

OBSERVATIONS TO PROVE
THAT A PLAIN & COMPREHENSIBLE DOCTRINE OF

THE TRINITY IS TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES.

BY A GOSPEL TRINITARIAN.

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INTRODUCTION.

Whoever attempts to improve the religious belief of a country, will find it a task of no ordinary difficulty; for, however pure and disinterested may be his motives, still he may rest assured they will be impugned, and his language perverted, by those who are interested in supporting the popular faith.

Thanks, however, to that wide-spreading desire for knowledge, which has allowed the mild spirit of the gospel to have a more powerful influence over the minds of men, and imparted to many sincere and enlightened believers, a wish that a system of faith might be found, which would be more plain and simple than any of our popular creeds, yet so evangelical as to embrace all the important and saving doctrines of the gospel.

It is, however, no trifling affair for a sincere believer in the gospel, to differ from every Christian church in matters of belief; nevertheless, this undertaking was not the determination of an inconsiderate moment, but the fulfilment of a wish long-cherished, and only delayed until circumstances allowed me an opportunity of proceeding with the inquiry.

Being weary with the never-ending disputes between Trinitarians and Unitarians, I came to the bold resolution of examining the gospel for myself, for I felt convinced that if the doctrine of salvation taught in its holy pages was so clear -that " he who runs may read," or that a "way-faring man cannot err," there must have been some illustrative principle overlooked, or else the Christian world could not have been wrangling for nearly 2,000 years about its true meaning In pursuing this inquiry, (which I should have extended further had my health permitted,) I have been led to conclusions which promise to give a more comprehensible character to the doctrine of the trinity than any of our popular views on that subject; but whether this new view of the trinity will have a convincing influence over the minds of professing Christians, is a question I cannot answer; nevertheless, I can most solemnly declare, whatever may be its effect, that no sinister motives induced me to take up the subject; and how far the true evangelical spirit of the gospel has governed my labors, a liberal and enlightened public will be the best able to judge, should they think my remarks worthy an attentive perusal.

ARGUMENTS DRAWN UPON VARIOUS SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS.

To Prove that a plain and comprehensible Doctrine of the Trinity is taught by Christ and his Apostles.

THAT eighteen centuries should have passed away since the first promulgation of the Gospel, and yet, the Christian world be as divided as ever respecting the real meaning and doctrine of its divine Author, seems at first view, an extraordinary circumstance, and with some, a conclusive argument that it could not have been a revelation from God, the all wise Creator of the Universe; for they contend, if it had come from God, its meaning would have been so clear and satisfactory, that it could not have remained for eighteen centuries a subject of doubtful disputation; therefore, to understand how, or from what source this confusion and uncertainty have arisen, must be an interesting question to every sincere and sober-minded believer in the gospel.

That this uncertainty has chiefly arisen from the confused and perplexing doctrines which have been promulgated respecting the Trinity, will become evident as we proceed in the inquiry; nevertheless, I shall endeavor to prove that a doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Gospel, and established by the scriptures themselves, but it is not a Trinity of three personal Deities, like that embraced and taught by our popular dogmas of belief, but a Trinity and unity of three divine emanations, all proceeding from God, and having for their united and ultimate object the redemption and final happiness of man, and recognized in the gospel under the three distinct names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

That this kind and Fatherly purpose of redemption originated with our Father, in heaven, the scriptures everywhere declare; and when the fulness of time was come, God sent his well-beloved Son to proclaim and execute his heavenly will. And for the perfect accomplishment of this glorious task, he did, by one of these manifestations of his holy spirit, create Jesus a pure and spotless man, in order that his kind and fatherly intentions might not be counteracted by any mixture with human frailty. Pure and holy as was the nature of Jesus, still, there was nothing attending his external appearance or character, that proved to his countrymen that he was the appointed Messiah; for even John, his forerunner, did not know he was the Messiah when he was baptized, until another manifestation of the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, as he came up from the river Jordan, and a loud voice proclaimed, " this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased! hear ye him."

Now, if we ask for what purpose this Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, the answer seems plain and natural, viz. it was to communicate and enable him to do all the will of his Heavenly Father, which he tells us was his meat and drink, or the daily duty of his mission. That the Redemption of Man was the great object of his mission is clearly pointed out by his preaching, and the labors of love which he daily performed; for after he had been led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, no doubt to meditate on the great and glorious work he was about to undertake, he immediately commenced his labors of love by repairing to the synagogue, and as he had been accustomed to do on the Sabbath day, stood up to read the scriptures, when, by the directing influence of the Spirit, he opened the book and read aloud, " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," and " to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," and he closed the book and gave it back to the minister, and sat down, " and he began to say unto them," " this day is the scriptures fulfilled in your ears," and " all bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Here, then, we see an ample display of the Fatherly character and purpose of God, for all that dwelt in the divine mind was about to be made known to his creatures by this special manifestation of his divine Spirit, through the medium of Jesus.

For a long period the children of Israel had viewed these glorious tidings of salvation through the fainter light of prophecy, but when they saw a more glorious light bursting on a dark and benighted world, they listened with attentive eagerness to the gracious words of salvation which fell from the lips of John, the forerunner of Jesus, who in strains of heavenly persuasion, called on them to " repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand."

