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THEOLOGY

SALVATION BY FAITH PROVED

OR AN ANSWER TO THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

by Adam Clarke

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THE DOCTRINE
OF
SALVATION BY FAITH PROVED;
OR,
AN ANSWER TO THE
IMPORTANT QUESTION,
WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

BY
ADAM CLARKE, LL. D. F. S. A.

SECOND EDITION

(1819 Version)

*Father, thy word is past; man shall find grace.
And shall grace not find means?—
Atonement for himself, or offering meet,
Indebted and undone, HE none can bring.
Behold ME then; me for him, life for life,
I offer. — Paradise Lost, B. 3:1. 227.*

ADVERTISEMENT

How a man may obtain and retain the favor of his Maker? how a sinner may be reconciled to his God, and be saved from his sins? have appeared to him questions of the highest importance, and he has attempted their discussion in the following pages. He has not pretended to examine systems of religion in detail, but merely the plans of what may be called initiatory salvation. On the awfully important subject of the Question in the text, he lays the result of his own researches and convictions before his Readers. It is true that they will all be found to issue in what is commonly called Orthodoxy. But he begs leave to say that they have not arrived at this issue by any sinuous ways. The conclusion is the spontaneous natural result of the principles laid down, and the reasonings founded upon them. With a heart full of charity for all mankind, and with respect and reverence for the good and pious of every denomination, he dismisses the whole, with the fullest conviction that the doctrine of justification by faith, through the atoning sacrifice of that Eternal Word which was manifest in the flesh, is the only way by which a fallen soul can regain the favor, and be restored to the image, of its Maker; and be at last brought, through the sanctification of the Divine Spirit, to the ineffable glory of God.

MILLBROOK, Dec. 25, 1815

A

DISCOURSE

What must I do to be saved? — ~~4:16~~ Acts 16:30.

To spread the gospel through the world, God employed certain persons who were called apostles, persons sent, i:e. immediately from God Himself; and from Him alone they received their commission, which was as extensive as the habitable world: for it was delivered in these words: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This, they appear to have understood in the most literal sense; and therefore thought of nothing less than carrying the glad tidings of salvation, by Christ Jesus, to every nation of the earth, to which the Providence of God should open their way.

It was necessary that, in the first planting of the gospel, these messengers of God should be able to mark extraordinary interpositions of Divine Providence in their favor; and should be furnished, as occasion might require, with miraculous powers: and this we find was the case. God did, by extraordinary providences, mark out their way, and enabled them to work a variety of beneficent miracles which at once pointed out the nature of the gospel which they preached, and were a confirmation of its doctrines.

Of those peculiarly providential calls, we have a remarkable instance in the chapter before us; by which the apostles were prevented from going to a certain place in Asia Minor, where they wished to preach the gospel, and were sent to another of which they had not thought. “Now, when they had gone through Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; after they were come to Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not. And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas: and a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over to Macedonia, and help us.” ver. 7—9. This was an interposition of Providence, which, to them, had no equivocal voice; and

they immediately endeavored to reach Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of that place.

The nighest way from Troas in Mysia, where they then were, was to run across the top of the AEgean sea, nearly from East to West, which we are informed they did; and thus came by a straight course by Samothracia to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, which appears to have been, at this time, the chief city of that part of Macedonia; though two hundred and twenty years prior to that, when Paulus AEmilius had conquered Macedonia, he made Amphipolis the chief city of that division of the country, which lay between the rivers Strymon and Nessus. Near this city the Jews, who, for the purpose of merchandise, frequented these parts, had an oratory, or place of prayer, this place Paul, with Silas his companion, visited on the sabbath days, and preached the gospel to the Jews and proselytes who assembled there; and with such good success, under the influence of that Spirit which was their constant Helper, that several persons were converted; among whom the most remarkable was Lydia, a seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira, in Asia Minor.

In their occasional attendance at this place, they were greatly disturbed by a young woman, who had a spirit of divination; and who was maintained by some persons of that city, to whom she brought considerable gains by her soothsaying: this woman continually followed the apostles, saying, “These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation,” ver. 17. All this was strictly true; but it was a testimony very suspicious in such a case; and was given with that subtilty and cunning which are peculiar to the great deceiver, who never bears testimony to the truth but when he designs to injure it. He well knew that, in the Jewish law, all magic, incantations, magical rites, and dealings with familiar spirits, were strictly forbidden: he therefore bore, what was in itself, a true testimony, that he might ruin the credit of the apostles. By such a testimony, from such a quarter, the Jews would be led to believe that the apostles were in compact with these demons; and that the miracles which they worked, were performed by the agency of these wicked spirits; and that the whole was the effect of magic; and this would necessarily harden their hearts against the preaching of the gospel. On the other hand, the Gentiles, finding that their own demon bore testimony to

the apostles, would naturally consider that the whole was one system; that they had nothing to learn, nothing to correct; and thus, to them, the preaching of the apostles must be useless.

In such circumstances as these, nothing could have saved the credit of the apostles but their dispossessing this woman of her familiar spirit; and that in the most incontestable manner: for, what could have saved the credit of Moses and Aaron, when the magicians of Egypt turned their rods into serpents, had not Aaron's rod devoured their's? and what could have saved the credit of these apostles, but the casting out this spirit of divination with which, otherwise, both Jews and Gentiles would have believed them in compact? Paul being grieved, and probably on these accounts, turned to the spirit, and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her; and he came out in the same hour; and from thenceforward the young woman was rendered totally incapable of acting the part she had before done; and the source whence her masters had derived so much gain was now most evidently closed up. This inflamed them to madness; therefore violently seizing the apostles, they dragged them before the magistrates, and accused them of turbulent and seditious designs. The magistrates, without acquainting themselves with the merits of the case, ordered their clothes to be rent off, and to scourge them. When this was done, and it appears to have been executed with as little mercy as justice, they were thrust into prison; and the jailor receiving the strictest charge to keep them safely, put them into the dungeon, and made their feet fast in the stocks, ver. 18-24.

These outward afflictions, however severe; contributed nothing to the diminution of their peace and joy: they had a happiness which lay beyond the influence of those changes and chances to which sublunary things are exposed. They were happy in God, though in the dungeon, and their feet fast in the stocks: and at midnight, while all the rest had forgotten their cares in sleep, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God, ver. 25. While thus employed, requesting grace to support themselves, and pardon for their enemies, praising God that He had accounted them worthy to suffer shame for the testimony of Jesus; God, by an earthquake, and loosing the bands of the prisoners, bore a miraculous testimony of approbation to His servants; and showed, in a symbolical way, the nature of that religion which they preached; for, while it shakes and terrifies the

guilty, it proclaims deliverance to the captives, the opening of the prisons to them that are bound; and sets at liberty them that are bruised. The prison-doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed; yet so did God order it in His wise providence, that not one of the prisoners attempted to make his escape! God never can work a miracle to defeat the ends of civil justice; many of those who were here confined, were no doubt offenders against the laws, and should be judged by the law which they had broken.

The jailor, who was responsible for the safe custody of all who were under his care, seeing what was done, supposing that the prisoners had escaped, and knowing that his own life would be the forfeit, choosing rather to die by his own hands, than by those of others; (for this sort of suicide was a heathen virtue,) drew out his sword, and was just going to kill himself, when Paul perceiving what was about to be done, cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm; we are all here! Astonished at these circumstances, he called for a light, (for these transactions took place at midnight,) and seeing what was done, and that a supernatural agency was most evident; fearing for his life, and feeling for his soul, he fell down before Paul and Silas; and having brought them out of the dungeon, he addressed them in the language of the text, every word of which is most solemn and emphatic, "O Sirs! what must I do that I may be saved?" Whether this strong enquiry refer to personal or eternal safety; or whether it relate to the body or soul in a state of danger; it is a question the most interesting and important to man.

