; that their very nature was itself depraved, and for this depravity, they were exposed to, and threatened with eternal death: they have been led in many instances to curse him to his face. And what is wonderful, this very natural, and I must say, reasonable opposition, upon the assumption that these sentiments are true, has been dwelt upon by their abettors, as evidence of their truth.

Another, and the last tradition to which I shall call your attention at the present time, is what is generally called irresistible grace. This doctrine maintains that sinners are irresistibly converted; that if they are of the number of the elect, they will be converted in spite of themselves. By irresistible grace I understand and mean nothing more than that it is not, in those cases, resisted. But it has been maintained by some that it was properly irresistible. This is evidently a limb of physical regeneration. If that is true, this must be true also. But what is more calculated to quiet

a man in his sins, than the idea of irresistible grace in regeneration. That do what he will; live as he will; resist as he will; still if he is to be converted, he will be irresistibly wrought upon, converted, and saved in spite of himself. I cannot conceive of a sentiment more directly calculated to break the power of the gospel, to strengthen the sinner's hands in his rebellion, and settle him quietly down upon his lees until he sinks to the depths of hell. It is believed that in millions of instances the traditions of physical or constitutional depravity, and inability, with their kindred errors, have led men very consistently to justify themselves, and condemn God. Hence when they have been called upon to repent, and believe the gospel, they have replied that they were willing and waiting God's time. The inference from their premises was irresistible, that they must wait, and consequently a compromise ensued; instead of calling upon him, and insisting upon his immediate repentance; instead of urging him to make to him a new heart and a new spirit, on pain of eternal death, he has been told to pray, to use the means, to call upon God for the influences of his spirit and wait for sovereign grace to change his heart. Thus when the sinner has felt straitened, and shut up to the faith, and ready to break down under the pressure of the requirement to repent and believe the gospel; his conscience has been relieved; the pressure of obligation mitigated, and the agonizing obligation to instant submission deferred. The sinner has found his pains removed, his obligation to present duty postponed; he has turned away, in the use of means, quenched the Spirit, prayed himself to sleep, and sunk to the depths of hell. And no wonder; for the requirements of God, are set aside, and another rule of duty substituted in its place. The requirement of the gospel is, repent now, and believe that your soul may live. It gives not the sinner a moment's time to wait; it presses upon him with all the weight of Jehovah's authority, instantly to ground his weapons, and submit to God. He feels hedged in, as with a

wall of fire; he pants, and struggles, and is driven to extremity; he prays, but still the gospel cries repent and believe; he goes to church, and reads his Bible, and attends upon the means; but his conscience finds no relief, the commandment comes thundering upon his ear repent and believe the gospel. Whatever he does, or omits to do,-- wherever he goes; the requirement still follows him, and increases his distress. But here comes in the charming, soothing opiate of inability. He meets some one, who tells him to use the means, that God is a sovereign, that he cannot repent himself; that he must not think to take the work out of the hands of God; that if he prays, and waits, at the gospel pool, he has no reason to be discouraged; that by-and-by, he has every reason to hope that God will change his heart. Ah, says the sinner; is it so. I feel relieved. I felt as if ten thousand voices were crying in my ears, repent, repent? And the more I prayed and used the means, the more guilty I felt: for I supposed that God required nothing less than absolute, and unconditional, and instantaneous submission. But I thank you for your comforting conversation. If this is all, to pray, and use the means, and wait God's time, I can do it without distraction. Thus another requirement being substituted for that of God, the power of the gospel is broken; and the commandment that was about to crush the sinner in the dust, that had hedged him in, and gave him no gleam of hope, but in instant submission is rendered of no effect by this tradition. The sinner breathes easier, feels relieved from the pressure of present obligation, drinks the lethean draught of the soul-killing poison, and goes down to hell.

If he believes himself in the performance of duty when in the use of means; the more industriously he uses the means, the less real conviction of sin he will have; if he supposes this is what is required of him; of course, while he is thus performing what he supposes to be duty, he must suppose himself to be growing better. The more he multiplies his impenitent prayers, and tears, and efforts: the

more acceptable he must suppose himself to be to God. Thus his fears gradually subside; his good opinion of himself increases; his delusions deepen; and "while his judgment of a long time lingereth not, and his damnation slumbereth not;" he is gradually, but surely sinking into the slumbers of a stifled conscience; of a hardened heart; and about to cry peace and safety, until sudden destruction come upon him that he cannot escape.

INFERENCES AND REMARKS.

You see, from this subject, why some deny total depravity. The principal reasons are two. The first, is founded on inattention to the spirituality of God's law, confining their attention to the prohibitory applications of it, as contained in the ten commandments, and considering it as designed merely to restrain outbreking sins; overlooking the absolute, positive perfection that it enjoins, in thought, word, and deed, they in reality substitute another rule of conduct, in the place of the law of God. Thus comparing themselves with a false standard, they of course mistake their own character. Instead of closely weighing their thoughts, their affection, and all the movements of their minds, in the delicate scales of the sanctuary: instead of bringing all their heart and all their soul under the clear blaze of the law of God; they weigh themselves in the corrupt scale of their own imaginings, and sink down to death.

Another reason why men deny total depravity, is, that they cannot see how the constitutional powers of the mind should be in themselves sinful; nor how it is that a God of justice could make men with a nature in itself totally depraved. Nor can I. If this be what is meant by depravity, I not only deny total depravity, but in this view of it, all depravity.

You see why some see no need of an atonement for sin. They have entirely misunderstood the nature of God's law. This was the reason why the Scribes and Pharisees, seemed to have had no right notion of the necessity of an atonement. Their system was mere self-righteousness. They, therefore, esteemed the announcement of the Deity of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his atonement, as blasphemous.

You see from this subject why the doctrines of grace, as they are called, lead to a pure morality. Some have regarded the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ, his making an atonement for sin, and making the conditions of salvation to be faith and repentance, as a dangerous doctrine, calculated to encourage men in iniquity, by holding out to them the hope of heaven, though they may continue to the last hour of their lives in rebellion against God. Thus, they look upon the doctrines of grace, as calculated to overthrow the very foundations of morality, and as highly prejudicial to the well-being of society. But the fact is, as all experience shows, that those who most cordially embrace the doctrines of grace, exhibit the purest morality. The reason is, they have right views of the spirituality of God's law; and notwithstanding they understand the conditions of the gospel to be repentance and faith; still they regard God's law, in all the length and breadth of its spirituality, as the rule of their lives. Upon this they keep their eye, as upon a pure mirror; in this they see their exact moral image; this leads them to watchfulness, to prayer, and to walking with God. And while the purity of its precepts annihilates every hope of being saved by their own works; they see and feel, that until they are perfectly conformed to the full length and breadth of its requirements, they never can be perfectly happy.

You see why those who reject the doctrine of the atonement, and depend upon their own works, and the

general mercy of God for salvation, exhibit a spurious, and lax morality. The fact is, it is their loose and vague notions of the spirituality of God's law, which lies at the foundation of their rejecting the doctrine of atonement: and as their views of the rule of duty is defective; their morality will be in like manner defective.

You see from this subject, why it is that some professors of religion, when they are pressed up to holy living, their sins pointed out, and they are required to obey the law of God; cry out, this is not the gospel; this is preaching the law; tell us of the mercy of God; we want to hear about Christ, not about the law. The fact is, such persons are Antinomians. They regard the gospel simply as a system of pardon, and overlook the great design of its making them holy, and bringing them back to perfect obedience of the law of God.

From what has been said, we may understand, why it is, that for so many hundred years, the gospel has had so little influence over the minds of men. For many centuries, but little of the real gospel has been preached, that is, it has been so mixed with the traditions of men, so much that is human, so much that is false, has been added to it, and intermingled with it, as to break its power. All the multitudinous errors, and false notions that have clustered around the doctrine of physical depravity, have every one of them served to shield the sinner from the arrows of the Almighty. Physical depravity, physical regeneration, the sinner's inability, and all their kindred errors, have formed so many hiding places, under which, millions upon millions have been entrenched, until the hail has swept away their refuges of lies, and the waters of Almighty wrath have overflowed their hiding places: and it is not to be doubted, that thousands of millions of our race are now groaning in hell, that might have been saved, but for these traditions of the elders that have made void the commandment of God. The design, and the tendency of

the gospel, is, to bring men to immediate repentance. It lays upon them no requirement short of this. It never calls upon them to do any thing less than to repent, and obey the gospel. But men, holding, as many of them have, that sinners were unable to do this, have set them to do something else, which God never required at their hands, as a condition of salvation; and in doing which, they put off repentance sinned away their day of grace, and lost their souls. I have already observed that the gospel was early corrupted. These corruptions have continued in a greater or less degree, to mingle themselves with the pure gospel; and precisely in proportion as more or less error has been mingled with the truth, the gospel has been more or less successful. Its power depends on its purity.

Multitudes have preached the substance of the gospel, but the misfortune is, they have added to it something of their own. They have preached, and boldly called on men to repent, but before they left the pulpit, would be sure to admonish them that they had no power to obey. Suppose the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, when the alarmed Jews cried out, sirs, what shall we do to be saved; instead of saying, "repent every one of you," had said, you can't repent, you are dependent upon the spirit of God; you must pray, and use the means, and wait God's time. If the multitude had believed them, it is manifest that not one of them had been converted on the spot.

Again, the day of earth's redemption can never come, till the traditions of the elders are done away; till all those dogmas that afford hiding places for the enemies of God, are rejected as making no part of the gospel of Christ. When ministers of all denominations shall see eye to eye, shall disencumber the glorious gospel of all these traditions of men's devising; shall take the pure commandment of God, and bring it with an uncompromising spirit to bear with mountain weight upon the rebellious hearts of dying men; when they call on them instantly to repent, and treat

them as if they expected them to repent; when they live, and labour, and pray, and preach, and exhibit the true gospel in all they say and do; then, and not till then, will the full power of God's moral government be felt on earth.

These traditions of the elders are the grand sources of most of the fatal errors of the present day. Universalism, as I have before remarked, has evidently had its origin in the notion of inability, and physical depravity. They have reasoned thus:--If men came into being with a depraved nature, physically and naturally inclined to all evil; if they are unable to obey God, as they really must be, if such is their nature; then surely a God of justice cannot damn them. Now this inference is irresistible from their premises. For God to make men physically incapable of obedience, and then damn them for disobedience, would be infinite tyranny and injustice. From the benevolence, and even upon the ground of the justice of God, upon the principles of physical depravity and inability, the arguments for Universalism are irresistible. Upon this hypothesis, they are right in rejecting, as most modern Universalists do, mercy from their system, and placing the salvation of men upon the ground of justice.

But take away the foundation, and the superstructure falls of course. Annihilate the dogma of physical depravity and inability; show the sinner that his depravity is a thing of his own creation; that his wicked heart is his voluntary selfishness, and the rejection of God and his commandments; that it is not for his nature, but for his conduct, that he is blamed; show him that what he calls his cannot, is his will not, and you destroy the very foundation upon which his Universalism is built, you convince him of his sin, and shut him up to the faith of Christ.

Again, as I have before said from this subject, in the doctrine of physical depravity, and its kindred dogmas, you see the foundation of modern infidelity. Thinking men, hearing those doctrines, so often reiterated from the

pulpit, become disgusted, when they hear men called upon to repent, and at the same time told that they cannot repent; when they hear the doctrine of the new birth, darkened by words without knowledge, when every thing is covered with mystery; the depravity of nature, the infusion of a new holy taste or principle; the mysterious and mystical nature of sin and holiness, of depravity and of regeneration; this confounding of mind and matter, of body and soul, of heaven, and earth, and hell; they look upon it as unphilosophical, ridiculous, absurd, and impossible; they turn away from such a loathsome exhibition of it, as something impossible for them to understand, and conclude that it is all a dream.

It is easy to see why revivals do not, and cannot prevail more extensively than they do. There is such a sticklishness on the part of many, for these crippling errors; such a constant effort to maintain these traditions of the elders, as to paralyze the influence of a great portion of the church. Many good men are halting and doubting whether they should reject them or not; and they are in that state of "betweenity," that they can heartily exhibit neither one thing nor the other. Many come out boldly, and strenuously, and hold up those dogmas, and while these are the topics continually held before the mind, it cannot be expected that revivals should prevail. It is true that men have had great and powerful revivals who have held and sometimes exhibited these views; but it was not when they exhibited them, that their preaching took effect. But when happily they were inconsistent enough to lay aside these peculiarities, and come out with the pressure of the gospel upon the hearts and consciences of men. Take a parable. A lady, who had been a long time under conviction, had often called on her minister, to know what she should do to be saved. He had as often reminded her of her helplessness, and dependence upon God; exhorted her to pray, and use the means, and wait patiently for God to change her heart. On the Sabbath, he would frequently

call upon sinners to repent; but before he closed would be sure to caution them against self-confidence, depending upon their own strength; and would solemnly remind them that they had no power of themselves to repent and embrace the gospel. But one day, when this agonized woman was present, he happily forgot his accustomed inconsistency, and after pressing sinners to immediate repentance, sat down without the usual addition that they could not. Before the last hymn had concluded, the gospel had done its work in the woman's heart; and after the congregation was dismissed, she was observed to stand weeping and waiting as he passed out to speak with him. As soon as he came near enough she exclaimed, my dear Mr. ----- why did you not tell me of this before? Tell you of this before, replied the astonished pastor, why I have declared it to you every Sabbath. Yes, she replied, but always until now, you told me before you set down, that I could not repent. I hope, said the pastor, you have not gone on in your own strength; no she replied, not in my own, but in the strength of God I have repented, and should have done it before had you not told me that I could not. This is the legitimate tendency of cannotism; if they believe it, they certainly will not repent: and how can revivals prevail, how can the world be converted, while so many are vehemently contending for these traditions of the elders. These dogmas, are exalted into fundamental doctrines, and they are supposed to be heretics, who do not keep these traditions. Well might Christ turn upon them with the rebuke, "wherefore do ye make void the commandment of God by your traditions." Oh! when will the day arrive, when the spurious philosophy upon which these dogmas are based, shall be given up? When unanimity of sentiment, and clearness of views, and brotherly love shall prevail? then will righteousness run down our streets, and salvation as an overflowing stream.

Charles Finney

CH 3

WHY SINNERS HATE GOD

“They have hated me without a cause.”

– John 15:25

THESE ARE THE WORDS of our Lord Jesus Christ. In my two former discourses on total depravity, I have endeavored to demonstrate, that all impenitent sinners, hate God supremely. And having, as I suppose, established this doctrine beyond controversy by an appeal to matters of fact; it now becomes a very solemn and important question, why sinners hate God?

If sinners have a good reason for hating God, then they are not to blame for it; but if they have no good reason, or if they hate him when they ought to love him; then they have incurred great guilt by their enmity to God.

In speaking from this subject, I design

1st. To show what is not the reason of their hatred.

2nd. What is the reason of it.

3rd. That they hate him, for the very reasons, for which they ought to love him.

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I. I am to show, what is not the reason of their hatred.