This important doctrine of repentance and newness of life was easy to be understood, and perfectly harmonized with the character and object of the Messiah, for when Jesus announced himself as the great mediator of the new covenant, he proclaimed this doctrine wherever he came, and told the deluded children of Israel, that if their righteousness did not exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The preaching of Jesus, which was always illustrative of his mission and character, will naturally lead us to a simplicity of faith, for he was ever anxious to impress on the minds of his Disciples,—that he was sent by God,—that of himself he could do nothing,—that it was by the Holy Spirit of his heavenly Father that he performed all the wonderful works which they beheld, and that the words he spoke were not his own, but the Father's, who sent him; and in all his labors of love he uniformly told his disciples he came to do his heavenly Father's will; and if we follow him to the garden, where his agony was so great that he sweat as it were great drops of blood, we shall see this doctrine more completely exemplified, for while prostrate on the ground, he prayed to his heavenly Father, saying, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." At this awful moment, when his strength and spirit seemed to fail him, an angel came and strengthened him, and then he arose and met his approaching end. With a calm and cheerful resignation; and this special aid of the Holy Spirit will appear more evident if we attend to the trying scene of our Savior's Death, for we shall see with what a heavenly composure he accomplished his heavenly Father's will. When this glorious work was done, and he had submitted to the awful trial of the Cross, and all was finished, the Holy Spirit of God which had so often strengthened him during his labors of love, seems to have been withdrawn from him at this time, for in the last moments of extreme anguish he cried with a loud voice, saying, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and immediately gave up the Ghost." The death of Jesus was a gloomy and heart-rending scene to his disciples, who did not as yet understand the divine plan of redemption, but a brighter day was at hand, for on the third day, God raised up Jesus from the dead, and they again beheld and conversed with their beloved but once crucified master, which recalled to their minds his prophetic words respecting his resurrection from the dead. This re-appearance of their beloved Savior filled their hearts with joy, but when they saw him ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, then was the measure of their joy complete, and the glorious plan of redemption began to dawn upon their minds in brighter colors, and they anxiously waited for that comforter which Jesus had promised he would send from his Father in heaven.

During this eventful period of high expectation, the disciples met together on the day of Pentecost, to congratulate each other on the glorious events which had just taken place, and it was when they were assembled together, that another and third manifestation of the Holy Spirit of God came upon them like a rushing wind, and sat upon each of the disciples in a visible manner.

Then Peter, who was filled with the Holy Ghost, recollecting that Jesus had told him just before he ascended into Heaven, to feed his lambs, rose up and boldly proclaimed the evangelical doctrine of repentance, and the forgiveness of sins, a doctrine which he had just received from the lips of his once crucified but now glorified master.

This special mark of attention which Jesus paid to Peter, after his resurrection, in requesting him to feed his lambs, is a proof that Jesus specially selected Peter to preach that doctrine which he came to reveal; therefore the declaration of Peter enforcing repentance and newness of life is of the highest importance, for this doctrine, which he had just learnt from his beloved master, was still fresh in his memory, and he had just received the Spirit of God, which was to teach him all things pertaining to man's salvation; and what makes this declaration of still greater importance, is, the principles and opinions which he had imbibed from his divine master, had not as yet become entangled with those disputations he afterwards had in counteracting the 19, prejudices of Jewish and Gentile converts; therefore the more likely to correspond to the evangelical teachings of Jesus.

If we carefully examine the Apostolic Writings, we shall find a considerable diversity of opinion among them on several points of doctrine, though they all agreed that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah, the glorious mediator of the new covenant, and that he received all his power from God, the creator of all things, who raised him from the dead; but, that the plain and simple doctrine first taught by the perfect and spotless Jesus, should become more or less entangled with human errors, is not a matter of surprise, for the apostles were not like their holy and spotless master, but men of like passions with ourselves, therefore, they naturally tinged the pure and holy doctrine of Jesus with their own individual character. Thus we find the teachings of Paul and James, on the subject of faith and works, do not always agree, and while Peter is accusing Paul of things hard to be understood, and which some even in their time wrested to their own destruction, Paul, with a warmth of temper, is charging Peter with dissimulation, consequently we must look to Jesus as the foundation of all our hopes, for he alone hath the words of eternal life.

In this short, and I trust plain view of the mission of Jesus, we find nothing that has even the appearance of opposition to the new sketch we have given of the Trinity, while numberless passages may be adduced that scarcely admit of any other meaning than what is in unison with the sentiments already expressed on that subject. That the creed of St. Athanasius, or popular doctrine of the Trinity, is incomprehensible, is a fact readily admitted by its most strenuous advocates; yet it is not its incomprehensibility which I object to, for we readily give our assent to many things we do not comprehend, but it is the improbable and contradictory conclusions to which it leads us, that form the chief objection to its dogmas, for they not only perplex us, but they completely destroy the harmony and simplicity of the gospel.

If we are asked how the Soul and Body are united, and how they act upon each other so as to produce all the wonderful effects we behold respecting their mutual co-operations, we readily confess we cannot tell, but still we believe in their union, and their mutual effect upon each other. Incomprehensible as this question is respecting the soul and body, still there is nothing about it of a contradictory nature; but when we are told, agreeably to our popular faith, that before the foundation of the world it was decreed by the Almighty himself, that He, the everlasting and unchangeable Jehovah, whose power extends throughout the universe, should descend on earth and be crucified by the finite beings he was going to create, it is a statement which seems so improbable, that we can scarcely believe it to be the real doctrine of the gospel. And further, when we are told that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God, and that this very God sits at his own right hand, every unprejudiced believer naturally feels inclined to search the scriptures, to see if these things be true.