As it has been supposed that the jailor asked this question in reference to his personal safety alone, and that it had no reference to his soul; it may be well to spend a few moments on the consideration of this point.

The jailor had seen, notwithstanding the prison doors had been miraculously opened, and the bands of all the prisoners loosed, that not one of them had escaped; hence he could not feel himself in danger of losing his life on this account; and, consequently, it cannot be his personal safety about which he enquires. He could not but have known that these apostles had been, for some time, preaching at Philippi what they called the doctrine of salvation; to this the Pythoness had alluded, "These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of SALVATION," ver. 17. And he knew that it was for casting the demon out

of this young woman that they were delivered into his custody: all this is sufficiently evident. The Spirit of God appears to have convinced his heart that he was lost, was in a state of the most imminent spiritual danger, and needed salvation; and therefore his earnest enquiry was, how he should obtain it. The answer of the apostles shows, that his enquiry was not about his personal safety; as his believing on the Lord Jesus could have had no effect upon that in his present circumstances; for as none of the prisoners had escaped, and he saw that this was the case, neither he nor his family could have been in personal danger: and if they had, the answer of the apostles would have been as impertinent on that ground, as his question was, had it referred to personal danger, when he must have been convinced that nothing of the kind existed. I conclude, therefore, from the circumstances of the apostles, the circumstances of the jailor, his question and their answer, that his enquiry concerned the salvation of his soul, and not the safety of his body; and, being taken in this point of view, it is the most momentous that can interest or arrest the attention of man.

I shall now enquire, taking up the subject in this sense,

I. What is implied in being saved?

II. How this salvation can be attained?

I shall not occupy any time in giving the various acceptations of the term salvation, or being saved; as I suppose it to apply here simply to the salvation of the soul; and shall only observe generally, that it signifies a being delivered from imminent danger, or impending ruin. The word therefore necessarily implies,

1. Danger, without which there could not be deliverance: and,

2. Salvation or deliverance from that danger.

The danger to which a soul is exposed, is that of dying in a state of sin, falling under the wrath of God, and perishing everlastingly. The cause of this danger is having sinned against God by breaking those laws, on the obedience of which God promises life and blessedness; and on the breach of which He threatens death, temporal and eternal. That all human souls have sinned and come short of the glory of God, I shall not wait here to prove; the Scriptures assert it; and it is incontrovertibly proved by matter

of fact. That all come into the world with a disposition that strongly stimulates them to vice, and makes them averse from virtue, is not less evident. Hence it follows, that in consequence of their personal transgressions, they are exposed to endless punishment; and in consequence of their impure and unholy nature they are incapable of the enjoyment of eternal glory: these I judge to be truths, equally asserted by the Scriptures, and strongly corroborated by reason.

To be saved therefore, implies the being delivered from all the guilt of all sin or transgression; from all the power or influence of sin, so that it shall have no more dominion over them; and from all the impurity of all sin, so that the soul shall be a fit habitation of God through the Spirit; and be capable of an eternal union with Him in the realms of glory.

I shall not enter here into a consideration of the question, When are these different degrees of salvation to be attained? but only assume that maxim in which all Christians are agreed, that unless the soul in the day of the Lord be found saved from all the power, guilt, and contamination of sin, it cannot inherit an eternal state of glory.

Therefore the second question, the consideration of which is the chief object of this discourse, presses itself strongly on our notice, viz.

II. How can human beings who have sinned against God, by breaking His laws, and whose nature is depraved and polluted, be thus delivered, and thus saved? or, in other words, “How can a man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” ^{REST} Job 25:4.

To effect this, five ways have been proposed by men;

1. By the law of works: or the merit of obedience to the law of God.
2. By works of supererogation; including voluntary sufferings, rigid discipline, severe austerities, uncommanded mortifications of the body; together with the patient endurance of the unavoidable miseries attendant on human life.
3. By penal sufferings in the life to come, such as those purgatorial fires, imagined by the church of Rome; and the pretended emendatory infernal punishments, which make a principal part of the doctrine both of the ancient and modern universal Restitutionists.

4. By the metempsychosis or transmigration of souls; as a portion of moral evil is supposed to be detached from them in each of the bodies which they successively animate.

5. By the mere benevolence of God, who may, it is affirmed, without any consideration except that of His own innate eternal goodness, pass by the sins of a transgressor, and bestow on him eternal glory.

These five, as far as I can recollect, include all the schemes of salvation which have been invented by man. Some of these profess to be derived directly from the Sacred Writings; others by implication from those writings; and others from reason, and the opinions of ancient philosophers.

As every thing which concerns the eternal state of the soul must be deemed of infinite importance; it will be necessary to examine the reasons of each of these proposed schemes, in order to see whether any of them be calculated to effect the purpose for which it is adopted; and afford a sure ground to support a sinner's expectation of pardon and final glory. And if; on examination, these should be found either inefficient or inapplicable; whether the method proposed by St. Paul, in his answer to the jailor, viz. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, be free from the objections to which the others are liable; and whether it possesses such evidence of infallible efficiency, as may be justly deemed sufficient to vindicate the ways of God with man, and support the mighty expectations which the Sacred Writings authorize men to build upon it.

As each of these systems has its partisans and supporters, it will be necessary to examine them separately, considering in this examination, the principal reasons by which they appear to be respectively supported.

I. The first is, that man by sincere obedience to the law of God, may merit pardon and eternal life.

1. In order that a man may be obedient, or merit by obedience, or by works; there must be some rule of life or law, laid down and prescribed by his Maker, the precepts of which he is to fulfill, in order to claim the salvation referred to in the question.

2. It must appear that this law, or rule of life, has been so strictly, conscientiously, and universally observed, as to justify the claim founded on obedience to its precepts.

1. This law, or rule of life, must be found in the original state of man: or, in other words, that law which we may presume his Maker imposed on him when He gave him his being: for it would be absurd to suppose that God formed any intelligent beings without a law or rule of life, when we know that He formed them to show forth His glory: which they can do no otherwise than by exhibiting in actions, those virtues derived from the perfections of God. And those actions must be founded on some prescription or rule. No creature of God, whether intellectual, animate or inanimate, is without a law, rule of life, or prescribed mode of being, according to which it is governed, influenced, and exists; such laws being the source of harmony, order, and consistency in all the works of God.

What our blessed Lord calls the FIRST and greatest commandment, must be the law in question, viz. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” This law may be thus shortly paraphrased, “Thou shalt love God with all thy HEART;” all thy affections shall be fixed on and concentrated in Him. “Thou shalt love Him with all thy soul;” thy whole heart shall be devoted to Him: thou shalt consider Him the great object and end of thy being. “Thou shalt love Him with all thy MIND;” thy understanding shall be occupied with Him and His attributes: all thy intellectual as well as thy animal powers, shall be employed by Him, and for Him. He shall be the grand subject on which, through which, and in reference to which, all thy rational powers shall be incessantly employed. “Thou shalt love Him with all thy strength;” all these powers, at all times, to the utmost of their respective limits, and with the utmost of their separate energies, shall be employed in doing His will, and promoting His glory. No power or faculty shall ever be unemployed; and none shall ever be exerted but to show forth His excellencies and praise.