1st. It is not because God has so constituted them, that they have a physical, or constitutional aversion to God. The text affirms that sinners have hated God without a cause. Not that there is no reason why they hate him; but no good reason. Not that there is strictly no cause for their hatred; for every effect must have some cause; but there is no just cause. If God had so created man, that he was under a physical necessity of hating his Maker, this would not only be a cause, but a just cause for hating him. If God had incorporated with the very substance of his being, a constitutional aversion to himself; this would be a sufficient cause, not only for the sinner's hating him, but a good reason why all other beings should hate him.

2nd. The sinner's hatred of God, is not caused by any hereditary, or transmitted disposition to hate him. A disposition to hate God, is itself hatred. Disposition, is an action of the mind, and not a part of the mind itself. It is therefore absurd, to talk of an hereditary, or transmitted disposition to love or hate God, or anything else. It is impossible that a voluntary state of mind should be hereditary, or transmitted from one generation to another.

If any of you understand by disposition, a propensity, or temper; not an action, which is not a voluntary state of mind; but a quality, or attribute, that is part of the mind itself, I say,

3rd. That the sinner's hatred, is not caused by any such attribute, or property, that makes a part of the mind, and which in itself has a natural and necessary aversion to God.

4th. There is no just cause, in the constitution of our nature, for opposition to God. The nature of man, is as it should be. Its powers are as God made them. He has made them in the best manner, in which infinite power, and goodness and wisdom could make them. They are perfectly adapted to the service of his creator; and if we survey all the exquisite mechanism, and delicate organization of the body, and scrutinize all the properties, and powers, and capabilities, of the mind, we can find no just cause of complaint; but on the other hand, infinite reason to love, and adore the great architect, and exclaim with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

5th. There is no just cause for the sinner's hatred, in that wise and benevolent arrangement, by which all men have descended from one common ancestor; and under which divine arrangement, we are naturally, (not necessarily) influenced; and our characters modified by the circumstances under which we have our being. Our being so constituted, as naturally to influence each other, and be highly instrumental in modifying each other's character, is a wise and benevolent arrangement, of the highest importance to the universe: but like every other good thing, is liable to great abuse; and by how much the more powerful our influence is, to promote virtue when we do right, by just so much the greater is our influence, to promote vice, when we do wrong.

6th. Again. There is no cause for the sinner's hatred, in the moral government of God. His commandments are not grievous; nor impossible to be obeyed; nor calculated to produce misery when obeyed: but on the contrary, "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light." His commandments are easily obeyed; and obedience naturally results in happiness. If God had established a government, the

requirements of which, were so high, that it was extremely difficult to yield obedience to his laws. If the laws were so obscure and intricate, and difficult to understand, that an honest mind were in great danger of mistaking the real meaning of his requirements; or if his laws were arbitrary, unnecessary, and capricious; or if they were guarded by unjust and cruel sanctions: if any of these things were true, sinners would have a just cause to hate God. But not one of them is true.

Again. Sinners have no just cause for their hatred, in the requirements of the Gospel. If the conditions of salvation, held forth in the Gospel, were arbitrary, capricious, or unjust; if it were impossible to comply with them; if the terms of salvation were put so high, that men have not natural power to obey them, and fulfil the conditions upon which their salvation is suspended. If God commanded them to repent, when they had no power to repent; if he required them to believe, when they had no power to believe; and threatened to send them to hell, for not repenting and believing; in any, and in all these cases, sinners would have just reason to hate God. But none of these things are true. The conditions of the Gospel, so far from being arbitrary, are indispensable in their nature, to salvation, so far from being put so high, that it is impossible, or even difficult to comply with them; they are brought down as low as they possibly can be, without rendering the sinner's salvation impossible. Repentance and faith, are indispensable to fit the soul for the enjoyment of heaven; and if God should dispense with these conditions, and consent that the sinner should remain in his sins, it would render the sinner's damnation certain.

Again. Not only are the conditions of salvation necessary in their own nature, but it is easy to comply with them. Much easier than to reject them. Our powers of mind, are as well suited to accept, as to reject the Gospel.

The motives to accept, are infinitely greater than to reject the offers of mercy. So weighty, indeed are the motives to comply with the conditions of the Gospel, that sinners often find it difficult to resist them, and they are under the necessity of making almost ceaseless efforts to maintain themselves in impenitence and unbelief.

Again. There is no just cause for hating God, in his providential government of the world. There is no reason to doubt, that God, so administers his providential government, as to produce upon the whole, the highest, and most salutary, practicable influence in favor of holiness. It is manifest that his moral laws, are guarded by the highest possible sanctions: that all has been done, which the perfection of moral government could do, to secure universal holiness in the world. So it is true, beyond all reasonable doubt, that his physical or providential government, is administered in the wisest possible manner.

It is doubtless administered solely for the benefit, and in support of moral government. It is so arranged, as to bring out and exert the highest moral influence, that such a government is capable of exerting. Many sinners talk, as if they supposed God might have administered his governments, both moral, and providential, in a manner vastly more judicious, and more highly calculated to secure perfection in the conduct of his subjects. They seem to think, that because God is almighty, he therefore can work any conceivable absurdity, or contradiction. That he can secure perfection in moral agents, by the exercise physical omnipotence; and that the existence of sin in our world, is proof conclusive, that, although on some accounts, he is opposed to sin, yet upon the whole, he prefers its existence to holiness in its stead. They seem to take it for granted, that the two governments which God exercises over the universe, moral, and providential; might have been so administered, as to have produced universal holiness throughout the universe. But this is a gratuitous, and most

wicked assumption. It is no fair inference from the omnipotence and omniscience of God; and the assumption is founded upon an erroneous view of the nature of moral agency, and of moral government.

Again. There is no just cause for hatred, in any thing that belongs to the character of God. There is nothing hateful or repellant to any just mind, in any view that can be taken of the character of Jehovah. But on the contrary, his character comprehends every conceivable, or possible excellence.

Again. There is no just cause for hatred, in the conduct of God. There is no inconsistency, between his conduct, and his professions. Some people seem to have conceived of God, as a sly, artful, hypocritical being, who says one thing, and means another. Who professes great abhorrence of sin, yet so conducts himself, and the affairs of his kingdom, as necessarily and purposefully to produce it. Who commands men to keep his law, on pain of eternal death, and after all, prefers that they should break it. Who commands all men to repent, and believe the Gospel, yet has made atonement but for the elect. Who, while he requires them to repent, has so constituted them, that he knows they are unable to repent; professes greatly to desire the salvation of all men, and yet has suspended their salvation upon impossible conditions. Indeed, many seem to represent the conduct, and professions of God, at everlasting variance with each other; and as making up a complicated tissue, of contradiction, absurdity, and hypocrisy. But all such representations, are a libel upon his infinitely fair and upright conduct.

Again. There is nothing unkind, or unnecessarily severe, in the conduct of God, towards the inhabitants of this world. There has been a great deal of complaint of his conduct, among sinners; they have often complained of the injustice of his dealings, and have sometimes inquired, what they had done, that he should chastise them with

such severity. But all such complainings only prove their own perverseness, and can never fasten any just suspicion upon the conduct of God.

II. Sinners do hate God, because they are supremely selfish; and he is, as he ought to be, infinitely opposed to their supreme object of pursuit.

The first thing that we discover, in the conduct of little children, is, the desire of self-gratification. At what period of their existence, their desire becomes selfishness, it is impossible for us to say. That a proper desire to gratify an appetite for food, and drink, and all our constitutional appetites, is not sinful, is manifest. These appetites, have no moral character; and their proper indulgence, is not sinful. But whenever their indulgence is inordinate, or whenever the indulgence of our appetites, comes in collision with the requirements of God; whenever, and wherever we indulge our constitutional propensities, when we are under an obligation to abstain from an indulgence, in every such case, we sin; for in all these cases we are selfish; we make our own indulgence, the rule of our duty, instead of the requirement of God. We consent to indulge ourselves, at the public expense, and in a way that is inconsistent with the glory of God, and the highest good of his universe. This is the essence, and the history of all sin. Now, at whatever period of our existence, we first prefer self-gratification, to our duty to God, when we first make self-gratification the supreme object of choice; at what particular moment self-gratification comes to be the ruling principle of our conduct, and the highest aim of our lives, it is perhaps impossible for us to determine.

But whenever this may be, this is the commencement of our depravity. It is our first moral act. It constitutes our first moral character. Every thing, that has preceded this,

has had no moral character at all. The Bible assures us, that this occurs so early in our history, that it may be said, that "the wicked are estranged from the womb. That they go astray, as soon as they be born, speaking lies." This language is not, of course, to be understood literally, because we do not speak at all, as soon as we are born: but the wicked speak lies, as soon as they do speak. Behold, says the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This language also, is certainly figurative; for it cannot be possible, that the substance of a conceived fetus should be sin! This would contradict God's own definition of sin. He says, "sin is a transgression of the law;" but the law prescribes a rule of action, and not a mode of existence. If the substance of a conceived fetus is sin: if the child itself, previous to birth, is a sin, than God has committed it. All that can possibly be meant, by this, and similar passages without making utter nonsense of the word of God; without arraying different passages in everlasting contradiction to each other, is, that we were always sinners from the commencement of our moral existence. From the earliest moment of the exercise of moral agency. And to insist upon the literal understanding of such passages as these, is the most dangerous perversion of the Bible. Adopt the principle of interpretation, that insists upon these passages being understood literally, and apply it, in the exposition of the whole Bible, and you will prove, not only that sin and holiness, are substances, but that God is, a material being. Indeed, here has been the great error, on the subject of depravity. This grand rule of interpretation, that all language is to be understood, according to the nature of the subject to which it is applied, has been overlooked, and the same meaning has often been attached to the same word, whether applied to matter, or to mind. For instance, to set aside God's definition of sin, as consisting entirely in the transgression of law, and bring in those figurative expressions, that would seem, unexplained by God's own

definition, to represent sin, as consisting in something else, than voluntary transgression; is to array the Scripture in irreconcilable contradiction to itself, by overlooking one of the most important rules of Biblical interpretation.

It is to trifle with the word of God. It is tempting the Holy Ghost. It is a stupid, not to say a willful perversion of the truth of God. Now, the great reason why sinners are opposed to God, is not, that there is any defect in their nature, rendering their opposition physically necessary, but because he is irreconcilably opposed to their selfishness. He is infinitely opposed to the supreme end of their pursuit, that is, to their obtaining happiness, in a way, that is inconsistent with HIS glory, and the happiness of other beings.

The supreme end, at which they aim, is to promote their own happiness, in a way that is inconsistent with the public good. To this he is infinitely opposed. As they have an unholy end, in view, the means which they use , to accomplish this end, are, of course, as wicked as the end. God is therefore, as much opposed to the means, which they use, as to the end, which they are endeavoring to accomplish by those means. These means make up the history of their lives. They are all designed, directly, or indirectly, to affect the all absorbing object, at which the sinner aims; the promotion of his own happiness. God is therefore, as he ought to be, sincerely and conscientiously, and infinitely opposed to every thing they do or say, while in a state of impenitency. They would make every thing subordinate to their own private interests. He insists upon it, that they shall seek their happiness, in a way that is consistent with, and calculated to promote the happiness of the whole. This is after all the only way in which, in the very nature of things they can be happy. He accordingly sets himself with full purpose of heart, to defeat every attempt which they make to obtain happiness in their own way. He is the irreconcilable adversary of all their selfish

schemes. He embitters every cup of selfish joy, "turns their" selfish "council headlong; and brings down their violent dealing upon their own pate."

Thus you see that sinners hate God, because he is so holy. While they remain selfish, and he is infinitely benevolent, their characters, their designs, their desires, and all their ways are diametrically opposed to his, and his to theirs. They are direct opposites; and until they change, it will always be true as he has said, "I loathe them, and they abhor me."

Holiness, is a regard to right. God requires upon infinite penalties, that every moral being in the universe should do and feel and say, that which is perfectly right; less than this, he cannot require without injustice. But sinners are unwilling to do right. They would be at liberty to consult their own private interest in every thing, and they of course consider God as an enemy, because he insists upon their unqualified obedience to the law of right, however perfectly it counteracts their selfish schemes.

Again. Sinners hate God because he is so good. He is good and does good, and moves on in the promotion of the public interest in a way that often overturns and scatters to the winds, all their selfish projects and Babel-towers upon which they are attempting to climb to heaven. His heart is so set upon doing good, that in the prosecution of his great design, he has often overthrown families and nations that stood in his way; and once, he overwhelmed a world of sinners in a flood to prevent their mischief, and bring the world back into such a state, that, through the introduction of the law and Gospel, he might reclaim mankind, and save a multitude from hell.

Again. Sinners hate God, because he is impartial. They view their own interest as of supreme importance, and are laying themselves out to make everything in the universe bend to it. They would have the weather, the winds, and

the whole material and moral universe, conform to the great object they have in view, to consummate and perpetuate their own happiness. But as God has an end in view entirely diverse from theirs; as his object is to promote the general happiness, and the happiness of individuals, only so far as is consistent with the happiness and rights of other beings, he continually thwarts them in their favorite projects. The very elements of the material universe, are so arranged and governed, as often to make shipwreck of their fondest hopes, and annihilate for even their most fondly cherished expectations.

But this is not all. Sinners hate God because he threatens to punish them for their sins. He will not compromise with them; he insists upon their obedience, or their damnation. He requests their repentance and reformation, or the everlasting destruction of their souls. Now, either alternative is supremely hateful to an impenitent sinner. To repent, heartily to confess that God is right, and he is wrong; to take God's part against himself; to give up the pursuit of his own happiness, as the supreme object of desire; to dedicate himself with all he is and has to the service of God and the promotion of the public interest; is what he is utterly unwilling to do; and inasmuch as God insists upon it, will make no compromise, but demands unqualified and unconditional submission to his will, or the eternal damnation of his soul; the sinner is entirely unreconciled to either. He considers God as his infinite and almighty adversary, and makes war upon him with all his heart.

III. I am to show, that sinners hate God for the very reasons for which they ought to love him.

They are the very reasons for which all holy beings do love him. His opposition to all sin, and to all injurious

conduct of every kind; his high regard to individual, and general happiness; and in short, all the reasons for which selfish beings are so much opposed to him, are the foundation of obligation to love him, and are the reasons why reasonable beings, that have any regard to the moral fitness of things, feel it right, and infinitely obligatory in them, to love their Maker. He deserves to be loved for these reasons, and for no other. And it is for these, and no other reasons that sinners hate him. They do not hate him because he deserves their hatred, but because he deserves their love. It is not because he is wicked, but because he is good. It is not because they have any good reason to hate him, but because they have every possible reason to love him. I mean just as I say. Sinners not only hate God, in spite of infinitely strong reasons for loving him; but for these very reasons. Not only is it true, that these reasons for loving him do not prevent their hating him, but they are the very reasons for which they hate him.

I shall conclude this discourse with several remarks.