The difficulty of comprehending this seemingly mysterious doctrine of the Trinity, is strongly portrayed in the works of that learned and eloquent writer, Dr. WATTS, who, having written on the powers and workings of the human mind with an acumen that few men can boast, turned the whole force of his intellectual capability to this important subject; yet his inquiries seem to have been so entangled and perplexed with his early opinions, that he could not obtain a clear and satisfactory view of this interesting question, for at the close of his pious labors, he offered up a most devout and humble prayer to God, that he 'would instruct him on this doubtful subject: such a devout and humble state of mind would no doubt be highly pleasing to his heavenly father, whom he was addressing, but it was not so to his religious partisans, for although they had styled him the "sweet singer of Israel," when his lofty melodies suited their dogmas of belief, they now, in the ungodly spirit of bigotry, did not hesitate to say he was mentally deranged when he offered up this devout and holy prayer. After having implored the aid of "the great and blessed God" to enable him to understand this apparent mystery of the Holy Trinity, he says, "Thou art witness, oh! my God, with what diligence, with what constancy, and care I have read and searched thy holy Word, how early and late, by night and by day, I have been making these inquiries, how fervently have I been searching Thee on my bended knees, and directing my humble addresses to Thee to enlighten my darkness, and to shew me the meaning of thy Word, that I may learn what I must believe and what I must practice with regard to this doctrine, in order to please Thee, and obtain eternal life," and then adds, "help me, heavenly father, for I am quite tired and weary of human explaining, so various and uncertain."

Although the pious and learned Dr. finds himself perplexed with this difficult subject, still he says, "I would have it observed here, that I do not absolutely determine the sacred doctrine of the Trinity to be incapable of all explication, for though many past attempts may have been weak and insufficient, yet it does not follow that all future attempts shall be so too; who can assure us that God will never give to any favorite Christian the happy turn of thought that may lead him, as by an easy clue, into the knowledge of this mystery!"—See Dr. Watts' Work, v. 5, p. 54.

By advocating the popular faith, many of the plain declarations of scripture are so opposed by the various figurative declarations of scripture, on which this faith is built, that our orthodox friends have been compelled to contend that Christ was a being of two distinct and opposite natures, viz. one nature the very God, and the other nature human, but had this been true, there can be no doubt but Jesus would have stated this important fact to his disciples; now as Jesus did not reveal this very peculiar circumstance to his disciples, it seems more than probable that it has been the inference of some expert Trinitarian, to get the popular doctrine of the Trinity out of its many difficulties.

That Jesus was fashioned like a man, and partook of the inoffensive elements of flesh and blood, is evident from the scriptures, but his nature did not partake of the sinful propensities of our frail nature, therefore, strictly speaking, could not be human, for by his miraculous origin he partook so abundantly of the divine nature, that he was perfect as his Father in Heaven was perfect, and this was the only nature he possessed, for he was from above, while the Apostles were of the earth, and men of like passions with ourselves. With this explanation, and leaving out the idea of his human nature, and allowing that he had but one nature, and that was divine, we shall see how easily many of those passages which evidently referred to him, and which are couched in those glorious terms and appellations so often applied to the holy and ever-lasting Jehovah, may be applied to Jesus, without requiring us to suppose that he was that mighty God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Had Jesus possessed a human nature, those unqualified declarations of spotless purity and perfection would never have been applied to him in that unreserved manner they are, consequently, we ought not, for the sake of a mystical creed, degrade him who was the light of the world, and the express image of his father's love, by such an unscriptural dogma of belief as that of supposing he was encumbered with a nature like our own, and at the same time contend that he was the omnipotent and unchangeable Jehovah.

The improbable and contradictory conclusions to which this part of our orthodox system of belief conducts its advocates, have induced a number of able and learned men to embrace what is now called the Unitarian system of belief, which is more simple, and more easily comprehended; but in their desire to get rid of the perplexing errors of past ages, they appear to me to have overlooked, or not duly appreciated some of the real and evangelical doctrines of the gospel, for their faith, when compared with the sacred writings, seems to be so defective on some points of doctrine, and so indefinite respecting the saving terms of the gospel, that its advocates in general, seem to have no clear and certain prospect ' about their own salvation; consequently, the members of this church, particularly its younger branches, are very liable to be carried away by the bewildering dogmas of fanaticism, or else become the unsuspecting victims of a baneful and speculative unbelief. From their views of the gospel, the unitarians conclude that Jesus was simply a man, and contend, that if he had been of a different nature to ourselves, he would not have been a fit example for us to follow, but the force of this. argument is overruled by their own dogmas of belief, for they admit that the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus without measure, therefore under such circumstances, and agreeably to their own principles, he could not be an example for us to follow, except we were favored with the same unlimited aid of divine power that descended upon our beloved master.