The very nature of man’s creation must show that this was the law or rule of life by which he was called to act. This law is suited to the nature of an intelligent being; and as man was made in the image and likeness of God, this law was suitable to his nature; and the principles of it must have been

impressed on that nature. It was the law of man, or the rule to regulate his internal and external conduct, when he came from the hands of his Creator; when as yet he had neither associate nor descendant. When he had descendants, and society was formed, a second law, flowing from the first, was given him to regulate his spirit and conduct in reference to that society of which He was a part; and hence our Lord, with the strictest precision, adds, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no greater commandment than these; and on these hang all the law and the prophets;" both the law of Moses afterwards given, and all the declarations of the prophets, being founded on those grand principles, love to God, and love to man. And hence every promise, and every threatening in the whole book of God, relative to the merit and demerit of human actions.

Now, the obedience in question must be obedience to this law; and the salvation in question must be, if it be at all, the result of such an obedience as this law requires.

Let it be observed, that such a law, to such a being, can admit of no deviations; it requires a full, perfect, and universal obedience; and an obedience performed with all the powers and energies of body and soul. I have fixed on this original law, as demonstrably the most proper; and leave out of the consideration the Mosaic law, whether ritual, ceremonial, or moral; as well as all other laws or rules of life, derived or deducible from these. On this part of the question, it is by the law of his creation that man stands or falls. With what was given afterwards, the scheme of salvation, which is now under examination, has nothing to do.

Let it be observed also, that no being is capable of fulfilling such a law, unless its nature be entirely pure and holy; the slightest degree of moral imperfection, the smallest irregularity of passions or appetites, would taint the required sacrifice; and mar and ruin the service. As man came pure and perfect out of the hands of his Creator, he was capable of observing this law; to him, in this state, there was nothing difficult, nothing grievous. He was made under this law; and He was made equal to it in all its requisitions and demands. Obedience to this was his duty; and we may add it must have been his delight; and that in which his happiness consisted; for no superior state of blessedness can be conceived: for He

who loves God with all his powers, and serves him with all his energies, must be unutterably happy.

But does it follow that man, in this pure and perfect state, fulfilling at all times the sublime duty required by this law, could merit an eternal glory by his obedience? — No. For he is the creature of God; his powers belong to his Maker: He owes him all the services He can perform; and, when He has acted up to the utmost limits of his exalted nature, in obedience to this most pure and holy law, it will appear that he can make no demand on Divine justice for remuneration; he is, as it respects God, an unprofitable servant; he has only done his duty, and he has nothing to claim. In these circumstances, was not only man in Paradise, but also every angel and archangel of God. Throughout eternity, no created being, however pure, holy, submissive, and obedient, can have any demands on its Creator. From Him its being was originally derived, and by Him that being is sustained; to Him, therefore, by right, it belongs and whatever He has made it capable of He has a right to demand. As well might the cause be supposed to be a debtor to the effect produced by it, as the Creator, in any circumstances, be a debtor to the creature.

To merit salvation, is to give an equivalent for eternal glory: for; if a man can be saved by his works, his claim is on Divine justice; and if justice make a commutation of eternal glory for obedience, then this obedience must be in merit, equal to that glory. Justice demands what is due; it can require no more; it will take no less. Man's obedience therefore, performed in time, which, however long, is only a moment when compared to eternity, must be considered, on this doctrine, equal in worth to the endless and utmost beatification which God can confer on an intelligent being, which is absurd. Therefore no being, by obedience in time, can merit an eternal glory.

Again, to merit any thing from God, we must act as beings independent of Him, and give Him that on which He has no legal claim; for as we cannot purchase one part of a man's property, by giving him another part of his own property; so we cannot purchase from God any thing that is His own, by that to which He has an equal claim. To merit glory, therefore, a man must not only act independently of God, but also with powers and energies of which God is neither author nor supporter; for the powers

which He has created, and which He upholds, are already His own; and to their utmost use and service He has an indefeasible right. Now, man is a derived and dependent creature; has nothing but what he has received; cannot even live without the supporting energy of God; and can return Him nothing that is not his own; and therefore can merit nothing. On this ground also, the doctrine of salvation by the merit of works, is demonstrably both impossible and absurd.

Once more, to perform acts infinitely meritorious, man must have powers commensurate to such acts: to merit infinitely, requires infinite merit in the acts; and infinite merit in the acts requires unlimited powers in the agent; for no being of limited and finite powers, can perform acts of infinite worth: but man, in his best estate, is a being of limited powers, wholly dependent, even for these, on the energy of another; consequently, cannot perform acts of infinite worth; and therefore can in no way whatever merit, by his obedience or his works, that infinite and eternal weight of glory of which the Scriptures speak. On the ground, therefore, of the dependent and limited powers of man, the doctrine of final glorification, by the merit of works, is self-contradictory, impossible, and absurd.

All the preceding reasoning is founded on the supposition that man is in a state of purity; having never fallen from original righteousness, and never sinned against his Creator: and even in those circumstances we find that his pure and spotless obedience cannot purchase an endless glory.

But, we must now consider him in his present circumstances; fallen from God; destitute of that image of God, righteousness and true holiness, in which he was created; and deeply guilty through innumerable transgressions. To him, in this state, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is of infinite importance; as, through his sinfulness, he is unfit for heaven: and, through his guilt, exposed to the bitter pains of an eternal death. In his mouth, the question resolves itself into several:

1. How shall I be delivered from the power of sin, that it may no longer have dominion over me?
2. How shall I be delivered from the guilt of sin, that it may no longer oppress my tortured conscience?

3. How shall I be delivered from the pollution of sin, and be prepared for, and entitled to, everlasting glory?

Will any man say to this alarmed and despairing sinner, “Thou must purchase thy pardon, and the kingdom of heaven, by a life of righteousness: God requires obedience to His law; and that, joined to sincere repentance, will induce Him to forgive thy iniquities, and admit thee at last to His eternal glory.” Of what avail are such sayings? can this satisfy his soul, or quiet the clamors of his tormented conscience? He feels himself incapable of any good; his inward parts are very wickedness; and, though he can will that which is right, yet how to perform it, he finds not. Can even fond hope lay comfortable hold on such directions as these? But, as this question is too important to admit of hasty and unauthorized conclusions; we must examine the ground of the hope which is held out on these terms.

Though man’s state has changed, his duty is not changed; he is still under the same law; it is as much his duty now to “love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength,” as it was the first moment he came out of the hands of his Creator. What was his duty then, must be his duty through the whole course of his being. To fulfill this original law, required a pure and holy soul, untainted by sin, and unbiased by iniquity. But, instead of a heart filled with holiness and love, he has now that carnal mind which is enmity to God; a mind that is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. To him, therefore, this obedience is utterly impossible; he cannot cleanse his own infected nature; and he cannot undo the criminal acts which he has already committed; and, having broken the Divine law, the wrath of God abideth on him. We have already proved that the most pure and perfect obedience cannot purchase glory; and the same arguments will prove, that the most perfect obedience cannot purchase pardon. Man owes every moment of his existence, and the full and constant exercise of all his powers, unto God. Could he even now live as pure and as perfect as an archangel, this would be no more than his duty; and, in point of duty, it would only be available for the time in which it was done; for, as every creature owes to its Creator the utmost service it can possibly perform through every moment of its being; therefore this obedience does not merit any thing in reference to the future: and if it have sinned, cannot atone for the past: the time in which it has sinned, must stand as an eternal blank, in

which all its obedience was due, and in which none was performed. The non-performance of its duty, is such a high degree of criminality, as to obliterate its title to the Divine protection, support, and happiness; and the sins which it has committed, instead of obedience, have exposed it to all the penalties of the laws which it has broken.

It appears, therefore, that even granting this fallen creature could live, from the present, a life of unspotted holiness; yet this could be considered in no other light than merely the obedience due to the Creator, and could have no tendency to blot out past transgressions. There is, therefore, no hope to any sinner from the doctrine of justification, or salvation by works. And, taken in any point of view, it is demonstrable, that no obedience to God, even from the most perfect creature, can merit any thing and that works of merit, and works of supererogation, are equally impossible and absurd: none can do more than he ought; and none, by doing his duty, can have claims upon his Maker.