1st. From this subject you can see the ridiculous hypocrisy of infidels. It is very common for them to profess in their investigations and inquiries after truth, to be impartial. They insist upon it that Christians are already committed, and are therefore incapable of giving Christianity a candid and unbiased examination. Christians, they say, cannot make up a judgment to be relied upon, because they are already committed in favor of Christianity. But infidels seem to suppose that they are in circumstances to make up an unbiased and enlightened judgment; and to examine and decide without prejudice. But this is utterly absurd. They are not on neutral ground, as they suppose themselves to be. They are committed against the Bible. That they are the enemies of God, is demonstrated by their conduct, entirely irrespective of the

Bible. That their lives are such as no good being can approve; such as God if he is holy must abhor, is a plain matter of fact. It needs no Bible to prove this. Now, here is a book claiming to be a revelation from God, demanding of them holiness of heart and life; and threatening them for their sins with eternal death. Now, is it not absurd? Is it not ridiculous and hypocritical, for these enemies of God, committed as they are against God, and against this revelation; to set themselves up as the only impartial judges?

They can sit down to the investigation of the subject without bias. They are on neutral ground. They feel no such prepossessions as to misguide their judgment. The fact is; admitting that Christians are as much prejudiced in favor of Christianity, as infidels say they are; still, unless infidels will admit that Christians are perfect, that they are wholly sinless, and entirely devoted to God; it will appear after all, that Christians are not so liable to be prejudiced in favor of Christianity, as infidels are against it. Infidels are entirely opposed to God, and all impenitent sinners, as I have shown in the two former discourses, are totally depraved; and until Christians are entirely perfect, they will not be so completely biased in favor of God, as sinners are in favor of the devil. They will not until then of course, be so liable to misjudge in favor of the Bible, as sinners will be against it.

Christians, being upon the whole in favor of God, and therefore feeling a strong attachment to the Bible, and yet, having much remaining sin about them; and therefore liable to feel many objections to the strictness of its claims; are in the best circumstances, and in the most favorable state of mind of any beings in the world, to judge impartially. They are not so wicked as to reject what they see to be true, nor so obsequiously disposed, as blindly to submit to every thing that pretends to have a claim upon their obedience without investigation. By this I do not

mean that Christians are better qualified to judge of the truth of the Christian religion, than if they were perfect; but I do mean to repel the absurd assertions of infidels, that the Christian's faith, is nothing more than a blind credulity. There never was at any time, piety enough in the church, to bear the restraints of pure Christianity, if the evidence in its favor, did not come upon them, with the power of demonstration.

2nd. From this subject you can see, that the wicked conduct of sinners is no proof that their nature is sinful. The universal sinfulness of men, has been supposed to conduct to the inevitable conclusion, that the nature of man must be in itself sinful. It has been said that in no other way, can the universal sinful conduct of men, be accounted for. It has been maintained, that an effect must be of the same nature of its cause; and that as the effects or actions of our nature are universally sinful, that therefore the nature or cause must be sinful.

But if the effect must be of the same nature of its cause, if the cause must have the same nature of the effect, then God must be a material being, for he is the cause of the existence of all matter, and therefore he must himself be material. The soul of man must also be material. It acts upon his material body, and causes his body to act upon other material things around him, and as it is constantly effecting material changes on every hand, the soul must be material. This would, indeed, be a short hand method of disposing of the existence of all spirits. But who will after all admit of this mode of argumentation, and adopt as a serious and grave truth, the absurd dogma that the character of an effect, decides in all cases the character or nature of its cause.

The universally sinful conduct of men is easily and naturally accounted for, upon the principles of this discourse. They universally adopt in the outset, the principle of selfishness as their grand rule of action, and

this from the very laws of their mental constitution, vitiates all their moral conduct, and gives a sinful character to every moral action.

If it be asked how it happens that children universally adopt the principle of selfishness, unless their nature is sinful. I answer, that they adopt this principle of self gratification or selfishness; because they possess human nature, and come into being under the peculiar circumstances in which all the children of Adam are born since the fall: but not because human nature is itself sinful. The cause of their becoming sinners, is to be found in their nature's being what it is, and surrounded by the peculiar circumstances of temptation to which they are exposed in a world of sinners.

All the constitutional appetites and propensities of body and mind, are in themselves innocent; but when strongly excited are a powerful temptation to prohibited indulgence. To these constitutional appetites or propensities, so many appeals of temptation are made, as universally to lead human beings to sin. Adam was created in the perfection of manhood, certainly not with a sinful nature, and yet, an appeal to his innocent constitutional appetites led him into sin. If adult Adam, without a sinful nature, and after a season of obedience and perfect holiness, was led to change his mind by an appeal to his innocent constitutional propensities; how can the fact that infants, possessing the same nature with Adam and surrounded by circumstances of still greater temptation, universally fall into sin, prove that their nature is itself sinful? Is such an inference called for? Is it legitimate? What, holy and adult Adam, is led, by an appeal to his innocent constitution to adopt the principle of selfishness, and no suspicion is, or can be entertained, that he had a sinful nature; but if little children under circumstances of temptation aggravated by the fall are led into sin, we are to believe that their nature is sinful! This is wonderful

philosophy; and what heightens the absurdity is, that in order to admit the sinfulness of nature, we must believe sin to consist in the substance of the constitution, instead of voluntary action; which is a thing impossible.

And that which stamps the inference of a sinful nature with peculiar guilt is, that in making it we reject God's own declaration that "sin is a transgression of the law," and adopt a definition which is a perfectly absurd.

3rd. From the view of depravity presented in these discussions, it is easy to see in what sense sin is natural to sinners; and what has led mankind to ascribe the outbreakings of sin to their nature; as if their nature was itself sinful.

All experience shows, that from the laws of our constitution we are influenced in our conduct directly or indirectly by the supreme preference of our minds. In other words, when we desire a thing supremely, it is natural to us to pursue this object of desire; we may have desires for an object which we do not pursue. But it is a contradiction to say that we do not pursue the object of supreme desire. Supreme desire is nothing else than a supreme or controlling choice, and as certain as the will controls the actions; so certainly, and so naturally, shall we pursue that object which we supremely desire. The fact therefore, that sinners adopt the principle of supreme selfishness, renders it certain and natural, while their selfishness continues to be predominant, that they will sin, and only sin, and this is in strict accordance with, or rather the result of the laws of their mental constitution. While they maintain their supreme selfishness, obedience is impossible. This is the reason why "the carnal mind, or the minding of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." No wonder therefore, that sinners, whose supreme preference is selfish, should find it very natural for them to sin, and extremely difficult to do anything else than sin. This being a fact of universal

observation, has led mankind to ascribe the sins of men to their nature; and a great deal of fault has been found with nature itself; when the fact is, that sin is only an abuse of the powers of nature. Men have very extensively overlooked the fact; that a deep seated, but voluntary preference for sin, was the foundation and fountain and cause of all other sins. The only sense in which sin is natural to men is, that it is natural for mind to be influenced in its individual exercises by a supreme preference or choice of any object. It will therefore, always be natural for a sinner to sin, until he changes the supreme preference of his mind, and prefers the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom to his own separate and opposing interests.

4th. Here you can see what a change of heart is. Its nature, its necessity, and the obligation of the sinner immediately to change it. You can see also that the first act which the sinner will, or can perform, that can be acceptable to God, must be to change his heart, or the supreme controlling

5th. Perhaps someone will object and say if infants are not born with a sinful nature, how then are they saved by grace? But I ask in return, if they are born with a sinful nature, how are they saved by grace? Does God create an infant a sinner, and then call it grace to save him from the sinfulness of a nature of his own creation? Absurd and blasphemous. What! represent the ever blessed God as either directly creating a sinful nature, or as establishing such an order of things that a nature in itself sinful would by physical necessity descend from Adam, and then call that grace by which the infant is saved! (not from its conduct, but from its nature!)

But let us look at this. Here are two systems; the one maintains that infants have no moral character at all, until they have committed actual transgression. That their first moral actions are invariably sinful, but that previous to

moral action they are neither sinful nor holy. That as they have no moral character they deserve neither praise nor blame; neither life nor death at the hand of God. God might annihilate them without injustice, or he may bestow upon them eternal life as a free and unearned gift.

The other system maintains that infants have a sinful nature which they have inherited from Adam. The scriptures maintain that all who are ever saved of the human family, must be saved by grace; and those who maintain the system that the nature of infants is itself sinful, suppose that upon their system alone is it possible to ascribe the salvation of infants, who die before actual transgression to grace. But let us for a few moments examine these systems. Grace is evidently used in different senses in the Bible. It is sometimes synonymous with holiness. To grow in grace, is to grow in holiness. Its most common import seems to be that of unmerited favor. It is sometimes used in a wider sense, and includes the idea of mercy or forgiveness. Now, when infants die previous to actual transgression, it is impossible to ascribe their salvation to grace, in any other sense, than that of undeserved, or unearned favor. If they have never sinned, it is impossible that they should be saved by grace, if we include in the term grace, the idea of mercy or forgiveness. To assert that a child can be pardoned for having a sinful nature, is to talk ridiculous nonsense: and it is only in the sense of undeserved favor, excluding the idea of mercy or pardon, that an infant, dying before actual transgression, can be said to be saved by grace. In this sense, his salvation is by grace. He has never earned eternal life; he has never done anything, by which he has laid God under any obligation to save him, and God might, without any injustice, annihilate him. But if it please him for the sake of Christ, as I fully believe it does, to confer eternal life upon one whom he might without any injustice annihilate, it is conferring upon him infinite favor. But let us look at the other system for a moment. This denies that infants have a

sinful nature, and rejects the monstrous dogma that God has created the nature sinful, and then pretends to save the infant from a nature of his own creation by grace, as if the infant deserved damnation for being what God made it. Those that hold this scheme insist that there is as much grace in the salvation of infants, upon their view of the subject, as upon the impossible dogma of a sinful nature. The fact is, that the very existence of the whole race of man, is a mere matter of grace; having reference to the atonement of Jesus Christ. Had it not been for the contemplated atonement, Adam and Eve would have been sent to hell at once, and never have had any posterity. The race could never have existed. There never could have been any infants, or adults (Adam and Eve excepted,) had it not been for the grace of Christ in interposing in behalf of man by his atonement. It was doubtless in anticipation of this, and on account of it, that Adam and Eve were spared and the sentence of the law not instantly executed upon them. Now every infant owes its very existence to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and if it dies previous to actual transgression, it is just as absolutely indebted to Christ for eternal life, as if it had been the greatest sinner on earth. On neither of these schemes, does the grace which saves infants include the idea of pardon - but on both of them they are saved by grace, inasmuch as they owe their very existence to the atonement of Christ; and in both cases are delivered from circumstances under which it is certain had they lived to form a moral character, they would have sinned, and deserved eternal death. To think, therefore, of objecting to the view of depravity that I have given in these discourses, that it denies the grace of God in the salvation of infants, is either to misconceive, or willfully to misrepresent the sentiments that I have advocated. I desire to ask, and I wish that it may be answered, if it can be; wherein there is any more grace displayed in the salvation of infants, upon the one system than upon the other. Will it be said that if the nature of

infants be sinful, grace must change their nature, and that there is this difference; that although in neither case does the infant need a pardon, yet in the one case his nature needs to be changed, and not in the other? But if his nature needs to be changed. I deny that this is an act of grace; if God has made his nature wrong and incapable of performing any but sinful actions, he is bound to change it. It is consummate trifling to call this grace - to cause a being to come into existence with a sinful or defective nature and then call it grace to alter this nature and make it as it should have been at first, is to trifle with serious things and talk deceitfully for God.

6th. Again. The hatred of sinners is cruel. It is as God says, "rendering hatred for his love." He is love, and this is the reason and the only reason why they hate him. Mark, it is not because they overlook the fact that he is infinitely benevolent. It is not merely in the face of this fact, that for other reasons they hate him; but it is because of this fact. It is literally and absolutely rendering hatred for his love. He is opposed to their injuring each other. He desires their happiness and is infinitely opposed to their making themselves miserable. He is infinitely more opposed to their doing any thing that will prove injurious to themselves, than an earthly parent was to that course of conduct in his beloved child, which he foresaw would ruin him. His heart yearns with infinitely more than parental tenderness. He expostulates with sinners and says, "O do not that abominable thing that I hate." "How shall I give thee up Ephriam? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together."

He feels all the gushings of a father's tenderness, and all the opposition of a father to any course that will injure his offspring, and as children will sometimes hate, and revile their parents for opposing their wayward courses to

destruction, so sinners hate God, more than they hate all other beings, because he is infinitely more opposed to their destroying their souls.

7th. The better God is, the more sinners hate him. The better he is, the more he is opposed to their selfishness: and the more he opposes their selfishness, while they remain selfish, the more they are provoked with him.

In my second discourse on depravity, I showed that men hate God supremely. The only reason is because his excellence is supreme excellence. His goodness is unmingled goodness, and therefore their hatred is unmingled enmity. If there were any defect in his character, men would not hate him so much. If God were not perfectly, yea infinitely good, men might not be totally depraved, I mean, they might not be totally opposed to his character; but because his character has no blemish, therefore they sincerely, cordially, and perfectly hate him.

8th. Again. The more he tries to do them good, while they remain impenitent, the more they will hate him. While they retain their selfishness, all his efforts to restrain it, to hedge them in, to prevent the accomplishment of their selfish desires; the more he interposes to tear away their idols; to wean them from the world, the more he embitters every cup of joy with which they attempt to satisfy themselves, the more means he uses to reclaim, and sanctify and save; if their selfishness remain unbroken, the more deeply and eternally will they hate him.

9th. This conduct in sinners is infinitely blame worthy and deserves eternal death. It is impossible to conceive of guilt more deep and damning than that of sinners under the Gospel. They sin under circumstances so peculiar, than their guilt is more aggravated than that of devils. Devils have broken the law and so have you sinners. But devils never rejected the Gospel. They have been guilty of rebellion and so have you. But they have never rejected the

offer of pardon and spurned, as with their feet, the offer of eternal life through the atoning blood of the Son of God. If you sinners do not deserve eternal death, I cannot conceive that there is a devil in hell that deserves it. And yet, strange to tell, sinners often speak as if it were doubtful whether they deserve to be damned.

10th. It is easy to see from this subject, that saints and angels will be entirely satisfied with the justice of God in the damnation of sinners. They will never take delight in the misery of the damned, but in the display of justice, in the vindication of his insulted majesty and injured honor, in the respect which punishment will create for the law and character of God, they will have pleasure; they will see that the display of his justice is glorious, and will cry halleluia, while "the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever."

CH 4

GOD CANNOT PLEASE SINNERS

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

-Luke 7:31-35

IT WOULD SEEM, AS IF GOD DESIGNED, in his dealings with men, to leave them without excuse. He uses such a variety of instrumentality to reclaim and save them,

that it appears as if he meant to try every possible means of winning them away from death, that he may give them eternal life.

John the Baptist, was an austere man: he seems to have had very little intercourse with the people, except in his public capacity as a prophet. His message seems to have been that of reproof and rebuke in a high degree. His diet was locusts and wild honey; and he seems to have practised a high degree of austerity, in all his habits of living. He did not visit Jerusalem as a public teacher, but continued in the wildest parts of Judea, to which places the people flocked, to listen to his instruction. His habits of life; his style of preaching; his abstaining in a great measure from intercourse with the people; led his enemies to say, that he had a bad spirit; and that so far he was from being a good man he was possessed with the devil.