But so far from the holy nature of Christ being an objection to the new view we are taking of the Trinity, we shall see it is in accordance with the spirit and teaching of the scriptures, and is the best possible assurance that the will of our heavenly father was delivered to us by this messenger of his love as pure as it came from him; and at the same time furnishes an ample field wherein the most glorious attributes of God may be graciously displayed to his weak and erring children, for when he sees them sincerely struggling with their load of human frailty to imitate his well-beloved son, he will view their labors with a smile of approbation, and in his pitying mercy will reward them with life eternal, though they may not arrive at that measure of holiness which their beloved Savior has left them as an example to follow.

It is admitted by most orthodox writers, that Jesus nowhere in his gospel has distinctly called himself God, therefore the doctrine of the personal deity of Christ depends on inferences chiefly drawn from a number of equivocal expressions; but the interpretations given to those expressions, are contradictory to some of the most plain and interesting declarations of the gospel, while the Unitarian faith, which considers Jesus merely as a man, is also attended with many difficulties, that embarrass and break the harmony of the scriptures. Yet, if an impartial believer will look with an unprejudiced eye at the many arguments and expressions which can be brought forward in favor of each of these opposing views of gospel salvation, he will not readily condemn either party for their theoretic opinions, but naturally feel a wish that some other view of the scriptures could be given that could reconcile all the apparently opposing expressions on which these contrary systems of belief are founded, as such a result, if it could be obtained, would soften down the spirit of sectarian animosity, and promote the cause of pure and undefiled religion.

In reading over the various arguments which are selected from the scriptures, and brought forward to establish the popular doctrine of the trinity, we find that its advocates look at one side of the question only, and they appear so clear and strong to them that they scarcely think it possible for any sincere believer in the gospel to doubt the correctness of their belief. While the advocates for the unitarian faith, or the unity and oneness of God, select such a variety of passages, which if viewed without duly considering the arguments brought forward by trinitarian believers, appear so conclusive in favor of their faith, that they also wonder how any unprejudiced mind can doubt the correctness of their conclusions. That this partiality is generally adopted by every religious sect and party, no one can doubt, and so long as the gospel is viewed in this unfair and partial manner, so long will its believers be wrangling about its true meaning; therefore, one of the chief objects of this investigation is to remove, as much as possible, this lamentable error which has crept into all our present systems of Christian theology. That all the Christian world will ever think exactly alike on every

point of doctrine, would be unreasonable to expect, but the great desideratum to be obtained is, that the difference which will always exist on points of faith should be of that mild and inoffensive nature as not to destroy that Christian charity for each other which is one of the best tests of a true disciple.

Although Jesus has laid down the practical duties of his religion in the plainest manner, yet, he has not left a formal and specific code of doctrine for our belief, but this important and truly evangelical principle on which all pure religion depends, runs through the whole of his heavenly teaching, viz. that we must repent and be born again, or all our actions must be under the control of heavenly motives, or we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This plain evangelical doctrine, which was uniformly taught by Jesus, is a very important doctrine, for it is easy to be understood, and in complete harmony with the whole of the scriptures; and the declarations of Jesus, that the scriptures cannot be broken, renders it still more important, as we may rest assured that this heavenly Teacher would not use any expression to break the very scriptures he said could not be broken; therefore we may fairly conclude, that many of those highly figurative expressions used by Jesus; and which have been explained by our orthodox friends in such a manner as to break the harmony of the scriptures, have been explained in a way that Jesus never intended. So important is this declaration of Christ, that the scriptures cannot be broken, that we ought to make it our guide in the examination of all those expressions which have been so explained as to oppose the plain and general teaching of the gospel, and then we may be led to adopt a system of belief that will reconcile all the apparently contradictory expressions with each other, and thereby preserve the harmony of the scriptures.

To shew the importance of this rule or principle, and support the gospel view of the trinity which we have taken, we may select those passages in which the glorious character of God is 'stated in the most unequivocal manner. In the first place, it is stated that "no man hath seen God at any time," and that "he is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," that "his glory is so bright that angels are compelled to veil their faces before him," that "he is God alone, and there is none other God beside him." That "he spread the heavens alone," and "created all things," and that this great and glorious being whom we are enjoined to worship, is unchangeable, for "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever!" Yet plain and simple as the system of faith would be to which these clear and impressive declarations naturally conduct us, still, their obvious meaning is opposed by the forced interpretation of a few figurative expressions, though such an explanation is at variance with the beautiful harmony and general teaching of the gospel.

In looking over those passages by which our orthodox friends think their views of the trinity are established, we find a number of expressions wherein Jesus told his disciples, but particularly Philip, that they who had seen him had seen the father also, and to which may be added that expression where Jesus says "I and my father are one," as well as several others of a similar character. Now if these last expressions are explained so as to suit our popular belief of the trinity, the scriptures become broken, and we are entangled with many insurmountable difficulties, for these latter expressions are completely opposed to all those clear and strong declarations we have just before selected to show the oneness and unchangeable character of God.

It is these apparently contradictory expressions which have so long perplexed the real simplicity of the gospel, and given rise to that spirit of angry disputation which has so long disgraced the Christian character, but if we conclude, (and we have strong evidence to uphold such an important conclusion,) that Jesus sometimes only meant the Spirit of God, by the term Father, and did not, as our orthodox friends contend, always mean personally the great Jehovah by that term, we shall be delivered by this very simple distinction from many perplexing difficulties, and more readily conducted to a rational and evangelical view of the trinity. If it be asked how are we to know that Jesus sometimes only meant the Spirit of God, by the term Father, while at other times he meant God, or his father in heaven, by the same expression. In answer to such a question, I should say, the scriptures are the best guide for the context, will generally point out to us which of the two meanings was intended by Jesus, when he used the expression, and I think it is by neglecting to make this distinction that so much confusion and perplexity have attended the Christian faith.