I need add nothing here, except the testimony of our own church, in her 13th article, where she says, “works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they are not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace; or, (as the school authors say,) deserve grace of congruity: yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.” That this doubt of our pious reformers was legitimately founded, has been sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding reasonings.

II. The second scheme of salvation is founded on works of supererogation, voluntary and involuntary sufferings, etc. By supererogation, I mean doing more than is required; being more obedient than the law of God demands, and thus forming a stock of extra-meritorious acts; so that a man has not only enough for himself, but has a fund of merits, which a certain church professes to have the power to dispense to those who have few or none. On the preceding point I have proved that it is impossible for any created dependent being to do more than its duty; how pure and holy soever that creature may be: and under the same head, it is proved that no fallen creature, in its lapsed state, can even perform its duty without supernatural and gracious assistance and, consequently, that the doctrine

of works of supererogation is chimerical and absurd. On this part of the scheme there is, therefore, no necessity to extend the argument. Another testimony from our church, article 14th, will set this matter in a strong light: "Voluntary works beside, over and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety: for, by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do; but that they do more, for His sake, than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, 'When ye have done all that are commanded of you, say, We are unprofitable servants.' The arrogancy and impiety, and we may add the ignorance, manifested by this doctrine are truly without parallel.

What remains to be considered, is the merit of sufferings; their capability to atone for sin, and their tendency to purify the soul.

I presume it will be taken for granted that there was no suffering in the world previously to the introduction of sin: suffering is an imperfection in nature; and a creature, in a state of suffering, is imperfect because a miserable creature. If an intelligent creature be found in a state of suffering, and of suffering evidently proceeding from the abuse of its powers; it necessarily supposes that such creature has offended God, and that its sufferings are the consequence of its offense, whether springing immediately from the crime itself, or whether inflicted by Divine justice as a punishment for that crime. As sufferings in the animal being are the consequence of derangement or disease in the bodily organs, they argue a state of mortality; and experience shows that they are the predisposing causes of death and dissolution. Derangement and disease, by which the regular performance of natural functions is prevented, and the destruction of those functions ultimately effected, never could have existed in animal beings, as they proceeded from the hand of an all-perfect and intelligent Creator. They are, therefore, something that has taken place since creation; and are demonstrably contrary to the order, perfection, and harmony of that creation; and consequently did not spring from God. As it would be unkind, if not unjust, to bring innumerable multitudes of innocent beings into a state of suffering or wretchedness; hence the sufferings that are in the world, must have arisen from the offenses of the sufferers. Now, if sin have produced suffering, is it possible that suffering can destroy sin? We may answer this question by asking another: Is it possible that the stream

produced from a fountain can destroy the fountain from which it springs? Or, is it possible that any effect can destroy the cause of which it is an effect? Reason has already decided these questions in the negative. Ergo, suffering, which is the effect of sin, cannot possibly destroy that sin of which it is the effect. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose the grossest absurdity that can possibly disgrace the understanding of man.

Whether these sufferings be such as spring necessarily out of the present constitution of nature; and the morbid alterations to which the constitution of the human body is liable from morbidly increased or decreased action: or whether they spring, in part, from a voluntary assumption of a greater share of natural evil than ordinarily falls to the lot of the individual, the case is not altered; still they are the offspring and fruit of sin; and, as its effects, they cannot destroy the cause that gave them birth.

It is essential, in the nature of all effects, to depend on their causes; they have neither being nor operation but what they derive from those causes; and, in respect to their causes, they are absolutely passive. The cause may exist without the effect; but the effect cannot subsist without the cause: to act against its cause is impossible, because it has no independent being, nor operation; by it, therefore, the being or state of the cause can never be affected. Just so sufferings, whether voluntary or involuntary, cannot affect the being or nature of sin, from which they proceed. And, could we for a moment entertain the absurdity, that they could atone for, correct, or destroy the cause that gave them being, then we must conceive an effect wholly dependent on its cause for its being, rise up against that cause, destroy it, and yet still continue to be an effect, when its cause is no more! The sun, at a particular angle, by shining against a pyramid, projects a shadow, according to that angle, and the height of the pyramid. The shadow, therefore, is the effect of the interception of the sun's rays, by the mass of the pyramid. Can any man suppose that this shadow would continue well defined, and discernible, though the pyramid were annihilated, and the sun extinct? — No. For the effect would necessarily perish with its cause. So, sin and suffering; the latter springs from the former: sin cannot destroy suffering, which is its necessary effect; and suffering cannot destroy sin which is its producing cause: Ergo, salvation by suffering is absurd, contradictory, and impossible.

III. Penal sufferings, in a future state, are supposed by many to be sufficiently efficacious to purge the soul from the moral stains contracted in this life; and to make an atonement for the offenses committed in time. This system is liable to all the objections urged against the preceding, and to several others peculiar to itself: for, if there had not been sin, there had not been punishment. Penal sufferings, inflicted by Divine justice, are the desert of the crimes which require justice to inflict such punishments. If the sufferings inflicted by this Divine justice be supposed to be capable of annihilating the cause for which they are inflicted; if they annihilate the cause, they must be greater than that cause, and consequently unjust; because, in that case, the punishment would be greater than the offense. Such penal inflictions could not proceed from a righteous God.

But the ground of this system is absurd: we have no evidence from Scripture or reason, that there are any emendatory punishments in the eternal world.

The state of probation certainly extends only to the ultimate term of human life. We have no evidence, either from Scripture or reason, that it extends to another state. There is not only a deep silence on this, in the Divine records; but, there are the most positive declarations against it. In time and life, the great business relative to eternity is to be transacted. On passing the limits of time, we enter into eternity; this is the unchangeable state. In that awful and indescribable infinitude of incomprehensible duration, we read of but two places or states; Heaven and Hell; glory and misery: endless suffering, and endless enjoyment. In these two places, or states, we read of but two descriptions of human beings: the saved and the lost; between whom there is that immeasurable gulf, over which neither can pass. In the one state we read of no sin, no imperfection, no curse: there, all tears are for ever wiped away from off all faces; and the righteous shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." In the other, we read of nothing but "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" of "the worm that dieth not;" and of "the fire which is not quenched." Here, the effects and consequences of sin appear in all their colorings, and in all their consequences. Here, no dispensation of grace is published; no offers of mercy made; the unholy are unholy still; nor can the circumstances of their case afford any means by which their state can be meliorated; and we have

already seen, that it is impossible that sufferings, whether penal or incidental, can destroy that cause, (sin,) by which they were produced.

Besides, could it be even supposed that moral purgation could be effected by penal sufferings, which is already proved to be absurd, we have no evidence of any such place as purgatory, in which this purgation can be effected: it is a mere fable, either collected from spurious and apocryphal writings, canonized by superstition and ignorance; or it is the offspring of the deliriums of pious visionaries, early converts from heathenism, from which they imported this part of their creed: there is not one text of Scripture, legitimately interpreted, that gives the least countenance to a doctrine, as dangerous to the souls of men, as it has been gainful to its inventors: so that, if such purgation were possible, the place where it is to be effected cannot be proved to exist. Before, therefore, any dependance can be placed on the doctrine raised on this supposition, the existence of the place must be proved; and the possibility of purgation in that place demonstrated. The opinion of our own church on this, and its kindred doctrines, should be heard with respect: “The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping, and adoration, as well of images as of reliques, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God.” — Article xxii.