After the Scribes and Pharisees had declined receiving his doctrine, under the pretense that he had a devil: Jesus Christ began his public, and in his habits of life, and intercourse with the people, differed widely from John the Baptist. Instead of confining himself to the wilderness of Judea, he visited most of the principle places, and especially spent considerable time at Jerusalem as a public teacher. He was affable in his deportment; mingled with great ease, and holy civility, with almost all classes of persons, for the purpose of instructing them in the great doctrines of salvation. He did not hesitate to comply with the invitations of the Pharisees, and great men of the nation to dine with them; and on all occasions was forward in administering such reproof, and instruction, as was suited to the circumstances and characters of those with whom he associated. But when the Pharisees listened to his doctrines, they were filled with indignation, and seized hold of the easy and gentlemanly manner in which he accommodated himself to all classes of people that he might give them instruction, and objected to him that he

was a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They objected to John, that he was morose and sour, that he had a denunciatory spirit, and was therefore possessed with the devil: and to Christ they objected, that he was on the opposite extreme; that he too was affable and familiar with all classes of people: that he was not only a gluttonous man, and a win-bibber; but that he was the friend of publicans and sinners. It was this inconsistency in them, that drew forth from Christ the words of the text. An evident allusion is made, in the words of the text, to Eastern customs; to their seasons of festivity and dancing on the one hand; and to their loud lamentation and mournings, on funeral occasions, on the other. It is common, as every one knows, for little children to copy, in their plays, those things which they see in adult persons. When they witness seasons of festivity, piping, and dancing, they get something that will answer as an instrument of music, and go forth piping and dancing, in imitation of what they have seen. So on the other hand, when they have witnessed funeral occasions, on which, mourning men and women, as is common in the East; by their loud wailings, have excited great lamentations among the spectators; they too, have attempted to copy this also. The conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees is compared to children, who sit in the marketplaces, and complain of their little playfellows as morose and sour, and not willing to play with them, play what they would. When they imitated festivity and dancing, their playfellows were solemn and reserved, and did not seem disposed to merriment. And when they attempted to play something that was more agreeable to their humour, and mourned and wailed unto them as if at a funeral, then they were disposed to be merry. We have piped unto you (say they), and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. And when Christ had thus represented the testy conduct of these children, he presses his hearers with the application, "for John the Baptist came neither eating

bread, nor drinking wine, and ye say he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come, eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

In speaking from these words, I design, to illustrate the following proposition---That God Cannot Please Sinners.

Some people are apt to imagine that it is a misrepresentation of God's character that creates so much opposition to him in this world. Sometimes, it is true, that his character is greatly misrepresented, and when his character is thus misrepresented the consciences of men are opposed to him; but they are no better pleased when his character is truly represented; for then, their hearts are opposed to him.

It is matter of fact, that only needs to be stated, to be admitted, that upon the subject of religion, the heart and the conscience of impenitent sinners, are opposed to each other. That which their hearts love, their consciences condemn, and that which their consciences approve, their hearts hate. Their consciences approve the character of God, as it is; but to this character their hearts are utterly opposed, as I have shown when treating upon the subject of total depravity, in No. 5 of this series. If the character of God should be so altered, as to conciliate and please their wicked heart; their conscience would condemn it.

In illustration of the proposition, "that God cannot please sinners." I observe in the 1st. Place, that sinners do not like the holiness of God, nor would they like him if he were unholy.

To the holiness of God their hearts are bitterly opposed. To deny this is as absurd as it is false. To maintain that an impenitent heart is not opposed to holiness, is the same as to maintain that an impenitent heart is not impenitent. Impenitence is the love of sin. But

sin and holiness are direct opposites. To say then, that an impenitent heart is not opposed to holiness, is to say that opposites are not opposites. God is infinitely holy, and therefore the impenitent heart is wholly opposed to him. But suppose he was infinitely sinful; would sinners be better pleased with him than they are at present? No. They would then make war upon him because he was so wicked. Their consciences would then condemn him, and although their hearts would be conciliated, their conscience, and their better judgment would be utterly opposed to him. Men are so constituted, that they cannot approve the character of a wicked being. No man ever approved of the character of the devil: and wicked men are opposed to both God and the devil, for opposite reasons. They hate God with their hearts because he is so holy; and in their consciences condemn the devil, because he is so wicked. Now suppose you place the character of God at any point between the two extremes of infinite holiness and infinite sinfulness; and sinners would not, upon the whole, be better pleased with him than they are now. In just as far as he was holy, their hearts would hate him. In just as far as he was wicked, their consciences would condemn him. So that he does not please them as he is, nor would he please them if he should change.

Again. Sinners do not like the mercy of God; in view of the conditions upon which it is to be exercised, nor would they like him if he were unmerciful.

If they liked his mercy with its conditions, they would accept forgiveness; and would no longer be impenitent sinners. This is matter of fact. But if he were unmerciful, then they would certainly be opposed to him.

Again. They do not like the precept of his law, as it is, nor would they approve of it if it were altered. When they behold its perfection, their hearts rise up against it. But if it were imperfect, and allowed of some degree of sin, their consciences would condemn it. Let the precept of the law

remain as it is, or alter it as you will; and sinners are and will be displeased. The law now requires perfect holiness; and for this reason the sinner's heart is entirely opposed to it. But suppose it required entire sinfulness; then his conscience would utterly condemn it. Let it be of a mixed character, and require some holiness, and some sin; and in as far as it requires holiness, their heart would hate it; and in as far as it required sin, their conscience would condemn it. So upon the whole, they would be as far from being satisfied, as they are now.

Again. Sinners do not like the penalty of the law as it is; nor would they approve of it, if it were altered. The heart of sinners rises into most outrageous rebellion, when the penalty of eternal death is held out to their view. But if the penalty were less, their consciences would condemn it. Then they would say the penalty was not equal to the importance of the precept. That as the importance of the precept was infinite; it is a plain matter of common sense that the penalty is infinite. That God was under an obligation in justice, to apportion the penalty to the importance of the precept. Furthermore, they would say that God had not done all the nature of the case admitted, to prevent the commission of sin. That he had not presented the highest motives to obedience, that could be presented; nor such motives as the nature of the case demanded: that therefore he was deficient in benevolence, and even wanting in common honesty and justice. Now, place the penalty of this law at any point between eternal death and no penalty at all, and the sinner is not satisfied.

If you make it less than eternal death, you offend his conscience; and if you let it remain as it is, you offend his heart.

Again. Sinners do not like the Gospel as it is, nor would they be better satisfied, if it were altered.

1st. They do not like the rule of conduct which it

prescribes, now would they be satisfied if it prescribed any other rule. It requires that men should be holy, as God is holy: and requires the same strictness and perfection, as does the moral law. But this is a great offence to their hearts. Suppose it prescribed a different rule of conduct, and lowered its claim as to suit the sinful inclinations of men; then their consciences would oppose it.

What, they would say, is the Gospel to repeal the moral law? Does it make Christ the minister of sin? Is it arrayed against the government of God, and does it permit rebellion against his throne? What sort of Gospel is this? To this their consciences would entirely object.

Again. Sinners do not like the conditions of the Gospel, now would they be satisfied, if they were altered. The conditions are, repentance and faith: but to these, the sinner's heart is opposed. To hate his sins; to trust in Christ, for salvation; is asking too much, to obtain the consent of his heart. But suppose the Gospel offered to pardon and save, without repentance and faith: tho' this the sinner's conscience, and his common sense would object. What, he would say; shall the Gospel offer pardon while they continue their rebellion? Shall men be saved in their sins? It is absurd and impossible. And shall men be saved without faith in Christ? Shall they be received and pardoned, while they make God a liar? Shall they go to heaven without believing there is a heaven? Shall they escape hell when they do not believe there is a hell? Shall they ever find their way to everlasting life, when they have no confidence in the testimony of God; and will not walk in the only way that will conduct them there? Impossible. A Gospel that pretends to save on such conditions must be from hell.

Now suppose you let the conditions of the Gospel remain as they are, or alter them in any possible way; and the sinner is not satisfied. They commend themselves to his conscience as they are, but they are a great offence to

his heart. Alter them, so as to conciliate his heart, and you offend his conscience; and while the sinner remains impenitent, there is no conceivable alternation that would please him.

The fact is, that sinners are at continual war with themselves. Their hearts and consciences are in perpetual opposition to each other. One view of a subject will please their hearts, and offend their consciences; and another view of it, will satisfy their consciences, but arouse the enmity of their hearts; and while they are in this state, it is plainly impossible to please them.

Again. Sinners do not like the means of grace, as they are, nor would they be satisfied, if any other means were used to save them. They do not like the doctrines that ministers preach, when they preach the truth, now would they be satisfied if they preached error.

If they come out with the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and bear down upon the hearts and consciences of men with the claims of God, their hearts arise in instant rebellion. This say they, is an abominable doctrine. But if the minister lets down the high claims of the Gospel, their conscience is dissatisfied; and the sinner if he is well instructed says, that the minister is afraid to tell the truth; that he is daubing with untempered mortar; that he is deceiving the people and leading them down to hell.

Now, whether the minister preaches the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; or error, and nothing but error; or a mixture of truth and falsehood; in just as far as he preaches the truth; the sinner's heart opposes: and whenever he preaches what the sinner knows to be error, his conscience condemns it. So let the minister preach what he will; while the sinner is impenitent, he will not upon the whole be satisfied.

Again. Sinners do not like the manner of ministers preaching as it is, nor would they be satisfied if their

manner was different. If the minister's manner is rousing, and pointed; pungent and impressive; the sinner's heart rises up against it. If it is lazy and cold and dry, his conscience condemns it. In the first case, the sinner says, he is an enthusiast, and a madman, that he appeals to the passions, and excites a great deal of animal feeling; that he frightens the women and children, and will drive people to madness. In the latter case, he says that he preaches the people all to sleep. That he is prosing, and dull, and does not believe the Gospel himself. Now let the minister's manner be wholly right, or wholly wrong, or a mixture of right and wrong; and the sinner is not satisfied. In so far as the manner is right, his conscience takes sides against it: and while the sinner is so inconsistent with himself, it is vain to hope to please him.

Again. Sinners do not like the lives of ministers, as they are, nor would they be satisfied if they lived differently. If the minister is determined to know nothing among his people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: if he make religion his entire business; and introduce his message on all occasions; the sinner's heart is filled with indignation: Says he is a great bigot; full of superstition; or a canting hypocrite; that he is not sociable, and affable as a minister ought to be; that he takes no interest in the common concerns of men; that he is entirely unacquainted with human nature; that he is always intruding his religion upon every body: and he thinks, for his part, that a minister would do a great deal more good, to be a little more like other people. But if on the other hand, the minister associates with the world like other people; takes an interest in the passing occurrences of the day: if he interests himself in politics; reads secular news, and books: relates anecdotes, and is cheerful, and companionable; and at home among his people, on all occasions; then the sinner's conscience condemns him. O he says, I don't see that he is any better than any body else; he is not what a minister should be, but is fond of politics, and as much

interested in the business of this world, as other people are. I like to see a minister confine himself to the duties of his office. Now, let the minister live as he will; wholly right, or wholly wrong, and the sinner is displeased. But suppose there be a mixture of consistency and inconsistency, or right and wrong, in a minister's life; then they say, he is not at all what he should be; that he is sometimes very hot, and sometimes very cold; that he is sometimes all religion, and sometimes no religion; that sometimes his conversation is all upon religious subjects, and sometimes all upon the world; they think this inconsistency calculated to do a great deal of hurt: for their part, they like to see a minister consistent and be always the same. Now, it is evident, that while the sinner is so inconsistent with himself, he will be displeased with the lives of ministers, let them live as they may. As far as the minister lives as he ought, the impenitent heart, loathes him; and in as far as he lives as he ought not; the conscience condemns him.

Again. Sinners do not like the conduct of Christians, as it is, nor would they be satisfied if it were different. When Christians are very much engaged in religion, have a great many meetings, and make great efforts to save souls of men, the hearts of sinners are very much disturbed. They call them enthusiasts, and hypocrites, and think they had much better attend to their worldly business, lest their families should come upon the town. They do not thank them for their impertinence in visiting from house to house, and intruding their religion upon all their neighbors: and if Christians are opposed to balls and parties, and all kinds of sinful amusements; then they say they are morose and sour, and misanthropic; are opposed to all the sympathies, and courtesies of life; and that they want to render every body else, as morose, and sour, and unhappy in themselves--that they had better be engaged in something else, than in muttering their prayers, running to meetings, and exhorting their neighbors to repent, as if

nobody had any religion but themselves. But, if on the other hand, Christians say but little about religion, attend meeting but seldom, except on the Sabbath; engage as deeply in business as worldly men; and appear to enjoy parties of pleasure, and time-killing amusements; now they say, these professors of religion are all hypocrites: what do they more than others? They care nothing about the souls of their neighbors. They neither warn, nor exhort them; nor live as if they believed there was a heaven or a hell. If these are Christians, I want no such religion as this. So that is Christians live right or wrong, sinners are not satisfied. Of if there is a mixture of good and evil in their lives, they are no better pleased. If sometimes Christians are awake, and at other times asleep; if sometimes they do their duty, and at other times neglect it; sinners say, that their inconsistency is a great stumbling-block; that they don't like this periodical religion; that is one day all zeal, and the next all coldness and death. The truth is, if they are engaged, the sinner's heart is disturbed; and if they are cold, his conscience gives sentence against them. If they are neither cold nor hot, in just as far as they are warm, their hearts oppose; and in as far as they are cool, their consciences condemn; and who can please them?

Again. Sinners are displeased if the church exercise discipline, and turn out unworthy members; and they are also displeased, if they do not do it. If a church suffer disorderly and wicked persons in their communion, their consciences are opposed to this. They say these church members are all hypocrites, to sanction such conduct as this. What! Have fellowship with such persons? The church can never prosper while they retain in their communion such hypocrites. By having fellowship with them, they show that they approve their deeds. But, if on the other hand, the church rise up and excommunicate these offending members, then their hearts are disturbed. They maintain that the church are persecuting some of its best members. They think that the proceedings of the

church are very uncharitable to deal thus with persons, who for aught they can see, are as good as any persons in the church. Cases of this kind have occurred, where the excommunicated members have been advised, by the ungodly, to prosecute the church for slander. The truth is, that while sinners continue to be so inconsistent with themselves, nothing, upon the subject of religion, can please them. What is right offends their hearts; and what is wrong offends their consciences.