To illustrate this important rule, we may refer to what Jesus said to his disciples, when he promised to them the Comforter, for he said, "At that day, ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you," which could not mean that the great Jehovah should personally dwell in each disciple, for if it did, it would prove too much, for it would prove each disciple to be God, as well as Jesus, but if we suppose that Jesus only meant in this case the Holy Spirit of God by the term Father, then there is no difficulty attending the expression.

That Jesus made this distinction, will be rendered still more evident if we attend to what he said to Mary, just before his ascension, for he said unto her, "go to my brethren, and say unto them I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God," clearly shewing that the term Father had not in both these cases the same import in the mind of Christ; and if this principle of illustration be admitted, we shall find both expressions to harmonize with a plain and simple faith, and the general teaching of the gospel, and completely correspond to the new view we are taking of the trinity; but, if we endeavor to make these two expressions of the term Father, conform to our orthodox faith, and that they have the same import in both cases, the scriptures become a mysterious puzzle, for in this latter case, it is the same as if Jesus had said to Mary, "I ascend to myself," which would have included an inconsistency not warranted by the gospel, however much it may be required to support our popular dogmas of belief.

Again, Jesus told Philip that they who had seen Him, had seen the Father also, which the friends of our popular faith say, meant God, the everlasting Jehovah; but on another occasion, when Jesus was addressing his disciples respecting God, or his Father in heaven, as

shewn by the context, he said unto them, "Ye have neither seen his shape nor heard his voice at any time," though they had often seen Jesus, and heard him speak. In opposition to this simple illustration of many difficult passages in the gospel, it may be argued by our orthodox friends, that Christ no-where distinctly told his disciples that he used the term Father under two different meanings; but such an argument may be applied with still stronger force against their own peculiar opinions, for Jesus Christ no-where distinctly told his disciples that he possessed two opposite personal natures, viz. one nature human, and the other nature the everlasting God, though such an incomprehensible doctrine is required, to support our popular view of the trinity; and what is of more consequence still, this explanation which our orthodox friends have given to many of these figurative expressions on which their faith depends, involves the sacred writings in confusion and mystery, while the explanation we are giving to the same expressions is easy to be understood, and in complete harmony with the general teaching and character of the gospel. After Christ had closed all his labors of love, and was about to ascend to God, or his Father in heaven, at whose right hand he now sits, he told his disciples to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," an injunction that is highly illustrative of the new view we are taking of the trinity, for that power which formed the pure and spotless Jesus, "the only begotten Son of God," and the Holy Spirit which descended upon him, and which we find he often designated by the endearing name of Father, as well as the Holy Ghost which descended upon the apostles, were three distinct manifestations of the glorious power of God, and all conspired; on earth in works of love for the redemption and final happiness of man; therefore, the contemplation of this holy trinity, under such a point of view, will naturally lead the believing mind to that divine source whence they all proceeded, and finally, be the means of conducting a sinful world to the worship of the only true God, the everlasting and unchangeable Jehovah.

By adopting this evangelical view of the trinity, we shall be enabled to examine with satisfaction, most of those apparently opposing passages in the gospel, about which the Christian world has been disputing for so many ages. That it will be a difficult task to find a rule or principle that will completely explain every figurative expression used in scripture, scarcely any one will doubt; but, if a general principle or rule can be established that will remove these palpable contradictions which our orthodox faith introduces between many of the most important declarations of scripture, we shall have gained much, and from what has been already advanced, it appears more than probable that this principle or distinction, for which we are contending, will have this desirable effect. To shew its reconciling influence still further, viz. that Jesus did not always use the term Father in the same sense, and with the same meaning, let us attend to what he said to his disciples respecting their attachment to him, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto my Father, for my Father is greater than I." Now, if we apply the above rule to this passage, we shall see how beautifully the passage will harmonize with the general teaching of the gospel, for it appears that in this case, Jesus referred to his father in heaven, from whom he received all his power. But if we suppose with our orthodox friends, that Jesus was the very God, and agreeably to their faith, believe that it was this very God, who at this time was addressing the disciples, it almost turns the expression into ridicule, for it is the same as if God had said, I am greater than myself.

Jesus often identified himself with the Father, or the Spirit of God in works of love, but when he applied the term Father, to God, he generally called him his Father in Heaven, or his Heavenly Father. He also said unto his disciples, "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." Now, if we apply the principle just laid down, and conclude that Jesus here meant in this case the Holy Spirit of God, by the term Father, the whole will become plain and rational, for he had already imparted the Spirit to them, and promised that when he was ascended to Heaven, a further share of the Holy Spirit of God should descend upon true believers, and teach them all things; but if we adopt our orthodox faith the passage becomes very difficult for us to understand, for it is not easy to conceive how the unchangeable God could personally dwell in the disciples. Although Jesus came to reveal a new and Heavenly doctrine to the children of Israel, and the world, yet he adopted many of the customs of the age in which he lived, for it was the practice to give instruction by proverbs and parables therefore Jesus delivered many proverbs and parables which his disciples did not at first clearly understand, but he said unto them, "the time cometh when I shall no longer speak to you in proverbs, but shall shew you plainly of the Father, for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God; I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father." And his disciples said, "by this we believe that thou tamest forth from God;" and Jesus answered them and said, "do you now believe?"