As to the atonement which is to be made to Divine justice, by enduring the torments of the damned, for ages numerable or innumerable, it is not found in the letter of the Divine oracles, nor by any fair critical deduction from that letter. Purgatory, professing to be an intermediate place, previously to its examination, has a sort of claim on our attention; but when this profession is examined, it is found to be as unreal a mockery, as the limbus [border, hem] of vanity, from which its ideal existence has sprung. But the doctrine of the final extinction of the fire that is not quenched, and the final restoration of all lapsed intelligences, has no such claims; it appears before us as a formal contradiction of every scripture which relates to that awful subject; founding itself on meanings which have been extracted from Greek and Syriac words, by critical torture; and which others, as wise as the appellants, have proved these words, in such connections, cannot bear.

But we must take up, and view this subject in another light. We have already seen that every intelligent being owes the full exercise of all its powers to its Creator, through the whole extent of its being: and if such creature do not love and serve God with all its heart, soul, mind, and strength, through the whole compass of its existence, it fails in its duty, and sins against the law of its creation. Now, it cannot be said, that beings, in a state of penal sufferings, under the wrath and displeasure of God, (for, if they suffer penally, they must be under that displeasure,) can either love or serve Him. Their sufferings are the consequences of their crimes, and can form no part or their obedience. Therefore, all the ages in which they suffer, are ages spent in sinning against this first and essential law of their creation; and must necessarily increase the aggregate of their demerit, and lay the eternally successive necessity of continuance in that place and state of torment. Thus it is evident, that this doctrine, so specious and promising at its first appearance, is essentially defective; and contains in itself the seeds of its own destruction. Besides, if the fire of hell could purify from sin, all the dispensations of God's grace and justice among men must have been useless; and the mission of Jesus Christ most palpably unnecessary; as all that is proposed to be effected by His grace and Spirit might be, (on this doctrine,) effected by a proportionate continuance in hell-fire: and there, innumerable ages are but a point in reference to eternity; and any conceivable or inconceivable duration of these torments, is of no consequence in this argument, as long as, at their termination, an eternity still remains.

This system, therefore, can give no consolatory answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" as it is itself essentially destitute of evidence; deficient in the validity of its adduced proofs; and, consequently, incapable of affording conviction to the enquiring mind.

IV. The doctrine of the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, has been adduced as affording a stable ground on which the hope of final salvation might be safely built. This doctrine is attributed to Pythagoras; but it is likely that he derived it from the Egyptians or Indians, who professed it long before his time; and among the latter of whom it is an article of faith to the present day.

It is on the ground of this doctrine that the bramins refuse to take any animal food, or destroy any living creature; as they suppose that the soul of an ancestor or relative may be lodged in fish, fowl, or beast. This doctrine not only allows men another state of probation after this life, but many such states; for in every body, especially human, through which, according to this opinion, the soul passes, it has an opportunity of acquiring those virtues by which it may be assimilated to the Divine Being; and afterwards be absorbed into the Divine essence.

The Pharisees among the Jews were certainly not only acquainted with this doctrine, but held it as an article of faith. It appears in the question of the disciples to our Lord, ~~John~~ John 9:2. Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Is his blindness a punishment on his parents for their sins? or did he sin in some other body, that he is punished with blindness in this? Though this doctrine is hinted at in this and some other places in the Bible; yet it is no where taught in that sacred book. It is not a doctrine of revelation; nor does it appear to have any foundation in reason. There are no facts in nature from which it can be inferred; and I am not acquainted with any arguments in philosophy, by which it can be proved to be either possible or plausible. Yet it has a greater show of simplicity and probability than the doctrines of emendatory punishments in hell; or of purging fires in an intermediate state. And were I to become a volunteer in faith, I could reconcile the metempsychosis to my reason, much sooner than I could any of the preceding systems. But this scheme also fails in several essential points:

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1. It has nothing in Scripture to support it.
 2. It is not a doctrine that sound philosophy can espouse; because it is incapable of any kind of rational or metaphysical proof.
 3. Could it be shown to be probable, it would not answer the end proposed; as it is absurd to suppose that a soul by becoming brutalized, could be refined and purified; or that by animating a body with bestial inclinations, it could acquire habits of virtue; or that by passing through so many mediums, it could make atonement for past transgressions; while in every state it was committing new offenses;

or, that these temporary degradations could be considered an adequate price for eternal glory.

For, in this, as in all preceding cases, we are to consider that there are —

1. Crimes which require an atonement.
2. Impurities which require purgation. And,
3. A state of endless felicity which must be purchased: and it is obvious that in each of these respects this doctrine, weighed in the balances, is found wanting.

V. The fifth opinion, which is by far the most plausible, is this: That God, through His own mere benevolence, may pardon sin, purify the soul, and confer everlasting bliss; and, therefore, to the sincere inquirer in the text it may be said, God is a Being of infinite benevolence; trust in His goodness, endeavor to live soberly and virtuously for the future, and doubt not that He will take you at last to His eternal glory.

This is specious; [erroneous] and by such assertions many have been, and are still deceived. For who can doubt that He, whose name is mercy, and whose nature is love, will not, from His endless benevolence, forgive a miserable sinner; and take, when earnestly solicited, a sincere penitent to an everlasting state of blessedness? Doubts on this point have been deemed irrational and absurd; and the assertion that salvation cannot be obtained in this way, has been regarded as little less than blasphemy. To see the merits of this scheme, the reader must consider that it is not God's benevolence or mercy in or through Christ which is here spoken of; but benevolence or mercy in itself; and acting from itself; without any consideration whatever to any thing done by the person himself; or by any other in his behalf: for this scheme supposes that God does this merely through the impulse of His own benevolence or goodness.

What God can do in the exertion of any one of His attributes, is not the question: but what He can do consistently with all the perfections of his nature. We know that He is omnipotent; and as omnipotence is unlimited, and unconfined, it can do every thing that is possible to be done: but, notwithstanding, it does not do all that is possible to be done; for it is possible, in the illimitable vortex of space, to create unnumbered worlds;

but this is not done. It is possible to change, in endless variety, the worlds and beings already made, and give them new modes of existence, new qualities, other forms, habits, etc. etc. by successive infinite changes; but neither is this done. Thus we see that the existence of attribute or perfection in the Divine nature, does not necessarily imply the exertion of that attribute or perfection, in any work suitable or correspondent to the nature of that attribute.

All the Divine perfections are in perfect unity and harmony among themselves: God never acts from one of His attributes exclusively; but in the infinite unity of all His attributes. He never acts from benevolence to the exclusion of justice; nor from justice to the exclusion of mercy. Though the effect of His operations may appear to us to be in one case, the offspring of power alone; in another, of justice alone; in a third, of mercy alone; yet, in respect to the Divine nature itself; all these effects are the joint produce of all His perfections; neither of which is exerted more nor less than another. Nor can it be otherwise; nor must we by our pre-conceived opinions, or to favor our particular creed, set the attributes of God at variance among themselves; or “wound one excellence with another.” God, therefore, can do nothing by the mere exercise of His benevolence, that is not perfectly consistent with His justice and righteousness.

Should it be said that, because God is infinitely good, therefore we may expect that He will save sinners, from this consideration alone: I answer, that God is infinitely just; and therefore we may expect that He will, on that consideration, show mercy to no man! Now, the argument in the one case is precisely as good and as strong as in the other; because the justice of God that requires Him to punish sinners, is equal to His mercy, which requires Him to save them. And this argument is sufficient to show, that the exercise of the mere benevolence of God is no ground to hope that He will save sinners: for humanly speaking, considering the apostate condition of this sinful world, and the multiplied rebellions and provocations of men, it is more natural to suppose, that, if any attribute of God can be exercised exclusively of the rest, it must be, in this case, His justice; and if so, the destruction of the whole human race must be inevitable. The conclusion in one case is as warrantable and legitimate as in the other. Here, therefore, we gain no ground; but are obliged to retire from the consideration of this

subject with the fullest conviction that salvation, on this hypothesis, is wholly impossible.