I shall conclude this subject with several remarks:

1st. From what has been said, you can see why it is that sinners find it impossible to rest in any form of error, until their consciences become seared as with a hot iron. It is affecting to see, how many persons there are, who are making continual efforts to hide themselves behind some refuge of lies. These errors are congenial to their feelings, and they want to believe them: and in the excitement of debate, or in view of some glowing exhibition of their error, when it is exhibited, as if it were sober truth, they feel as if they did believe it; and while the excitement lasts they seem to rest in it. But when the tumult of feeling subsides, and an enlightened conscience can gain a hearing, it gives forth the sentence of condemnation against their favorite heresy. Conscience comes forth and writes "falsehood" upon the very head and front of it. This leads the heart to mutiny, and an internal struggle and war is created, from which it would seem that the sinner can only escape by working himself into such an excitement, as to lose sight of Scripture, and reason and common sense: and thus in the wild uproar of his tumultuous feelings drown the voice of conscience, and for the time being feel measurably quiet in his sins. Thus you will see Universalists, and errorists of almost every description courting debate; they seem to be unhappy unless they can

be engaged in some exciting conversation that will drown the voice of conscience. But until by utter violence they have put conscience to silence, they can never rest quietly in any form of error when they have been rightly instructed. It is in vain for them to expect to bring an enlightened conscience to take sides against truth, and against God. God has not left himself without a witness in the sinner's breast; and however much his warring passions, and his desperate heart, may mutiny against high heaven, he may rest assured, that conscience will write out, and sign and seal his death-warrant; and often in anticipation of coming retribution, hand him over to the executioner of eternal justice.

Again. You can see, from this subject, why it is that sinners will at one time praise, and at another censure the same thing. There is a sinner goes to hear a minister preach who daubs with untempered mortar; whose velvet lips utter the honied words of deceitfulness and guile; who puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; who makes falsehood appear like truth, and truth like falsehood; and whose flowing eloquence is like one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument. He conceals the sinner's danger. He says nothing of his guilt. "He strengthens the hands of the wicked that he shall not turn from his wicked way, by promising him life." O, says the sinner, what a charming preacher. His feelings are enlisted; he is almost in a rapture. He goes home pouring forth the most enthusiastic commendations of the sermon. But let his feelings subside; let him have time for reflection; and when he has thought, he will change his tune: and when speaking the sober dictates of his conscience, he will condemn the preacher and his sermon, as calculated to bewitch and deceive, rather than to reform and save.

Again. Let him hear a minister who brings the truth of God to bear with the most impressive pungency upon the hearts and consciences of men, and his heart rises in

rebellion; and while under the excitement, he will pour out execrations upon the minister and his sermon, and declare that he will never hear him preach again. He is ready to quarrel with every body that will justify the sermon or the preacher. But let him have time to cool; let the lawless perturbations of his bosom cease. Let conscience gain a hearing, and you will find him speaking a different language. Let the same preacher have an appointment in his neighborhood, and you will find him at the house of God. He will say, after all, I may as well go; the man preached the truth, and I may as well hear it as not. Though I was angry at his doctrine, I cannot but respect his honesty; I will go once more and hear what he has to say. Now in one of these cases the sinner speaks the language of his heart; and in the other the language of his conscience.

From this subject, you can see, that a minister whose preaching pleases the hearts of sinners, cannot commend himself to their consciences in the sight of God. Many ministers seem to aim at conciliating the feelings of the impenitent part of their congregation. They seem to consider it an evidence of their wisdom and prudence, that their preaching has so much favour with the ungodly. Now let these sinners be converted, and they will lose their confidence in such a minister. Their consciences, if enlightened, have never been satisfied with him. They have praised his preaching, and loved to hear him, because he has commended himself to their hearts, and not because he has commended himself to their consciences. If then, they are ever truly converted, and their hearts are brought over to take sides with their conscience, it is highly probable that they will go away and join some other congregation, if another is within their reach; and where in such cases they do not do this, there is reason to fear that they are not truly converted. But where a ministry preaches to the conscience, and sinners get angry and go away, if ever they are converted they will desire to come back

again, and set under the preaching that used so to disturb them while in their sins.

From this subject, you can see, that where Christians try to gain influence with sinners, by bringing down their religion so as to conciliate their feelings while in their sins, they will never by this kind of influence do the sinner any good. For while by this course they please the heart of sinners their consciences condemn them; and while their consciences condemn the course they take, it is impossible that this course should do them any good.

Many persons are attempting to gain influence with people in high life, by imitating them, and conforming their lives and habits, and equipage, to their taste and mode of living. In this way they seem to think that they shall gain access to them, and influence over them. But it is certain, that the access and influence they will thus gain, will never do the sinner any good; because this whole course of conduct, by which this influence is gained, is condemned by the sinner's conscience. It is not a religious, but a worldly influence, that is thus gained. It is not a sanctified, but a sinful influence. And instead of giving the person's character who takes this course, weight, as a Christian, it has directly the opposite effect; and destroys the confidence of the sinner, that he is a Christian. By taking this proud and worldly course to gain influence, he may conciliate the sinner's feelings, and commend himself to his heart, but the sinner's conscience repels and condemns him.

God, so speaks and conducts, as to commend himself to every man's conscience. The sinner's heart is entirely opposed to God; but God pursues such a course, as not to leave himself without a witness in the sinner's breast. Conscience will testify for God. Now, it is certain, that the sinner's heart must be reconciled to God, or he is eternally miserable; his judgment and conscience, will always bear witness that God is right; and unless the heart is brought

over to take sides with conscience, it is self-evident that the sinner must be damned.

Ministers, and Christians should take the same course that God does. Should so live and speak, as to commend themselves to the sinner's conscience.

If we live so as to have the sinner's conscience on our side, however much he may hate us now, it is certain, that he must love us, or he must be damned. If we have done that which his conscience approve, he must be reconciled to us, or God will never be reconciled to him.

You see from this subject, why it is that where persons are converted, they often manifest the greatest attachment to those Christians whom they most hated, previous to their conversion. Those Christians that lead the most holy lives, are most apt to be hated by impenitent sinners; and it often happens, that the more they reprove and warn and rebuke them; the more sinners will hate them. But if those sinners become truly converted, you will always see that they have the most confidence in those very persons; the reason is, their hearts are changed. Their conscience took part with the faithful Christian before; and now they are converted, both heart and conscience approve his character.

You see, from this subject, why it is that when persons are converted, they manifest the least attachment for, and the least confidence in, those professors of religion with whom they were most intimate while in their sins. Those persons with whom they were most pleased, while in this state of impenitency; were agreeable to them, not because they had so much piety, but because they had so little. Not because they did their duty to them so faithfully, but because they neglected it. Now when they are converted, they cannot have much confidence in the piety of those professors with whom they used to have this kind of worldly intimacy. They cannot, for their lives, help

suspecting that they have no piety. In some cases a husband or wife, who was a professor of religion, has so lived, and so concealed their light as to please their unconverted companion. If, in such a case, the husband or wife becomes truly converted, rest assured, there will be but little Christian confidence between the young convert, and the old professor in this case. In some cases, husbands have said, after their conversion, that they have very little confidence in their wife's religion, because she never manifested religion enough to disturb them in their sins.

You see, from this subject, that temporising with sinners; letting down, concealing, or evading the claims of the Gospel, can do them no good. To attempt to please them, while in their sins, is but to ruin them, if we succeed. Their hearts must be changed; and the only way to effect this, is by taking the deepest hold upon conscience, that is possible. Instead of expecting to change the heart, by concealing the offensive features of the Gospel, we need only expect to change it, by spreading out before the conscience, the claims of God, in all their length and breadth. The heart is to be brought over, through instrumentality of conscience, and the more fully the claims of God are represented to the conscience, the more likely the sinner is to be converted.

To conceal the truth from conscience, and attempt to win the sinner over by a lovely song; is but to lull him with a syren's voice, until he plunges into eternal death.

You see from this subject, why it is that convicted sinners often manifest the greatest opposition, just before they submit to God. It is often the case, that the more conscience is pressed, the more the sinner is fretted, and the more he will rebel; and when the conscience is thoroughly enlightened, and has obtained a firm footing, so as to exert its utmost power upon the heart; a desperate and outrageous conflict often ensues; and in the madness of his exasperated feelings, the sinner is sometimes almost

ready to blaspheme the God of heaven. And it is often observed, that sinners will be the most high-handed in the outbreakings of their enmity, while conscience is taking its most thorough lessons, from the truth and Spirit of God. But when feeling has in a measure exhausted its turbulence, the power of truth, presented by the Spirit of God, exerts upon the heart such tremendous power, through the conscience, as to make the sinner quail --- throw down his weapons, and submit to God.

From this subject, you can see the long-suffering of God in sparing sinners. How amazing it is, that he spares them so long, notwithstanding all their unreasonable fault-finding and rebellion. Nothing that he does pleases them, and nothing that he can do would please them. What would you think of your children, if they should conduct in such a manner towards you. Suppose they had never obeyed you, and had never so much as meant to obey you. When you have conducted in such a way as to commend yourself to their consciences, their hearts opposed you; and when you have commended yourself to their hearts, their consciences opposed you; so that upon the whole you have not, and cannot please them. They are always displeased, and murmuring at whatever you do. O how little patience would the kindest earthly parents have with their children, when compared with the long-suffering of the blessed God.

You see that it is of no use for God to try to please you, sinner, while you are in your sins. He cannot please you if he would, and he would not please you if he could while you remain in sin. Sinners often seem to imagine, that if God was such a being, as they would have him, they should love him. They do not realize, that if they framed a God to suit their hearts, they would fail of appeasing their consciences. Sinner, your conscience approves of the character of God as it is. If his character could be altered in any conceivable degree, it would upon the whole please

you no better than it does now, while you are in your sins; for if you could alter his character so as to satisfy your heart, you would only outrage your conscience; and the only possible way for you to be happy is, to change yourself, instead of expecting or desiring that God should change.

The necessity of a change of heart is self-evident. It is a fact of universal experience that the consciences and hearts of sinners are opposed to each other; and this is true even where the light of the Gospel has never shone. That men in following the inclination of their hearts, have violated their consciences, is known and acknowledged by every nation under heaven. This they have acknowledged in the most public manner by the expiatory sacrifices which they have offered to appease their offended gods. However absurd and foolish their ideas of God have been, yet their sacrifices show that they have violated their consciences; and there is probably not a man on earth who can honestly say, that in the indulgence of his heart he has not violated his conscience.

An enlightened conscience will never change. Its testimony will be louder and louder in favour of truth for ever. There must be a change or there can be no inward peace; and this change must plainly be in the heart, and not in the conscience.

It is in vain for sinners to wait for God to use means that suit them better, before they are converted.

Most sinners are waiting to hear some different kind of preaching; and sometimes they will pass through one revival after another, because the means, as they think, are not adapted to their case. Sometimes they hear preaching that pleases their hearts, but then their consciences are not enough impressed, to do them any good. And then again, they hear preaching that impresses their consciences; but their hearts rise up in rebellion.

Now if they could only hear some preaching, or God could use some means, that they would please both their conscience and their heart, they think they should be converted. But such means cannot possibly be used while the heart, and conscience are opposed to each other. Sinner, there is no use in your waiting. To expect God, or any body else, to satisfy you before you are converted, is vain; and if you wait for such an event you will wait, until you are in the depths of hell.

Sinners ought not to desire that means should be used to please their hearts, while they are in their sins. If any preaching, or means, make you feel pleasantly; if your heart is delighted with it, rest assured, that these means will do you no good. They will only deceive you, and make you overlook the necessity of a change of heart.

You can see the nature of hell torments. Sinners are often thrown into great agony in this life, by the internal struggles, and janglings of their consciences and hearts. Now let them go into eternity with their hearts unchanged. Let the full blaze of eternity's light be poured upon their consciences; and with a heart at enmity against God, what horrible rebellion, what insupportable conflicting, and quarreling with self, and with God, will the sinner experience.

With a conscience that sternly takes the part of God; and a heart that supremely hates him, what a fire of hell will such a conflict kindle up in the sinner's breast.

Lastly. Sinners should not follow their feelings, but obey the voice of conscience. In other cases, where sinners find their feelings, opposed to their better judgment, they will often set down their foot, and resist the current of their feelings. They will say, I am not going to be carried away, and throw up the reins to my feelings, I must exercise my judgment. I must act like a reasonable being. But oh, on the subject of religion, how perfectly men give

themselves up to their wicked hearts. Sinner, you ought this moment to come forth promptly, and act like a man, and say you will not go another step in the way of death. Why throw up the reins, and give loose to passion? Why drive with such furious haste to hell? Why suffer yourself to be carried hither and thither, by every gush of feeling, and by every breathe of emotion that passes over the surface of your soul? Why sinner, if you do not exercise your reason; if you do not listen to the voice of conscience; if you do not gather up the reins; gird up your loins, and address yourself to the work of your salvation like a man. If you do not make up your mind to resist the whole tide of your carnal feelings, and put yourself under the clear blaze of heaven's light; and when conscience gives forth its verdict, unless you will promptly obey, you must die in your sins; and now will you here, in the house of God, while your character, and danger are before you; while mercy waits to save, and death brandishes his weapon to destroy, while heaven calls, and hell groans; while the spirit strives, and Christians pray, will you have the moral courage; the decision of character, the honesty, and manhood, to resolve on immediate submission to Jesus Christ?

CH 5

STEWARDSHIP

“Give an account of thy stewardship.”

-Luke 16:2

A STEWARD IS ONE WHO IS EMPLOYED to transact the business of another, as his agent or representative in the business in which he is employed.

His duty is, to promote, in the best possible manner, the interest of his employer. He is liable at any time to be called to an account for the manner in which he has transacted his business, and to be removed from his office at the pleasure of his employer.

One important design of the parable, of which the text is a part, is to teach that all men are God's stewards. The Bible declares, that the silver and the gold are his, and that he is, in the highest possible sense, the proprietor of the universe. Men are mere stewards, employed by him for the

transaction of his business, and required to do all they do for his glory. Even their eating and drinking are to be done for his glory, i.e. that they may be strengthened for the best performance of his business.

That men are God's stewards, is evident, from the fact that God treats them as such, and removes them at his pleasure, and disposes of the property in their hands, which he could not do did he not consider them merely his agents, and not the owners of the property.

If men are God's stewards, they are bound to account to him for their time. God has created them, and keeps them alive, and their time is his. Reader, should you employ a steward, and pay him for his time, would you not expect him to employ that time in your service? Would you not consider it fraud and dishonesty, for him, while in your pay, to spend his time in idleness, or in promoting his private interests? Suppose he were often idle, that would be bad enough; but suppose that he wholly neglected your business, and that when called to an account and censured for not doing his duty, he should say, "Why, what have I done?" would you not suppose that for him to have done nothing, and let your business suffer, was great wickedness, for which he deserved to be punished?

Now, reader, you are God's steward, and if you are an impenitent sinner, you have wholly neglected God's business, and have remained idle in his vineyard, or have been only attending to your own private interests; and now are you ready to ask what you have done? Are you not a knave, thus to neglect the business of your great employer, and go about your own private business, to the neglect of all that justice, and duty, and God require of you?

But suppose your steward should employ his time in opposing your interest, using your capital and time in driving at speculations directly opposed to the business for which he was employed? Would you not consider this

great dishonesty? Would you not think it very ridiculous for him to account himself an honest man? Would you not suppose yourself obliged to call him to an account? And would you not account anyone a villain who should approve such conduct? Would you not think yourself bound to publish him abroad, that the world might know his character, and that you might clear yourself from the charge of upholding such a person?

How, then, shall God dispose of you, if you employ your time in opposing his interest, and use his capital in your hands to drive at speculations directly opposed to the business for which he has employed you? Are you not ashamed, then, to account yourself an honest man; and will not God consider himself under an obligation to call you to an account? Should he not do this, would not the omission be an evidence, on his part, of his approval of your abominable wickedness! Must he not feel himself constrained to make you a public example, that the universe may know how much he abhors your crimes!