Now, I ask any unprejudiced believer in the gospel, what language could be more explicit than this, and what expressions more conclusive in favor of the principle for which we are contending. Here, it is as evident as language can make it, that in this case Jesus meant God, and God only; he used the term Father, while in some of those expressions already mentioned, he evidently only meant the Holy Spirit of God which dwelt in him, and which he promised the disciples should come and dwell with them, if they loved him with sincerity. Although Christ told Philip, that they who had seen him had seen the Father also; yet we have the strongest proof that Jesus could not in this case mean that they had seen God by looking at him or his works, without breaking the scriptures, for both John the Baptist and John the Evangelist declare, in the most distinct and positive manner, that no man hath seen God at any time. Having seen a clear and distinct application of this new principle, by comparing some of the most difficult and apparently opposing passages in the gospel, we may proceed to examine other expressions, which have been so explained by our orthodox friends so as to destroy the harmony of the scriptures.

Thus, when Jesus said to his disciples, "I and my Father are one," the malignant Jews endeavored to pervert his words, and said that he spoke blasphemy, for though a man he made himself God; now Jesus knew that by the term God, the Jews meant his Father in Heaven, the great Jehovah, the everlasting God; therefore he immediately rebuked them, and reasoned with them to prove that such an

inference broke the scriptures, and that it was not his meaning when he used the expression; therefore, is it not almost surpassing all belief that this very malicious misrepresentation of his words should now form a part of our popular faith, for the rejection of which we are threatened with everlasting perdition, though we have the solemn declaration of Jesus, that he did not use the words with any such meaning as that put upon them by the malignant Jews and our orthodox friends. If it be asked what Jesus meant by the expression in question, the gospel supplies us with a plain answer, for agreeably to the figurative language of the context, he meant that he and his Father were one shepherd, in protecting the sheep, and not one God, as the obstinate Jews contended; for at another time he prays that his disciples may be one as he and his Father are one; now the least consideration will enable us to see, that Jesus did not mean one person, or one disciple, by this oneness for which he prayed; but that they might be united as he and his father were united in the great work of redemption, for he evidently anticipated those divisions among his disciples which we find took place after his ascension. On another occasion, when Jesus was addressing his disciples respecting his father in heaven, he said to them " call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father which is in heaven, neither be ye called master, for one is your master even Christ," clearly making a complete distinction between God and himself. Besides, on almost every occasion when Jesus had to speak of God, he spoke of him as dwelling in heaven, and that he was the creator and preserver of all things. Thus, when preaching to his disciples on account of their anxiety for worldly things, he said to them, " if God so clothe the grass, which to-day is in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, oh! ye of little faith."

Nor did he, during his labors of love, endeavor to alter the opinion which the children of Israel had formed respecting God, or his father in heaven, for he uniformly taught them to pray to God as their gracious benefactor; by advocating this view of the subject, and allowing that Jesus often used the term father under two different meanings, which may generally be discovered by the context, we shall not have to contend, in order to support an incomprehensible creed, that the everlasting and unchangeable God descended upon earth, and became a little helpless child, although at the same time he possessed unlimited power and wisdom; for had such been the fact, it would not have required an angel to have come down from heaven to forewarn his father and mother in a dream to fly into Egypt with this very God to whom all things past, present, and to come were known. Now the view we have taken of the holy trinity, leads to no such perplexing dogmas of belief, for we have only to contemplate Jesus as the Christ, the pure and spotless son of his heavenly father's love, who in humble expectation, waited until the fulness of time was come for him to announce himself the appointed Messiah, and preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and this he did so effectually by the power of the Spirit of God, which then descended upon him without measure, that the vain and obstinate children of Israel wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

The reply of Jesus to his mother, when she rebuked him for tarrying in the Temple, is a proof that he knew that he was the promised Messiah, the chosen of God; yet Jesus told his disciples that of himself he could do nothing, which in all probability referred to a period before the Spirit of God had descended upon him in a visible manner; for it does not appear that he worked any miracles until the Holy Spirit descended upon him when publicly baptized; and it was this Holy Spirit which descended upon him in a visible form, and imparted to him all the Fatherly purposes of redemption which dwelt in the divine mind, that he often recognized by the endearing name of Father.

From this view of the subject we may discover the propriety of Christ requesting Philip to believe that he saw the Father by the miracles he wrought; without supposing for a moment that Jesus meant by looking at those works that he would see the everlasting God, whom no man hath seen or can see. That Jesus, however, sometimes meant God by the term Father, is equally evident, for when he taught his disciples how to pray, he said unto them, " When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c." which he would not have done without referring to himself had he been that very God to whom he directed them to pray, for we cannot suppose that he practiced dissimulation on this important question.

If we were to extend this inquiry still further, we should meet with many other expressions that favor the idea that Jesus did not always attach the same meaning to the term Father, but I think a sufficient number have been already selected to establish the fact, and furnish us with a rule by which all those expressions in the gospels, including the term Father, may be explained, when aided by the plain sense of the context, without breaking the harmony of the scriptures.