To the objection, that “as the king has the royal prerogative to pardon those who are convicted and condemned by the law; and that he can, without any impeachment of his character, as the fountain of justice and supreme magistrate in the land, display his royal clemency in remitting capital punishments, pardoning the guilty, and restoring him to his primitive condition, with all the rights and privileges of civil society;” it may be answered, that it is never supposed that the king acts thus from the mere impulse of his clemency; though the words *de gratia nostra speciali, et ex mero motte nostro*, (of our special grace, and mere motion,) be sometimes used; yet it is always understood that for every act of this kind “there are certain reasons and considerations, thereunto him inducing:” and these reasons and considerations are such as in his own opinion, and that of his counsellors, are a sufficient vindication of his conduct. Sometimes in the pardons themselves, these reasons are stated, *ad instantiam dilecti et fidelis nostri A. B. pardonavimus C. D.* “at the earnest entreaty of our beloved and faithful friend A. B. we have pardoned C. D.” etc. or *Nos — de avisamento et assensu Dominorum Spiritualium et Temporalium, ac ad specialem requisitionem Communitatis regni nostri Angliae, in presenti Parlamento nostro existentium, pardonavimus et relaxavimus A. B.* “We — by the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and at the special request of the Commons of our kingdom of England in the present Parliament assembled, have pardoned and forgiven A. B.” etc.

At other times, the king enumerates a great variety of reasons why he should do this; at first, the consideration that vengeance is the Lord’s, and he will repay. 2. A consideration of the passion of Christ for transgressors. 3. Filial piety towards the blessed virgin: and, lastly, the consideration of innumerable favors received from the hand of God; as in the case of a royal pardon granted to several traitors by Hen. VI. See Rymer, Vol. IX. page 178.

Add to all this, that such clemency is not extended, where something cannot be pleaded in arrest of justice; something that may be said to lessen the iniquity and enormity of the crime. And it may likewise be added, that

no wise and prudent king ever resorts to the exercise of this prerogative of his crown, where the circumstances of the case will not justify him both in the sight of equity, and in the sight of his people. For, as Sir Henry Finch says, “The king has a prerogative in all things that are not injurious to the subject: *Nihil enim aliud potest rex, nisi id solum quod de jure potest*; for the king can do nothing but that which is according to law.” Finch, lib. lxxxiv. 5. Hence, “the power of pardoning offenses is entrusted to the king on a special confidence that he will spare those only, whose case, had it been foreseen, the law itself may be presumed willing to except out of its general rules; which the wisdom of man cannot make so perfect, as to suit every particular case.” 1 Shaw 284.

The king, therefore, was ever supposed to use his royal prerogative in pardoning offenses, according to the spirit and design of the law: and never to pardon him whom the law would condemn, all the circumstances of his case having been foreseen.

Now we may rest assured that God never does any thing without infinite reason and propriety; and requires nothing but through the same. His benevolence was the same under the Mosaic law that it is now, or ever can be, as He is unchangeable; yet we find that under the Mosaic law He required sacrifice, and would not remit any offense without this; and for this conduct He must have infinite reason, else he had not required it; thus we see that during that dispensation, His own infinite goodness, separately considered, was no reason why He should remit sin; else He had gratuitously done it without requiring sacrifice, which bears all the appearance of a requisition of justice, rather than a dictate of mercy.

Again, God can have no motive relative to His kingdom or throne, to forgive a transgressor; for He is infinitely independent: therefore, no reason of state can prevail here, nor even exist; and as to any thing that might be found by equity to plead in arrest or mitigation of judgment against the rigorous demands of justice, this also is impossible; for God’s justice can have no demands but what are perfectly equitable: His justice is infinite righteousness, as totally distant from rigor on the one hand, as from laxity or partiality on the other. Again, surely nothing can be alleged in extenuation of any offense committed by the creature against the Creator. Every sin against God, is committed against infinite reasons of

obedience, as well as against infinite justice, and consequently can admit of no plea of extenuation. On all these considerations, there appears to be no reason why God should exercise His eternal goodness merely, in remitting sins; and without sufficient reason He will never act.

Should it be farther said that the wretched state of the sinner pleads aloud in the ears of God's mercy, and this is a sufficient reason why this mercy should be exercised; I answer, as before, that his wicked state calls as loudly in the ears of God's justice, that it might be exclusively exercised; and thus the hope from mercy is cut off. Besides, to make the culprit's misery, which is the effect of his sin, the reason why God should show him mercy, is to make sin and its fruits the reason why God should thus act. And thus, that which is in eternal hostility to the nature and government of God, must be the motive why He should, in a most strange and contradictory way, exercise His benevolence to the total exclusion of His justice, righteousness, and truth! Hence it appears that no inference can be fairly drawn from the existence of eternal benevolence in God to answer the solemn enquiry in the text; nor to afford a basis on which any scheme or human salvation can be successfully built.

As these five schemes appear to embrace all that can be devised on this subject; and on examination each of them is proved to be perfectly inefficient, or inapplicable to answer the purpose for which it is produced; we may therefore, conclude that no scheme of human salvation, ever invented by man, can accomplish this end: and the question What must I do to be saved? must have remained eternally unanswered, if God in His boundless mercy, in connection with all His attributes, had not found out a plan, in which all His perfections can harmonize, and His justice appear as prominent as His mercy.

VI. I come, therefore, to the scheme proposed by the Almighty, and contained in the apostle's answer to the terrified jailor, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

In order to see the force of the apostle's meaning, and understand the propriety of his exhortation, we must endeavor to acquaint ourselves with the Person of whom he speaks. "Believe," says He, "on the Lord Jesus Christ." From this answer, it is certain the apostle intimates that the believing, which He recommends, would bring from the Person, who is the

Object of his exhortation, the salvation after which the jailor enquired. And as trusting in an unknown person for his eternal welfare would be a very blind and desperate confidence; it was necessary that he should be informed of the Author, and instructed in the principles, of this new religion, thus recommended to his notice; and, therefore, it is immediately added, ver. 32. that they spake the word of the Lord unto him, and to all that were in his house, [Greek: the doctrine of the Lord] all the teaching that concerned Jesus Christ, and the salvation which He came to dispense to mankind.

From the specimens we have of the apostle's preaching in the book of the Acts, as well as in his Epistles, we cannot be at a loss to find what the doctrine was which he preached both to Jews and Gentiles: it was, in general, Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{<4006>}Acts 20:16. And of this Jesus, he constantly testified, that although He was the most high and mighty of beings, yet He died for our offenses, and rose again for our justification.

But who is this Person in whom he exhorts the jailor to believe, and who is here called the Lord Jesus Christ? That there has been much controversy on the subject of this question in the Christian world, is well known; and into it I do not propose at present to enter: I shall simply quote one text from this apostle's writings, on which I shall make a few remarks, in order to ascertain what his views of this Person really were: and the conclusions which we must necessarily draw from these views. The text is, ^{<5006>}Colossians 1:16, 17. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Four things are here asserted:

1. That Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe; of all things visible and invisible; of all things that had a beginning, whether they exist in time or in eternity.
2. That whatsoever was created, was created FOR himself: — that He was the sole end of His own work.