Stewards are bound to give an account of their talents. By talents, I mean here, the powers of their minds. Suppose you should educate a man to be your steward, should support him during the time he was engaged in study, and be at all the expense of his education, and that then he should either neglect to employ his mind in your service, or should use the powers of his cultivated intellect for the promotion of his own interests; would you not consider this as fraud and villany? Now, God created your minds, and has been at the expense of your education, and has trained you up for his service; and do you either let your mind remain in idleness, or pervert the powers of your cultivated intellect, to the promotion of your own private interest, and then ask what you have done to deserve the wrath of God?

But suppose your steward should use his education in opposition to your interest, and use all the powers of his

mind to destroy the very interest for which he was educated, and which he is employed to sustain; would you not look upon his conduct as marked with horrid guilt? And do you, sinner, employ the powers of your mind, and whatever education God may have given you, in opposing his interest--perverting his truth-- scattering "fire-brands, arrows, and death" all around you, and think to escape his curse? Shall not the Almighty be avenged upon such a wretch?

A steward is bound to give an account for the influence he exerts upon mankind around him.

Suppose you should employ a steward, should educate him until he possessed great talents, should put a large capital into his hands, should exalt him high in society, and place him in circumstances to exert an immense influence in the commercial community, and that then he should refuse or neglect to exert this influence in promoting your interest; would you not consider this default a perpetual fraud practised upon you?

But suppose he should exert all this influence against you, and array himself with all his weight of character, and talent, and influence, and even employ the capital with which he was intrusted, in opposing your interest--what language, in your estimation, could then express your sense of his guilt?

Reader, whatever influence God has given you, if you are an impenitent sinner, you are not only neglecting to use it for God, to build up his kingdom, but you are employing it in opposition to his interest and glory; and for this do you not deserve the damnation of hell? Perhaps you are rich, or learned, or have, on other accounts, great influence in society, and are refusing to use it to save the souls of men, but are bringing all your weight of character, and talents, and influence, and example, to drag all who are within the sphere of your influence down to the gates of

hell.

You must give an account for the manner in which you use the property in your possession. Suppose your steward should refuse to employ the capital with which you intrusted him for the promotion of your interest, or suppose he were to account it his own, and to use it for his own private interest, or apply it to the gratification of his lusts, or the aggrandizement of his family; in bestowing large portions upon his daughters, or in ministering to the lusts and pride of his sons; while at the same time your business was suffering for the want of this very capital; or suppose that this steward held the purse-strings of your wealth, and that you had multitudes of other servants, whose necessities were to be supplied out of the means in his hands, and that their welfare, and even their lives, depended on these supplies; and yet this steward should minister to his own lusts, and those of his family, and suffer those, your other servants, to perish--what would you think of such wickedness? You intrusted him with your money, and enjoined him to take care of your other servants, and through his neglect they were all dead men.

Now, you have God's money in your hands, and are surrounded by God's children, whom he commands you to love as you do yourself. God might, with perfect justice, have given his property to them instead of you. The world is full of poverty, desolation, and death; hundreds and millions are perishing, body and soul; God calls on you to exert yourself as his steward, for their salvation, to use all the property in your possession, so as to promote the greatest possible amount of happiness among your fellow-creatures. The Macedonian cry comes from the four winds of heaven, "Come over and help us;" come over and help us; and yet you refuse to help; you hoard up the wealth in your possession, live in luxury, and let your fellow-men go to hell. What language can describe your guilt?

But suppose your servant, when you called him to

account, should say, "Have I not acquired this property by my own industry?" would you not answer, "You have employed my capital to do it, and my time, for which I have paid you; and the money you have gained is mine." So when God calls upon you to use the property in your possession for him, do you say it is yours, that you have obtained it by your own industry? Pray, whose time have you used, and whose talents and means? Did not God create you? Has He not sustained you? Has He not prospered you, and given you all his success? Yes, your time is his, your all is his, you have no right to say the wealth you have is yours; it is His, and you are bound to use it for His glory. You are a traitor to your trust if you do not so employ it.

If your clerk take only a little of your money, his character is gone, and he is branded as a villain. But sinners take not only a dollar or so, but all they can get, and use it for themselves. Don't you see that God would do wrong not to call you to account, and punish you for filling both your pockets with His money, and calling it your own. Professor of religion, if you are doing so don't call yourself Christian.

You must give an account for your soul. You have no right to go to hell. God has a right to your soul; your going to hell would injure the whole universe. It would injure hell, because it would increase its torments. It would injure heaven, because it would wrong it out of your services. Who shall take the harp in your place, in singing praises to God? Who shall contribute your share to the happiness of heaven?

Suppose you had a steward to whom you had given life, and educated him at great expense, and then he should wilfully throw that life away; has he a right thus to dispose of a life of so much value to you? Is it not as unjust as to rob you of the same amount of property in any thing else? God has made your soul, sustained and educated you, till

you are now able to render him important service, and to glorify him for ever; and have you a right to go to hell, and throw away your soul, and thus rob God of your service? Have you a right to render hell more miserable, and heaven less happy, and thus injure God and all the universe?

Do you still say, What if I do lose my soul, it is nobody's business but my own? That is false: it is every body's business. Just as well might a man bring a contagious disease into a city, and spread dismay and death all around, and say it was nobody's business but his own.

You must give an account for the souls of others. God commands you to be a co-worker with him in converting the world. He needs your services, for he saves souls only through the agency of men. If souls are lost, or the gospel is not spread over the world, sinners charge all the blame upon Christians, as if they only were bound to be active in the cause of Christ, to exercise benevolence, to pray for a lost world, to pull sinners out of the fire. I wonder who has absolved you from these duties? Instead of doing your duty, you lie as a stumbling-block in the way of other sinners. Thus, instead of helping to save a world, all your actions help to send souls to hell.

You are bound to give an account of the sentiments you entertain and propagate. God's kingdom is to be built up by truth, and not by error. Your sentiments will have an important bearing upon the influence you exert over those around you.

Suppose the business in which your steward was employed, required that he should entertain right notions concerning the manner of doing it, and the principles involved in it; of your will and of his duty. And suppose you had given him, in writing, a set of rules for the government of his conduct, in relation to all the affairs with which he was intrusted; then if he should neglect to

examine those rules, or should pervert their plain meaning, and should thus pervert his own conduct, and be instrumental in deceiving others, and leading them in the way of disobedience, would you not look upon this as criminal and deserving the severest reprobation?

God has given you rules for the government of your conduct. In the Bible you have a plain revelation of his will in relation to all your actions. And now, do you either neglect or pervert it, and thus go astray yourself, and lead others with you in the way of disobedience and death, and then call yourself an honest man? For shame!

You must give an account of your opportunities of doing good. If you employ a steward to transact your business, you expect him to take advantage of the state of the market and of things in general, to improve every opportunity to promote your interest. Suppose at the busy seasons of the year, he should spend his time in idleness, or in his own private affairs, and not have an eye at all to the most favorable opportunities of promoting your interest, would you not soon say to him, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward?" Now, sinner, you have always neglected opportunities of serving God, of warning your fellow-sinners, of promoting revivals of religion, and advancing the interest of truth. You have been diligent merely to promote your own private interests, and have entirely neglected the interests of your great employer; and are you not a wretch, and do you not deserve to be put out of the stewardship, as a dishonest man, and to be sent to the state prison of the universe? How can you escape the damnation of hell?

REMARKS.

From this subject you can see why the business of this world is a snare that drowns men's souls in destruction and

perdition.

Sinners transact business to promote their own private interests, and not as God's stewards; and thus act dishonestly, defraud God, grieve the Spirit, and promote their own sensuality, pride, and death. If men considered themselves as God's clerks, they would not lie, and overreach, and work on the Sabbath, to make money for Him; they would be sure that such conduct would not please him. God never created this world to be a snare to men--it is abused; he designed it to be a delightful abode for them--but how perverted!

Should all men's business be done as for God, they would not find it such a temptation to fraud and dishonesty, as to ensnare and ruin their souls; it would have no tendency to wean the soul from Him, or to banish Him from their thoughts. When holy Adam dressed God's garden and kept it, had that a tendency to banish God from his mind? If your gardener should all day be very busy In your presence, dressing your plants, consulting your views, and doing your pleasure continually, asking how shall this be done, and how shall that be done, would this have a tendency to banish you from his thoughts? So, if you were busy all the day, seeking God's glory, and transacting all your business for him, acting as his steward, sensible that his eye was upon you, and were this your constant inquiry, how will this please him? and how will that please him? your being busy in such employment would have no tendency to distract your mind, and turn your thoughts from God.

Or, suppose a mother, whose son was in a distant land, was busy all day in putting up clothes, and books, and necessities for him, continually questioning, how will this please him? and how will that please him? would that employment have a tendency to divert her mind from her absent son? Now if you consider yourself as God's steward, doing his business; if you are in all things

consulting his interests and his glory, and consider all your possessions as his, your time and your talents; the more busily you are engaged in his service, the more will God be present to all your thoughts.

Again. You see why idleness is a snare to the soul. A man that is idle, is dishonest; forgets his responsibility, refuses to serve God, and gives himself up to the temptations of the devil. Nay, the idle man tempts the devil to tempt him.

Again. You see the error of the maxim, that men cannot attend to business and religion at the same time. A man's business ought to be a part of his religion. He cannot be religious in idleness. He must have some business, to be religious at all; and if it is performed from a right motive, his lawful and necessary business is as much a necessary part of religion as prayer, or going to church, or reading his Bible. Any one who pleads this maxim is a knave by his own confession; for no man can believe that an honest employment, and pursued for God's glory, is inconsistent with religion. The objection supposes in the face of it, that he considers his business either as unlawful in itself, or that he pursues it in a dishonest manner. If this be true he cannot be religious, while thus pursuing his business: if his employment be wicked, he must relinquish it; or if honest and pursued in an unlawful manner, he must pursue it lawfully; or in either case he will lose his soul. But if his business is lawful, let him pursue it honestly, and from right motives, and he will find no difficulty in attending to his business, and being religious at the same time. A life of business is best for Christians, as it exercises their graces and makes them strong.

That most men do not account themselves as God's stewards, is evident from the fact that they consider the losses they sustain in business as their own losses. Suppose that some of your debtors should fail, and your clerks should speak of it as their loss, and say they had met with

great losses, would you not look upon it as ridiculous in the extreme? And is it not quite as ridiculous for you, if any of your Lord's debtors fail, to make yourself very uneasy and unhappy about it? Is it your loss, or his? If you have done your duty, and taken suitable care of his property, and a loss is sustained, it is nor your loss, but his. You should look at your sins and your duty, and not be frightened lest God should become bankrupt. If you acted as God's steward or as his clerk, you would not think of speaking of the loss as your own loss. But if you have considered the property in your possession as your own, no wonder that God has taken it out of your hands

Again. You see that in the popular acceptance of the term, it is ridiculous to call institutions for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, charitable institutions. In one sense, indeed, they may be called such. Should you give your steward orders to appropriate a certain amount of funds for the benefit of the poor in a certain parish--this would be charity in you, but not in him; it would be ridiculous in him to pretend that the charity was his. --So, institutions for the promotion of religion, are the charities of God, and not of man. The funds are God's and it is his requirement, that they be expended according to his directions, to relieve the misery, or advance the happiness of our fellow-men. God, then, is the giver, and not men; and to consider the charities as the gift of men, is to maintain that the funds belong to men, and not to God. To call them charitable institutions, in the sense in which they are usually spoken of, is to say, that men confer a favour upon God; that they give him their money, and consider Him as an object of charity.

Suppose that a company of merchants in the city should employ a number agents to transact their business in India, with an immense capital, and suppose these agents should claim the funds as their property, and whenever a draft was made upon them, should consider it

begging, and asking charity at their hands, and should call the servant by whom the order was sent a beggar; and farther, suppose they should get together, and form a charitable society to pay these drafts, of which they should become "life members," by paying each a few dollars of their employers' money into a common fund, and then hold themselves exonerated from all farther calls; so that, when an agent was sent with drafts, they might direct the treasurer of their society to let him have a little, as a matter of almsgiving. Would not this be vastly ridiculous! What then do you think of yourself, when you talk of supporting these charitable institutions, as if God, the owner of the universe, was to be considered as soliciting charity, and his servants as the agents of an infinite beggar! How wonderful it is, that God does not take such presumptuous men, and put them in hell in a moment, and then with the money in their hands execute his plans for converting the world.

Nor is it less ridiculous for them to suppose that by paying over the funds in their hands for this purpose, they confer a charity upon men: for it should all along be borne in mind; that the money is not theirs. They are God's stewards, and only pay it over to his order--in doing this, therefore, they neither confer a charity upon the servants who are sent with the orders; nor upon those for whose benefit the money is to be expended.

Again. When the servants of the Lord come with a draft upon you, to pay over some of the money in your possession into his treasury, to defray the expenses of his government and kingdom, why do you call it your own, and say you can't spare it? What do you mean by calling the agents beggars, and saying you are sick of seeing so many beggars--disgusted with those agents of charitable institutions? Suppose your steward under such circumstances should call your agents beggars, and say he was sick of so many beggars; would you not call him to an

account, and let him see that the property in his possession was yours, and not his?

Again. You see the great wickedness of men's hoarding up property so long as they live, and at death leaving a part of it to the church. What a will! To leave God half of his own property. Suppose a clerk should do so, and make a will, leaving his employer part of his own property! Yet this is called piety. Do you think that Christ will always be a beggar? And yet the church is greatly puffed up with their great charitable donations and legacies to Jesus Christ.

Again. You see the wickedness of laying up money for your children, and why money so laid up is a curse to them. Suppose your steward should lay up your money for his children, would you not consider him a knave? How then dare you take God's money and lay it up for your children, while the world is sinking down to hell? But will you say, Is it not my duty to provide for my "own household?" Yes, it is your duty suitably to provide for them, but what is a suitable provision? Give them the best education you can for the service of God. Make all necessary provision for the supply of their real wants, "till they become of sufficient age to provide for themselves"--and then if you see them disposed to do good in serving God and their generation, give them all the advantages for doing this in your power. But to make them rich--to gratify their pride--to enable them to live in luxury or ease--or to provide that they may become rich--to give your daughters what is called a genteel education--to allow them to spend their time in dress, idleness, gossiping, and effeminacy, you have no right--it is defrauding God, ruining your own soul, and greatly endangering theirs.

Again. Impenitent sinners will be finally and eternally disgraced. Do you not account it a disgrace to a man, to be detected in fraud and every species of knavery, in transacting the business of his employer? Is not such a

man deservedly thrown out of business; is he not a disgrace to himself and his family; can any body trust him? How then will you appear before an injured God, and an injured universe--a God whose laws and rights you have despised--a universe with whose interests you have been at war? How will you, in the solemn judgment, be disgraced, your name execrated, and you become the hissing and contempt of hell, for the numberless frauds and villanies you have practised upon God and upon his creatures! But perhaps you are a professor of religion: Will your profession cover up your selfishness and vile hypocrisy, while you have defrauded God, spent his money upon your lusts, and accounted those as beggars, who came with drafts upon you to pay over into his treasury? How will you hold up your head in the face of heaven? How dare you now pray; how dare you sit at the communion table; how dare you profess the religion of Jesus Christ, if you have set up a private interest, and do not consider all that you have as his, and use it all for his glory?