In St. John's Epistle it is stated, that there are three that bear record in heaven: " The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one," which our orthodox friends exultingly say, means one God, and thereby establishes the doctrine of the trinity. Now respecting this verse, many of our ablest divines, among whom are a number of learned Trinitarians, admit that it is an interpolation, as it is not found in the earliest manuscript copies; but without contending for this doubtful point, the passage will admit of another interpretation, besides the orthodox one, that will not break the harmony of the scriptures; for if it be asked what is meant by this oneness, the plain and true evangelical answer is, one testimony, or the agreement of three witnesses, and not one God, an inference that is dictated by the verse immediately following, and in perfect harmony with that oneness which Jesus prayed that his Father would give to his disciples, viz: a oneness of testimony and purpose, and not a oneness of person. Besides, if the view we have taken of the trinity be correct, it furnishes a still more satisfactory solution to the meaning of this difficult passage, for Jesus, just before his ascension, told his disciples to go and preach his gospel to all nations, " baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Now, agreeably to the new version we have given of the Trinity, the first emanation of divine power created God's well-beloved Son a pure and spotless man, and the next manifestation of divine power, which was given without measure, touching man's

salvation, imparted to this spotless Son of his heavenly Father's love all the glorious plan of man's redemption; while the third emanation of the - Holy Spirit of God, here referred to, instructed the Apostles more fully in this great plan of salvation, than what they had learnt from their divine Master, and as all these three divine emanations co-operated together on earth in the glorious work of man's redemption, it follows as a certain result, that the records they bear in heaven so far agree that they might fairly be considered as one witness, though not one God. In contemplating the glorious character and mission of Jesus, we find he was ever anxious to do his heavenly Father's will, and leave an example for his faithful disciples to follow, which he told them if they would sincerely endeavor to imitate, they would, through the mercy of God, be rewarded with everlasting life; and to encourage their endeavors, he told them that he was meek and lowly, and they would find rest unto their souls if they became his sincere disciples.

But the exaltation of Christ for this humility, is the brightest display of God's unbounded love in the plan of redemption, for as a reward for this humble obedience, he raised him from the dead, and took him from a humble station on earth and crowned him with honor and glory far above that of angels, and placed him at his own right hand, from whence he shall come with transcendent glory to judge the world. The more we study this unbounded love to Christ, the more shall we see its wisdom and goodness, for what greater proof can we require of God's love for a life of obedience, than the exaltation of Jesus to such unspeakable honor and glory; and when we consider the frailty of our own nature, and the benign character of him who is to be our judge, how cheering is the thought to the sincere believer, that he once dwelt on earth, and visited the humblest scenes of life, and wept in pity for the sorrows of the world. Thus, whatever view we take of this plan of redemption, we find it began in love, and if we are truly wise it will end in happiness, for God is love. How different is this view of the death of Christ to that which is taught by our popular system of belief. According to its dogmas of faith, it was determined before the foundation of the world that the pure and Holy Jesus, who was God from everlasting, and who, from all eternity, was equal to the Father in wisdom, power, and glory, should be crucified to stop the uplifted arm of his angry Father, and satisfy his offended justice for the offences of finite creatures, which they had mutually agreed to create, though such finite beings were not created at the time this awful determination took place. But what a benevolent and Godlike aspect the view we have taken of the subject gives to this event, when compared with the conclusions of our popular faith. Here we see Jesus, the only-begotten Son of his heavenly Father's love, humbly and cheerfully submitting to a momentary pain, that he might be crowned with that transcendent glory which has filled the host of Heaven with delight, and furnished the sincere believer with the best assurance that his labors of love and duty will not go unrewarded in the world to come; for the same heavenly Father who rewarded our elder brother, is still waiting to manifest his unbounded love to all the obedient followers of his Son; a conclusion to which the writings of St. Paul bear ample testimony, for when addressing his Hebrew brethren, he says, " let us run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Yet in opposition to this lovely character of God, which is displayed in the plan of man's redemption, as well as the exaltation of Christ, our orthodox friends warmly contend that Christ was crucified in order that his streaming blood might appease the wrath of his offended Father, and cleanse the souls of believers; but if all such expressions are to be taken in their literal sense, agreeably to the opinions of orthodox believers, it will be no easy task to shew how, or in what manner the blood of Christ does purify the souls of believers. By referring to the scriptures, we shall find that the gospel of Christ, and the preaching of that gospel, as well as the blood of Christ, are only different modes of expressing the reconciling means of salvation, for as the shedding of blood was the appointed means under the old dispensation of shewing that God and the repenting children of Israel were reconciled, so the shedding of the blood of Christ, or the voluntary sacrifice of himself when he had finished his labors of love, was to be the appointed means under the new covenant of shewing that a guilty world was reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and to keep this important event in perpetual remembrance, the Lord's supper was established, in order that believers might make a public acknowledgment of their faith, and chew they were reconciled to God, by believing his Son's gospel. Just before Jesus made use of that expression which associates the salvation of man with his blood, he told his followers that he was that living water, and if they drank of that water they would live forever, or never thirst again; and then added, he was that bread which came down from Heaven, and if they would eat of that bread or his flesh, they would never hunger again. All of which figures were beautiful illustrations of the purifying and soul-sustaining power of his gospel, but the perverse Jews did not or would not understand him, therefore, he put their perverseness to a further trial, by telling them that they must "eat his flesh and drink his blood, or they could not be his disciples." This declaration, by being taken in its literal sense, seems to have so completely confounded their perverse minds, that Jesus, out of pity, thought proper to give them a less figurative description of what he meant by the expressions in question. Although he had just before told them that their salvation depended on eating his flesh as well as drinking his blood, which was that bread that came down from heaven, yet, to make the expression more plain, he immediately adds, " it is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing," and then closes the illustration by saying, " my words they are spirit and they are life," clearly shewing that he meant his gospel, or holy doctrine, by all these figurative expressions.