3. That He was prior to all creation; to all beings whether in the visible or invisible world.

4. That He is the Preserver and Governor of all things for by him all things consist.

Now, allowing St. Paul to have understood the terms which he used, he must have considered Jesus Christ as being truly and properly God: —

1. Creation is the proper work of an infinite, unlimited, and unoriginated Being; possessed of all perfections in their highest degrees, capable of knowing, willing, and working infinitely, unlimitedly, and without control: and as creation signifies the production of being where all was absolute non-entity; so it necessarily implies that the Creator acted of and from Himself: for, as previously to this creation, there was no being, consequently He could not be actuated by any motive, reason, or impulse, without Himself; which would argue that there was some being to produce the motive or impulse, or to give the reason. Creation, therefore, is the work of Him who is unoriginated, infinite, unlimited, and eternal: but Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things; therefore, Jesus Christ must be, according to the plain construction of the apostle's words, truly and properly God.

2. As, previously to creation, there was no being but God; consequently, the great First Cause must, in the exertion of His creative energy, have respect to Himself alone: for He could no more have respect to that which had no existence, than He could be moved by non-existence to produce existence or creation. The Creator, therefore, must make every thing for himself.

Should it be objected, that Christ created officially, or by delegation, I answer, this is impossible; for, as creation requires absolute and unlimited power or omnipotence, there can be but one Creator, because it is impossible that there can be two or more omnipotent, infinite, or eternal beings. It is therefore evident, that creation cannot be effected officially, or by delegation for this would imply a Being conferring the office, and delegating such power; and that the being to which it was delegated, was a dependent being, consequently not unoriginated and eternal. But this, the nature of creation proves to be absurd —

- 1.** The thing being impossible in itself; because no limited being could produce a work that necessarily requires omnipotence.
- 2.** It is impossible, because if omnipotence be delegated, he to whom it is delegated had it not before: and He who delegates it ceases to have it, and consequently ceases to be God; and the other to whom it is delegated, becomes God; because such attributes as those with which he is supposed to be invested, are essential to the nature of God.

On this supposition God ceases to exist, though infinite and eternal; and another, not naturally infinite and eternal, becomes such; and thus an infinite and eternal Being is produced in time, and has a beginning, which is absurd. Therefore, as Christ is the Creator, He did not create by delegation, or in any official way. Again, if He had created by delegation, or officially, it would have been for that Being who gave him that office, and delegated to him the requisite power; but the text says that all things were made BY him and FOR him, which is a demonstration that the apostle understood Jesus Christ to be the end of His own work; and truly and essentially God.

- 3.** As all creation necessarily exists in time, and had a commencement; and there was an infinite duration in which it did not exist; whatever was before or prior to that, must be no part of creation; and the Being who existed prior to creation, and before all things, all existence of every kind; must be the unoriginated and eternal God: but St. Paul says, Jesus Christ was before all things; ergo, the apostle conceived Jesus Christ to be truly and essentially God.
- 4.** As every effect depends upon its cause, and cannot exist without it; so creation, which is an effect of the power and skill of the Creator, can only exist and be preserved by a continuance of that energy that first gave it being: hence God, as the Preserver, is as necessary to the continuance of all things, as God, as the Creator, was to their original production; but this preserving or continuing power is here attributed to Christ; for the apostle says, and by him do all things consist; for, as all being was derived from Him as its cause; so all being must subsist by him, as the effect subsists by and through its cause. This is another proof that the apostle considered Jesus Christ to be truly and properly God, as he attributes to Him the preservation of all created things, which property of preserving belongs to

God alone; ergo, Jesus Christ is, according to the plain obvious meaning of every expression in this text, truly, properly, independently, and essentially, God.

Taking, therefore, the apostle as an uninspired man, giving his own view of the Author of the Christian religion; it seems, beyond all controversy, that himself believed Christ Jesus to be God: but, considering him as writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then we have, from the plain, grammatical meaning of the words he has used, the fullest demonstration that He who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, was God over all: and as God alone can give salvation, and God alone remit sin, hence with the strictest propriety the apostle commands the almost despairing jailor to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he should be saved.

In examining the preceding schemes of salvation, we have already seen, that God cannot act from one attribute exclusively; that He can do nothing without infinite reason; and that when He acts, it is in and through the infinite harmony of all His attributes.

In the salvation of the human soul, two attributes of God appear to be peculiarly exercised; viz. His justice and His mercy; and to human view, these attributes appear to have very opposite claims; nevertheless, in the scheme of salvation laid down in the Gospel, these claims are harmonized so, that God can be just, and yet the “justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.” In this scheme “Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.”

From St. Paul’s doctrine concerning Christ, as the Savior of men, we may learn what it was which he wished the jailor to believe, viz.

1. That this glorious Personage, who was the Creator, Preserver, Owner, and Governor of all things, was manifested in the flesh, and suffered, and died, to make an atonement for the sins of the world: for it is most evident from all the apostle’s writings, that he considered the shedding of Christ’s blood in his death, as a sacrificial offering for sin; and he ever attributes the redemption of the soul and the remission of sins, to the shedding of this blood.

2. That His life was offered for the life of men; and that this was a sacrifice which God Himself required; for Christ was considered “THE LAMB OF GOD which takes away the sin of the world.”
3. That all the Law and the Prophets bore testimony to this; and that He, as a sacrifice for sin, was the end of the Law, for righteousness, [Greek: for justification,] to every one that believeth.

That God manifested in the flesh is a great mystery, none can doubt; but it is what God Himself has most positively asserted, ~~John~~ John 1:1-14, and is the grand subject of the New Testament. How this could be, we cannot tell: indeed the union of the soul with its body is not less mysterious; we can just as easily comprehend the former as the latter: and how believers can become “habitations of God through the Spirit,” is equally inscrutable to us; yet all these are facts sufficiently and unequivocally attested; and on which scarcely any rational believer, or sound Christian philosopher, entertains a doubt. These things are so; but how they are so, belongs to God alone to comprehend: and as the manner is not explained in any part of Divine Revelation, though the facts themselves are plain; yet the proof and evidences of the reasons of these facts, and the manner of their operation, lie beyond the sphere of human knowledge.

From what has been said, we derive the following particulars: —

1. That the Word, which was with God, and is God, became flesh, and tabernacled among us: this is a truth which we receive from Divine Revelation.
2. That God never does any thing that is not necessary to be done; and that He never does any thing without an infinite reason: — these are truths, also, which we learn from the perfections of the Divine Nature.
3. That God has required the incarnation, and passion of Jesus Christ and this the Sacred Scriptures abundantly declare.
4. That this would not have taken place, had it not been infinitely reasonable, and absolutely necessary, we learn from the same perfections.
5. That the sacrifice of Christ, thus required by God, was infinitely pleasing to Him, and completely proper to accomplish the end for

which it was appointed: — this is evident, from its being required; for God can require and devise nothing that is not pleasing to Himself, proper in itself; and fit to accomplish the end for which it was required.

6. That, as the sacrifice of Christ was required to take away the sin of the world, we may rest assured that it was proper to accomplish that end; and that God, in the claims of His justice and mercy, is perfectly pleased with that sacrifice.

7. That, as the dignity of Jesus Christ is infinitely great and glorious; so all His acts have an infinite merit; because they are the acts of a Being absolutely perfect.

8. That, though His passion and death could take place only in the human nature which He had associated with His Divinity, for in that “dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” yet this association stamped all the acts of that manhood with an infinite value.

9. And, as these sufferings, etc. took place in human nature, and were undergone on account of all those who were partakers of that nature, therefore they were sufficient to make atonement for the sins of the whole world; and are, to the Divine justice, infinite reasons, why it should remit the sins of those in whose behalf these sufferings, etc. were sustained. When, therefore, a sinner goes to God for mercy, he goes, not only in the name, but with the sacrifice of Christ: this he offers, by faith, to God; that is, he brings it with the fullest confidence, that it is a sufficient sacrifice and atonement for his sins; and thus he offers to Divine justice an infinite reason why his sins should be blotted out. To this faith can attach itself without wavering; and on this, God can look with infinite complacency and delight. And it follows, that the man whose business it is to make known the way of salvation to perishing mortals, can say with the utmost confidence to every genuine penitent, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and THOU shalt be saved.”