Again. We have here a true test of Christian character. True Christians consider themselves as God's stewards; they act for him, live for him, transact business for him, eat and drink for his glory, live and die to please him. But sinners and hypocrites live for themselves; account their time, their talents, their influence, as their own; and dispose of them all for their own private interest, and thus drown themselves in destruction and perdition.

At the judgment, we are informed that Christ will say to those who are accepted, " Well done, good and faithful servants." Reader! could he truly say this of you, " Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things," i. e. over the things committed to your charge. He will pronounce no false judgment, put no false estimate upon things; and if he cannot say this truly, " Well done, good and faithful servant," you will not be accepted, but will he thrust down to hell. Now, reader,

what is your character, and what has been your conduct? God will soon call you to give an account of your stewardship. Have you been faithful to God, faithful to your own soul, and the souls of others? Are you ready to have your accounts examined, your conduct scrutinized, and your life weighed in the balance of the sanctuary? Are you interested in the blood of Jesus Christ? If not, repent, repent now, of all your wickedness, and lay hold upon the hope that is set before you; for, hark! a voice cries in your ears, "Give an account of thy stewardship for thou mayest be no longer steward."

CH 6

LOVE OF THE WORLD

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

-1 John 2:15

IN DISCUSSING THIS SUBJECT I shall pursue the following order: --

- 1. What we are to understand by the love of the world.*
- 2. Who love the world in this sense.*
- 3. That they do not love God.*

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I. What are we to understand by the love of the world.

Negatively. The love of the world here spoken of, is not every kind or degree of desire for worldly objects. God has so constituted us, that a certain amount, and certain kinds of worldly objects, are indispensable to our existence. We need food and raiment, implements of husbandry and trade, and various worldly things. The proper desire of which is not sinful, nor inconsistent with the love of God.

But to love the world, is to make worldly things the principal objects of desire and pursuit.

To love them, and desire them more than to love God and man, to be more anxious to obtain them, and spend more time in their acquisition, than in efforts to glorify God, and save the souls of men, is to love the world in the sense of the text. Where the love of God and of men is supreme in the heart, there may be a suitable desire for worldly objects; but, where an individual manifests a disposition to give the acquisition of wealth, or of worldly objects the preference, and aims rather at obtaining worldly things than at glorifying God and of doing good to men, it is certain that the love of the world is supreme in his heart.

II. Who do this?

All who cheat and defraud to obtain the things of the world. That a man who will cheat and defraud his neighbor, does not love him as he does himself, is too manifest to require proof. That a man who will disobey God for the purpose of obtaining worldly goods, does not love God supremely, is self-evident. Nay, that he loves the things of the world supremely, is a simple matter of fact.

All those whose anxieties and cares are mostly about worldly things. If they are more careful for the things of the world-- more anxious and earnest in the pursuit of

them, than in glorifying God and in doing good to men, they love the world supremely.

Objection. But do any of you ask, May not a man be anxious to obtain worldly things, for the purpose of doing good with money? I answer, a man may be desirous to obtain money for the purpose of glorifying God with it; but, in that case the principal anxiety, and care, and desire, would not terminate upon the acquisition of money, but upon the end which he hoped to accomplish through its instrumentality. To suppose that a man, whose supreme object is to glorify God and do good to man, should concern himself principally about worldly things, is the same absurdity as to suppose, that he was more anxious about the means than about the end which he hoped to accomplish by these means. It is the end that gives value to the means. It is the end that is the main object of thought and of desire; and to suppose that a man's anxieties and cares would cluster about the means of effecting the end, rather than about the end itself, is plainly absurd and impossible.

Suppose a gentleman was engaged to be married, and has commenced a journey for that purpose. His heart is greatly set upon the end he has in view, and is it likely that either the delights or cares of his journey will occupy more of his thoughts, and absorb more of his affections than the object for which he has undertaken the journey. Who does not know that, in such a case, if his heart was greatly set upon the obtaining of his bride, he would pass from stage to stage without being hardly conscious of the incidents that occurred in his progress. His bride and his marriage would fill up his thoughts by day, and be the subject of his dreams by night; and all his cares and desires, that the stages and steamboats should convey him more rapidly, would be for the more speedy accomplishment of his heart's desire. And now, shall a man who loves God supremely, and whose desire for money and for worldly

goods, is that he may glorify God, and benefit mankind thereby, can he be so anxious and so busy about the means as to lose sight of the end? that his interest in the end to be accomplished is swallowed up in efforts to obtain the means? This cannot be. And now I appeal to the two classes of persons already mentioned; you that practice fraud, and take advantage of the ignorance of men, and over-reach, and cheat them in little or great things, do you pretend to love God? If so, you are an arrant hypocrite.

And you, who are filled with cares about worldly things, whose time, and thoughts, and affections are swallowed up in efforts to obtain them, know assuredly that you love the world, and that the love of God is not in you.

God requires you to love your neighbour as yourself. Again he says, "let every one look not upon his own things, but upon the things of others." "Let every one seek not his own, but another's wealth." These are express requirements of God; they are the very spirit and substance of the Gospel. Benevolence is a desire to do good to others. A willingness to deny self, for the purpose of promoting the interest of your neighbor, is the very spirit of Christ, it is the heart and soul of his Gospel. Now, suppose a man, in his bargains with others, aims only at promoting his own interest; he seeks not another's, but his own wealth. He looks not to the welfare of others, but his eye and his heart are upon his own side of the bargain. He does not aim at benefiting the individual with whom he transacts business; his only object is to take care of himself. This is the very opposite of the spirit of the Gospel. Does this man love his neighbour as himself? Does he love that God supremely, who has prohibited all selfishness, on pain of eternal death? No! If he loved God, he would not disobey him, for the sake of making money. If he loved his neighbor as himself; if he felt that it was more blessed to give than to receive; if he had the spirit of

the Gospel, he would of course feel and manifest as great a desire for the interest of those with whom he deals, as for his own interest. He would be as anxious to give, as to get a good bargain; nay, he would be more so. Self-denial, to promote the happiness and the interest of others, would be his joy, would constitute his happiness, would be that to which he would be inclined, of course. And now let me ask you who are here present, can you deny this principle? What then is your spiritual state? Have you the love of God in you? How do you transact business? Do you consult the interest of those with whom you deal, as much as you do your own? or in all your bargains, do you aim simply at securing a profit to yourself? If you do, the love of God is not in you. You have not the beginning of piety in your heart.

All those that feel chagrined and grieved when they find that the person with whom they have dealt has the best of the bargain, and has made a greater profit than themselves. Now, if a man had the spirit of Christ, he would rejoice in this. It would be the thing at which he would aim, to benefit the individual with whom he deals, as much as possible; and if he afterwards learns that he had made a good bargain, and had been greatly benefitted by it, it would gratify him all the more.

Now, how is it with you, my hearers? Do you find yourselves gratified and delighted, when you find that you have greatly contributed to the interest of those with whom you deal, in having given them the best side of the bargain? Be honest, try yourself by this rule; see whether you love your neighbor as yourself; see whether you love God supremely. He requires you to seek not your own, but your neighbor's wealth. To look not upon your own interest, but the interest of others. Have you the spirit of these requirements? Have you the spirit and temper of that God who lays down this rule of action? If not, you have not the love of God in you?

All those who will make bargains only when they can make a profit by it.

There are many who will never trade only when they can promote their own interest; it matters not how much it might benefit any body else. The interest of the individual, who desires to make the bargain with them, is not taken into the account at all. They do not think of making a bargain to benefit others, and will turn away from the proposal instantly, unless then can promote their own selfish ends. They will stand and bow, and be very accommodating, and kind, and attentive, while there is any prospect of their making a good percentage on their goods; but the negotiation is broken off instantly, without courtesy or good breeding, whenever it is settled that they can make nothing by the bargain. This shows that they do not consult the interests of those with whom they deal, and that the world is their God.

All those who will take advantage of the ignorance of those with whom they deal, to get a good bargain out of them, love the world supremely.

Cases of this kind often occur. A customer comes in; he is instantly measured from head to foot by every eye; they survey him all around, to see whether he understands the value of the articles which he wishes to purchase; whether it will be difficult, or otherwise, to get a good bargain out of him; whether it will do to set the price of goods high, and how high; and whether it is likely that he will buy much or little. And if he wishes to make a heavy bill, some of the first articles for which he inquires are put low; and thus baits are laid to lead him on, from step to step, under the idea that all the articles are low. All such management as this is supreme selfishness, it is fraud, and the very opposite of the spirit of Christ. For such a man to profess the love of God is naked hypocrisy.

Those who will sell useless articles to men, for the sake

of profit, have not the love of God in them.

A man that does this cannot be consulting the interest of his neighbor at all. He must be acting on principles of pure selfishness. He takes the money without an equivalent, and consents that they should "spend it for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not." This is the direct opposite of the spirit of Christ.

All who sell hurtful articles, for the sake of the profit, have not the love of God in them.

The man that will sell articles of known pernicious tendency to his fellow-men, for the sake of gain, has the very spirit of hell. Shall a man, who will sell rum, or make whiskey, and deal out death and damnation to men, and make them pay for it, and thus not only poison them to death, but worse than rob them of their money, shall he pretend to love God? For shame, thou hypocrite! thou wretch! thou enemy of God and man! thou wolf in the clothing of a sheep! Lay aside your mask, and write your name Satan on your sign-board.

There are those that will sell articles that are not only useless, but hurtful; inasmuch as they are designed to promote the pride and vanity of men, and to take their hearts from God, and fasten them upon the baubles and gew-gaws of this vain world. To tempt the deceitful hearts of men, and enlist them in the chase of fashion, and gaiety, and worldliness. Now, instead of being pious, they who do this take the devil's place, and tempt mankind to sin.

All those who transact business upon principles of commercial justice, rather than on principles of benevolence, love the world supremely.

Business principles, or the principles of commercial justice, are the principles of supreme selfishness. They have been established by selfish men, for selfish purposes, without even the pretence of conformity to the law of

love. Upon these principles it is neither demanded, nor expected, that any one should seek another's wealth; but that every one should take care of himself, purchase as low, and sell as high as he can; take advantage of the state of the market, the scarcity of the articles in which he deals; and, in short, to go the whole circle of selfish projects, to promote the interest of self. Can a man love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself, who daily and habitually transacts business upon the principles of commercial justice, founded, as they are, in that which is the direct opposite of the requirement of God? Every day engaged in business transactions, the sum and substance, the aggregate, and the detail of which are designed to promote self-interest that do not even pretend to aim at the promotion of the interest of others; but self is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the whole matter.

All those who engage in business, to the neglect of spiritual exercises, love the world supremely.

Many professors of religion seem just about as much determined to do good with their money, as impenitent sinners are to repent. They profess to engage in business for the glory of God, but instead of using their money for this purpose, they enlarge their capital, and their business, and transact business upon the principles of worldly men, and practice upon themselves a constant delusion. Instead of laying out their money as they go along for the building up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, they add their yearly profits to their capital, until nearly their whole time, and thoughts, and affections, are engrossed with money-making. Now, why do you not see, who practice this, that you are deceiving yourselves?

The only way in which money can be used for the glory of God and the good of men, is to promote the spirituality and holiness of men, and if you pursue business in a way that is inconsistent with your own spirituality, you might as well talk of getting drunk or swearing for the glory of God,

as of making money for His glory. For you to neglect communion with God, under the pretence of making money for him, is sheer hypocrisy. If you prefer business to prayer, busy yourselves in you offices, and shops, and business, and neglect your closets, the love of God is not in you. To pretend that you love God is just as absurd as to suppose that your eagerness to make money for the glory of God, leads you to neglect communion with him, or that your great zeal to serve him, and great love for him, leads you to neglect communion with him, and betake yourself to making money.

Those who make their business an excuse for not attending meetings and using means for the conversion of sinners. It is manifest that such persons are not transacting business for God. The only possible use of making money for the glory of God is, to use it for the conversion and sanctification of sinners. This is the great end of doing business for God. But to be so busy in making money, as to neglect to make direct and personal efforts for the conversion of sinners is absurd; it proves to a demonstration, that the object of making money is not to convert, and sanctify, and save sinners. In such cases, it is plain, that money is sought from the love of it, and not for the purpose of building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

All those whose business diverts their thoughts and affections from God. If they were transacting business for God, the more busy and engaged they were in his service, in doing his will, and in making money for him, the more would he be present to all their thoughts, and the deeper and more mellow would be their piety.

All rich men love the world supremely. Jesus Christ has said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, you say, this is true, if he sets his heart upon his riches. Now, what I affirm is, that every rich man under the Gospel, does set his heart upon his riches. If he

did not he would not be rich. If he loved the kingdom of God supremely, he would give his riches to promote that kingdom. We always do that which we, upon the whole, choose to do. If you have money, and see an article of furniture, or dress, or any thing else that, upon the whole, you prefer to any given amount of money, you are certain to make the exchange, and give your money for the article, if it is in your power. This is just as certain as it is that your choice governs your conduct. Now, if a man loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and the souls of men, more than he does his money; if, upon the whole, he prefers the glory of God, and the salvation of men, to his own selfish interest, it is as certain that he will cease to be rich, and give his money to promote those objects, as it is that his will controls his actions. So that a man being rich under the Gospel, when it is known that his money can be used for the glory of God and the conversion of souls, is demonstration absolute, that he loves the world supremely. To say that he is rich, but does not set his heart upon riches--that he continues to retain his wealth, and yet does not set his heart upon it, is manifestly absurd and false. For, certainly, nothing but a supreme attachment to it could cause him to hold on to the possession of it, when every wind is loaded down with cries and beseechings to send the bread of life to those that are ready to perish.

But, perhaps some will say that much depends upon the instructions that rich people have received--that they may be conscientious in the belief that they may lawfully retain and enjoy their wealth. I answer that this does not relieve the difficulty, for the question is not, what they may lawfully do, but what they are disposed to do. Suppose an affectionate wife to have a husband in slavery, whom she tenderly loves; the price of his ransom is fixed, and she, by her earnings and savings, is determined to pay the price. See how she will behave herself. Of what use is it to tell her that she may lawfully purchase such articles of dress and convenience, and that it is lawful for her to have the

comforts of life--will she so lay out her money? No: she will scarcely allow herself a pair of shoes. She will practice the most rigid economy, and take a satisfaction in denying herself every thing but the absolutely indispensables of life, until she has made out the sum demanded for her husband's ransom. It is of no use to preach to her of the lawfulness of appropriating her money to other purposes. She has one all-absorbing object in view. She values money only as it will contribute to the promotion of this object. No false instruction, nor right instruction, in regard to the lawfulness of using her money for other purposes will alter her practice. Every penny that she can spare is laid out for the promotion of this object of her heart's desire. So if a man love God supremely, if he long for the coming and prosperity of his kingdom more than for any thing else, the question with him will not be whether he may lawfully enjoy an estate. The truth is, that could he do it never so lawfully, it is not his choice to do it. He prefers to build up the kingdom of Christ with his money, and accounts his money as of no value, only as it can contribute to this object. Therefore, I hold it to be a certain truth, that if a man is rich and continues to be rich under the Gospel, there can be no other reason than that he prefers wealth to the promotion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Do any of you object and say, that Abraham, and Job, and David, and Solomon were rich? I answer: the command had never been given in their day to preach the Gospel to every creature, and there is no reason for believing that they so much as dreamed that the world could be converted in the way in which we now know that it can and must be converted. They could not, therefore, have had the same motives for using their wealth for the conversion of the world that we have. We have not the least reason to believe that their property could have been used for the conversion of the world, in the sense in which we can use ours. It was no certain sign, therefore, if they kept their wealth, that they preferred it to the kingdom and glory of

God.

All those who lay up their surplus income, have not the love of God in them. By surplus income, I mean that which is not necessary for the support of themselves and families; if they lay it up, it must be because they love it. If they preferred the kingdom of Jesus Christ, they would immediately use what they could spare, after providing for the necessities of their families, to the building up of his kingdom. Suppose an individual was on the coast of Africa, and longed exceedingly to return to his home, but had no means of paying his passage, if some one should present him with a purse of gold, would he lay it up, or would he immediately lay it out to gratify the all-absorbing desire of his heart and pay his passage to his native country. This would be the very reason why he would prize the gift. It would be valuable to him on that account, that by it he might accomplish the object of his heart's desire. Can it be that a man loves supremely the kingdom of Christ, and longs exceedingly for its coming and extension, and yet hoards up his money instead of spending it for this supremely desirable object?

Although a man may give his surplus income, yet if he practice no self-denial, he gives to God that which costs him nothing, and gives no substantial evidence that he loves God. If he gratify all his wants and the wants of his family, and provide for them all the comforts and conveniences of life, and simply appropriate what remains of his income over and above his expenditures, he really practices no self-denial; he enjoys all that can be enjoyed of wealth, and is really ridding himself of the trouble of taking care of it by appropriating the balance of his yearly income to the cause of Christ. This is like a safety-valve to let off the surplus steam that would otherwise burst the boiler.

Objection. But do any of you object and ask, should every man give up all his capital and means at once of promoting the cause of Christ? I answer, that this might

not be Christian economy. A man's capital, if it be not larger than is necessary for the wisest transaction of business, is to be considered in light of tools with which he serves God and his generation. In such cases, if he give his income, after deducting the necessary expenses of his family, I cannot see that such a use of it is inconsistent with the love of God. But for a man to live and die rich, to hoard up his income, to enjoy his wealth, and leave his substance to his babes, is the Psalmist's definition of a wicked man who has his portion in this world.

All those who are more interested in secular news, that relates to money transaction, than in the accounts of revivals of religion, and in those things that pertain more particularly to the kingdom of Christ, love the world supremely.

Show me a man that is looking over the secular news, after the price of stocks, and excited about bank questions and monied speculations, but who does not read or take an interest in reports of revivals, and the onward movements of the church, and if he profess to love God, his profession is base hypocrisy.

All those who are more depressed, and feel more keenly commercial and monied embarrassments, than they do the low state of religion, and the state of dying sinners, love the world supremely. This is too plain to need either proof or illustration.

All those who would sooner engage in monied speculations than they would in revivals of religion, love the world supremely.

Some professors of religion are all excitement when great speculations are to be made.

When stocks are high, or real estate is on the rise, or any opportunity of making money. But if an effort is to be made to promote a revival of religion, they are too much

engrossed in their speculations to give their time and hearts to it. They may pretend that they are making money for God, but the promotion of revivals of religion is the only object of appropriating money to the cause of Christ. If this be the great object of embarking in these speculations, to promote revivals of religion, and build up Christ's kingdom, it were passing strange if in the use of means they should have no heart to engage in directly promoting the end at which they aim. The naked matter of fact is, that if they prefer monied speculations to revivals of religion, they love money, and love the world supremely.

All those who disobey the commandments of God, for the purpose of making or saving money, love the world supremely.

A man who would travel on the Sabbath to secure a debt, or to avoid the expence of spending a Sabbath at a public house, when on a journey, certainly loves money supremely. Could he think, if he considered the property in his possession as belonging to God, that God would rather he would violate the holy Sabbath, than to lose a debt or spend a few shillings or dollars by stopping on the Sabbath?

All those who do not feel more gratified with the appropriation of money to the cause of Christ, than with any other appropriation of it, love the world supremely.

Take again the case of the woman who is earning money to relieve her husband from bondage. What other appropriation can she make of money that would so much gratify her heart? It is this object that gives value to money in her estimation. Should an individual give her a purse of gold, would she say, now I can buy me a nice dress, now I can furnish my house and live fashionably? No, but bursting into tears of joy and gratitude, she would exclaim, Now I can redeem my husband! Just so a man, who loves

God, and longs for the coming of his kingdom, will feel gratified, most of all, with appropriating money for the promotion of that darling object. Jesus Christ has said, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The truly benevolent man has the highest and holiest pleasure in so disposing of his possessions as in the highest manner to promote the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. Instead of giving to those objects grudgingly and with a sparing hand, here in the promotion of Christ's kingdom he will pour out of his treasures the most unsparingly, and with the fullest, readiest heart. For this his heart is panting. His spirit is longing with unutterable desires. He therefore accounts nothing a privation or a sacrifice which is appropriated to this object. Does the miser account the hoarding up of money a privation, a sacrifice, or a grievance? No, he accounts the hoarding up as the best possible disposition of his money. To every other object he gives sparingly, and takes but little satisfaction in any expenditures which he is obliged to make; but his heart is set upon accumulating treasures. Every shilling that is saved and put into his iron chest is disposed of according to his heart's desire. Now the Christian's heart is just as truly set upon building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ as a miser's heart is upon hoarding up his wealth. In other expenditures, therefore, he will naturally be sparing; but in the promotion of the great object of his heart's desire, he will be liberal and bountiful, and enjoy most of all the appropriation of money to that object.

All those who prefer a speculation to a contribution for the promotion of the interests of Christ's kingdom, love the world supremely. If they loved God supremely, they would desire to make the speculation only for the purpose of enabling them to make the contribution. If they made a hundred or a thousand dollars, they would say, "O for an opportunity now to appropriate this money to the cause of Christ." But if they love the speculation, and are not ready and joyful in the contribution, they love the world, and

have not the love of God in them.

All those who would rather see a customer come in to pay them money, than an agent of some benevolent society to receive and appropriate it to the promotion of Christ's kingdom, love the world supremely. There is a man who smiles and appears delighted when a customer comes in; but when an agent who is collecting funds for the building up of Christ's kingdom calls, he is sour, and dry, and formal, and perhaps uncivil. This demonstrates, beyond all doubt, where his heart is, and shows that he loves his money more than he loves his God.

All those who do not really enjoy giving more than receiving, love the world supremely. If they loved God supremely, their supreme object and joy in receiving would be that they might immediately turn round and give to the promotion of their darling object. But if their incessant cry is give, give, wishing always to receive, and not enjoying the giving of money as they do the receiving of it, it must be because they love the world.

All those who are more parsimonious in their expenditures for the kingdom of Christ, than in their expenditures upon themselves and their families, love the world supremely. There are multitudes of professedly pious people who seem to think it a Christian duty to have every thing connected with the worship and service of God of the cheapest kind, while in their own houses, and about their own persons, and that of their families, they practice upon a very different principle. If a church is to be fitted up, every thing must be done with as little expense as possible. If there are carpets, they must be of the cheapest kind; if there are stoves, or cushions, or lights, or other conveniences, almost any thing will answer, provided it is cheap; things are suffered to be out of order; filth is suffered to accumulate, and the house of God to lie waste; and all this is done under the pious pretence of Christian economy. Many churches in the country have no lamps,

and some of them have no stoves, and others have the panes of glass broken out; the doors of others are so dilapidated that they will scarcely shut; others have the stoops rotten, and the church either not painted at all, or so faded, that if it was a dwelling house, you would suppose it the abode of the drunkard. Most of the churches in the country have no carpets; and in churches carpets are more needed than in any other house, to prevent the disturbance that always occurs where people are going out and in upon an uncarpeted floor; and in the city there are many who are entirely unwilling to be at the expense of fitting up a house of worship as commodiously as they fit up their own dwellings. Now, it is manifest, whatever may be the pretence, and however such things may be baptized by the name of Christian economy, all such conduct has its foundation in the love of the world, and in supreme selfishness. Men are always most free in appropriating their money to the promotion of the objects dearest to their hearts. This is simple matter of fact. If, therefore, the heart is set supremely upon honoring God with our substance, it is certain that if in any thing we are bountiful and liberal in our expenditures, it will be in fitting up places for his worship, and in all those things that are essential to decency, to comfort, and enjoyment in his service.

III. Having noticed some of the principal evidences of supreme attachment to the world, I now proceed to suggest several reasons why such persons cannot love God.

The text is a form of expression that is to be understood as expressing a very strong negative. "If any man love the world," says the apostle, "how dwelleth the love of God in him;" that is, the love of God is certainly not in him. This is the language and the doctrine of the

whole Bible; so that, so far as Scripture testimony goes, the proof is conclusive. But I will mention several considerations that belong to the philosophy of mind, that will demonstrate beyond all contradiction, that individuals upon whom these marks of worldliness are found, have not the love of God in them. The argument runs thus, and is very brief.

1. It is impossible that a man should have two supreme objects of affection. If he have any acceptable love to God, it must be supreme; and to affirm that a man loves the world in the sense of this text, and that he loves God with any acceptable love, is a contradiction. It is the same as to say, that he loves both God and the world supremely.

2. A man cannot love two objects, that are entirely opposite to each other, at the same time. The apostle immediately subjoins to the text, "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." The love of the world, and the love of God, are directly opposite states of mind, so that to exercise them both at the same time is impossible.

3. It is minding the flesh which the apostle declares to be enmity against God.

Lastly. It is supreme selfishness, which is the direct opposite of the love of God and man. These considerations need only to be named, to be seen to be proof conclusive, that if any man love the world, the love of God is not in him.

REMARKS.

You can see from this subject, that if men should transact worldly business upon the principles of the

Gospel, it would be infinitely better for the world in every respect. If every one sought to promote the happiness and interest of others, the amount of property, and of every other good, would be greatly increased. Some persons seem to suppose, that unless they consult solely their own interest, it is impossible that society should exist. What! they say, would you have us all seek not our own interest, but the interest of others? What then would become of our own interest? I answer, your interest would be secured, if, while you were mainly solicitous to benefit others, they were just as solicitous to benefit you. The secular interests of men would be thus as highly, and more highly advanced, than under the present arrangement of society, while the spirit that would be cherished and cultivated by this course of conduct, would shed a sweet, and healing, and refreshing influence over all the discords and inquietudes of selfishness; and peace, and love, and heaven, would reign in the bosoms of men.

But does any one object and say, that inasmuch as worldly men will not practice upon these principles, it is impossible that Christians should, without giving up all the business of the world into their hands. This is a radical and ruinous mistake. Suppose it were known that Christians universally discarded all selfishness in their business, and acted upon principles of entire benevolence; that in all their dealings they sought the interest of those with whom they deal, equally with their own. No sooner would this fact be known, than worldly men would be forced to transact business upon these principles, or give up all the business of the world into the hands of Christians; for who would deal with a man who acted upon principles of supreme selfishness, when he might just as well transact business with those who would not only treat him with equity, but with entire benevolence; so that it is perfectly within the power of the church to compel worldly men to transact business upon Gospel principles, or not transact it at all. And woe to the church, if she does not reverse and

annihilate the whole system of doing business on principles of selfishness.

Perhaps some of you will say, if the doctrine of this sermon be true, who then can be saved? I answer, certainly not those who manage their affairs upon principles that are in direct opposition to the benevolence of the Gospel; who make commercial justice, which is founded in selfishness, the rule of their lives, and satisfy themselves with being honest in this sense of honesty, instead of being governed by the law of love; who seek their own, and not their neighbor's wealth; who mind earthly things, and account it more blessed to receive than to give. If there be any truth in the word of God, all such men are in the way to hell.

But will any one object, and say, this is very uncharitable. If this be true, nearly all the church are hypocrites. I answer, the doctrine is true, whatever the inference may be. I do not pretend to be more charitable than God is, and to hope that those persons are pious of whom God has said that his love is not in them. I will not be charitable enough to throw away my Bible, or suppose that the lovers of the world are the friends instead of the enemies of God. That multitudes of professors are deceived, that they love the world supremely, is as evident as if they had taken their oath of it; and because the great mass of professing Christians give evidence of this state of mind, we are not to dispute our Bibles, and charitably hope that they may be saved.

You see from this subject why it is that so few professors of religion have a spirit of prayer. The truth is, the love of God is not in them. Look around this great commercial city; nearly the whole population are here for the purposes of worldly gain. The principles upon which almost the entire business of the city is transacted, is that of supreme selfishness. How then can a spirit of prayer prevail in such a community as this. This same principle

prevails almost universally through the country. Farmers, mechanics, merchants, and men and women of every occupation, without hesitation, transact their business upon selfish principles, and seek supremely their own and not their neighbor's wealth. It is impossible that the love of God should prevail in the church, or in any heart, while actuated by such principles.

You see from this subject why it is that young converts so uniformly wax cold in religion. Let any individual pass through one business season, acting upon business principles, and it is impossible that the love of God should be alive in his heart. He is assiduously cultivating and cherishing a spirit of selfishness; and in all his daily avocations, he does not so much as intend to seek the good of others, but his own good; and can we be at a loss for the reasons of such universal backsliding?

From this subject you may see that the religion of the great mass of the church is not the religion of love, but of fear. They fear the Lord, but serve their own gods. They are dragged along in the dry performance of what they call duty, by their consciences. They have a dry, legal, earthly spirit; and their pretended service is hypocrisy and utter wickedness.

You can see from this subject why so little is effected by all the means that are used for the building up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Men had much rather give their money than to live holy lives and walk with God. An effort seems to be making now to convert the world with money. Unbounded speculations are entered into by professedly pious men; and while their heart, and soul, and lives are absorbed in the spirit of this world, they are trying to persuade themselves that their money will be a substitute for a holy life, and compensate for the neglect of personal exertions to save the souls of men; but, rely upon it, God will teach them their mistake.

The spontaneous conduct of the primitive church shows what true piety will do in leading men to renounce the world; and while the love of God pervaded the church, men were manifestly actuated by different principles from those of commercial justice. They sought not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ.

But do you ask, are nearly all the church wrong? I answer, that upon this subject they are wrong. In most things the church of the present day is orthodox in theory, but vastly heretical in practice. Nor is it any thing new for the church to be nearly all wrong. More than once or twice have nearly the entire body of the church departed from God, and satisfied themselves with the religion of selfishness.

Lastly, I beg of you who are convicted of worldliness, not to go away and say that you hope that you love God, notwithstanding some, or nearly all of these evidences are against you. I declare to you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that if these marks of worldliness are upon you, the love of God is not in you. And O, "be ye not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