This scheme is of God’s own appointment: by it His law is magnified and made honorable; from its very nature it must be effectual to the purposes of its institution; and is liable to none of the objections with which all

other schemes of salvation are encumbered. By it, the justice of God is as highly magnified as His mercy. “What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God” has done by “sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [Greek: as a sacrifice for sin,] condemned sin in the flesh.” ^{ROM}Romans 8:3. And thus our salvation is of grace; of the free mercy of God, in and through Christ; not of works, nor of sufferings, that any man should boast; and thus God has the glory to eternity while man enjoys the unspeakable gift, and the infinite benefits resulting from that gift.

In this scheme of redemption we see a perfect congruity between the objects of this redemption, and the redemption price which was paid down for them. The objects of it are the human race; all these had sinned and come short of the glory of God: it was right, therefore, that satisfaction should be made in that same nature, either by receiving punishment, or paying down the redemption price. Now we have already seen that, bearing the punishment due to a crime, is no atonement for that crime nor can answer any of the purposes of that original law which God gave to man in his state of innocency: and we have also seen, that no acts of delinquents, however good they may be supposed, can purchase blessings of infinite worth, or make atonement for the past. Hence, it is absolutely impossible that the human race could redeem themselves; and yet, justice and the fitness of things required that the same nature which sinned should be employed in the work of atonement. Behold, then, the wisdom and goodness of God! Christ assumes human nature: — that it might be free from blot, stain, or imperfection; it is miraculously conceived, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a Virgin; and, that it might be capable of effectually performing every redeeming act, GOD was manifested in this flesh. Here, then, we see the same nature suffering which had sinned; and we see all these sufferings stamped with infinite merit, because of the Deity who dwelt in that suffering humanity. Thus Christ was man, that he might suffer and die for man; and He was GOD, that the sufferings and death of the man Christ Jesus might be of infinite value! The skill, contrivance, and congruity of this system, reflect as high honor on the wisdom, as on the mercy of God!

It has been stated in the commencement of this discourse, that men, by their personal transgressions, are exposed to eternal punishment; and, in

consequence of the impurity or infection of their nature, they are incapable of enjoying eternal glory; and, therefore, to be saved, must necessarily imply the being delivered from all the guilt of all sin, and from all its impurity; so that the soul shall be a proper habitation of God through the Spirit; and be capable of an eternal union with Him in the realms of glory. How, therefore, are these purposes to be effected by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? St. Paul says, ^{<REF>}Galatians 3:22. “The Scriptures hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Now, the promise not only comprehends the incarnation of Christ, but also the blessings to be communicated through that incarnation. These blessings may be all summed up in these three particulars;

1. Pardon of sin;
2. The gift of the Holy Spirit, for the purification of the heart; and, Eternal life, as the consequence of that pardon and purification.

Now Christ, by His sacrificial death, has purchased pardon for a condemned world, and reconciliation to God; for, “God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them.” ^{<REF>}2 Corinthians 5:19. And we “have redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” ^{<REF>}Ephesians 1:7. When reconciled to God, and thus brought nigh by the blood of Christ, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is a fruit of the death, resurrection, and ascension, of our Lord. ^{<REF>}Psalms 68:18. ^{<REF>}Ephesians 4:8. And this Spirit, which is emphatically called the HOLY Spirit, because He is not only infinitely holy in His own nature, but His grand office is to make the children of men holy, is given to true believers, not only to “testify with their spirits that they are the children of God,” ^{<REF>}Romans 8:16.; but also to purify their hearts; and thus he transfuses through their souls His own holiness and purity; so that the image of God in which they were created, and which by transgression they had lost, is now restored; and they are, by this holiness, prepared for the third benefit, the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, in perfect union with Him who is the Father and God of glory, and the Fountain of holiness. This pardon and reconciliation, this holiness and purity, and this eternal glory, come all in consequence of the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and mediation of Christ; and this complete

restoration to the image and likeness of God is the utmost salvation the soul of man can possess; and being brought to eternal glory; the utmost beatification of which a created intelligent being is capable. And as it has been demonstrated that no scheme of salvation ever invented by man can procure or produce these blessings; and as the word of God shows that all these things are provided by the Christian system; we may confidently assert that there is no name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved: neither is there SALVATION in any other. ⁴⁰¹²Acts 4:12; and, with the same confidence we can say to every sinner, and especially to every genuine penitent, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The exhortation itself appears so very rational, and the basis on which it is built so very solid, that all difficulties in the way of faith or believing are completely removed; so that it seems as impossible, on this ground, not to believe, as it seemed before to credit the possibility of being saved, even through this scheme; because it has been too often recommended unaccompanied with those considerations, which prove it to be the first-born of the goodness, wisdom, justice, and mercy, of the God and Father of ALL.

On a review of the whole of the preceding argumentation, it maybe objected to this doctrine, as it was to St. Paul, its first systematic defender, "You make void the law through faith." To which we reply as he did: God forbid! Yea, we establish the law.

Whether we understand the term law as signifying the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic institution; or the moral law which relates to the regulation of the manners or conduct of men; the doctrine of salvation by faith establishes this law. All the law of commandments, consisting of ordinances, had respect to Christ, who alone was the Object and the End of this law; and, by His passion and death, the whole of its sacrificial system, in which its essence consisted, was fulfilled and established.

As to the moral law, this also is fully established by the doctrine of salvation by faith: for, the faith essential to this doctrine works by love; and love is the principle of obedience, and he who receives salvation by faith, receives, at the same time, power from God to live in obedience to every moral precept; and such persons are emphatically termed the workmanship of Christ, created anew unto good works. They are born of

God, and his seed remaineth in them; and they cannot sin because they are born of God. Being freed from the dominion, guilt, and in being of sin, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; and, in a righteous life, they “show forth the virtues of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.” The very thoughts of their hearts are cleansed by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit; so that they are enabled perfectly to love Him, and worthily to magnify His name.” They show the work of the law written in their hearts, by living not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The very Spirit which is given them, on their believing in Christ Jesus, is the Spirit of holiness; and they can retain this Spirit no longer than they live in the spirit of obedience. He, who is saved by grace through faith, not only avoids every appearance of evil; but lives an innocent, holy, and useful life. Hypocrites, Pretenders to holiness, and Antinomians of all sorts, have no interest in this sacred doctrine: they neither know its nature, nor power; before such swine, God will not have His pearls cast; they “are of their father the devil, for his lusts they will do.” Let not the doctrine suffer on their account; they have neither lot nor part in this matter; if they hold this truth in their creed, they hold it in unrighteousness.

We have already seen that the law given to man in his state of innocence was most probably this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” As he not only broke this law by his first transgression, but also lost the power to fulfil it; the object of God in his redemption, was not merely to provide pardon for the breach of this law, but to restore him to that Divine image which he had lost; hence the Gospel proclaims both pardon and purification; and they that believe are freely justified from all things, and have their hearts purified by faith. Thus the grand original law is once more written on their hearts by the finger of God; and they are restored both to the favor and to the image of their Maker. They love Him with all their powers; and they serve Him with all their strength. They love their neighbor as themselves, and consequently can do him no wrong. They live to get good from God, that they may do good among men. They are saved from their sins, are made partakers of the Divine nature, escape the pollutions that are in the world; and being guided by His counsel, they are at last received up into His glory.

Now, to Him, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

FINIS.

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