That the voluntary death of Christ, and consequently the shedding of his blood, as well as his exaltation, were all comprehended in the divine plan of redemption, before the foundation of the world, is positively stated in the scriptures, and the blood or death of Christ was a public announcement that the great and glorious work of man's redemption was finished; a fact which shewed, agreeably to the typical sacrifice under the old or Mosaic dispensation, that a reconciliation had taken place between a guilty world and a merciful God; but it never was intended as a substitute for that personal holiness which is necessary to salvation, for if repentance and a change of life from bad to good did not take place among the Children of Israel after the reconciling sacrifices were made, such pretensions

were an abomination unto the Lord; and so it is under the gospel dispensation, for if we pretend we are reconciled to God by the atoning blood of his Son, and still go on in works of unrighteousness, our judge will say unto us at the great last day, whatever may be our mystical views respecting the blood of Christ, " I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity."

This appears to me a rational view of the subject, and I would advise our orthodox Mends to consider seriously whether the apostles did not often mean the purifying effects of his gospel when they spoke of the purifying blood of Christ, and then I think they will not be so strongly inclined to perplex the plain teachings of the gospel, by contending for principles of salvation they cannot comprehend. When St. Paul was writing to the Ephesians respecting the gospel, he tells them it is the word of reconciliation, and no doubt he used it with the same meaning as when he said the blood or death of Christ was the means of reconciliation, and on another occasion, when speaking of the gospel, he says, " it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile."

In forming our religious opinions, there is one obvious truth which should always be kept in view by every sincere believer, viz r that the gospel declares in the most unequivocal manner, that our salvation depends on repentance and newness of life, or that change which in the gospel is termed being born again; and it may be stated without the fear of being refuted, that all the figurative expressions used in the gospel were intended to establish this plain and important doctrine, but unfortunately the Christian world in general seems to have reversed this plain and simple purpose of the gospel, and made its highly figurative language the foundation of which to build their faith; and viewed the plain and holy teachings of the gospel as things of a secondary consideration: therefore, it is no wonder that the Christian church should be in a perpetual state of wrangling about its various modes of faith. That this spirit of disputation in the Christian world has been increased by paying too much attention to those wrangling disputes which some of the Apostles had with the early Jewish and Gentile converts, in order to counteract their erroneous views of religion, will be evident if we carefully examine the writings of those who advocate our popular dogmas of belief; but if we turn our attention awhile to that neglected, yet truly evangelical Apostle, James, we shall find that he has erected his truly evangelical doctrine on the plain teachings of Jesus, and seems to have been specially raised up by God to confute the unscriptural views of some early Christians. After a sincere believer has read over the Epistles of St. James, he turns with increased pleasure to the plain and holy teachings of Jesus, for the holy doctrine which was taught by our heavenly master, and is so faithfully reflected from the Evangelic mind of St. James, that we cannot mistake the source whence he derived his heavenly sentiments. Yes, it was from the unpolluted lips of his crucified master that he learnt what pure and undefiled religion was, and which, like refined gold, will shine again in all its native holiness, when the debasing alloy of superstition and fanaticism shall have been taken away.

When this happy time arrives, the question that now puzzles every sincere believer, on account of so many dogmas of belief, will then be solved; he will then see that all who have put on the righteousness of Christ, and thrown aside their own righteousness, which is too often governed by carnal motives, will be the true disciple of Jesus, and in the words of St. John, he will be ready to exclaim to the members of every Christian sect and party, " Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness, is righteous, as he (Christ) is righteous." To this view of the question, St. Paul bears ample testimony, though he is often quoted to establish a very contrary doctrine, for when writing to the Romish converts, he says, " what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit?"

In looking over various sectarian disputes, we find no portions of scripture have been more perverted than those which are supposed to inculcate the popular doctrine of imputed righteousness, arising from what is termed the vicarious sacrifice of Christ; but that faith which teaches the monstrous notion that the righteousness of God the Son, who was crucified to appease the anger of God the Father, will be imputed to us, and our sins transferred to him, is so contrary to all the holy teachings of the gospel, that it seems truly surprising how any rational believer, who has carefully read the scriptures, can entertain such an unscriptural dogma of belief; for if we examine the scriptures with care and attention, we shall find that the evangelical doctrine respecting the righteousness of Christ, is the doctrine of adoption, and not of imputation. That man in his unregenerate state cannot be saved by his own righteousness, is a doctrine taught in almost every portion of the gospel, for his works while in this unregenerate state, generally partake of the nature of sin, as they are stimulated by carnal or worldly motives; but that righteousness which Jesus came to reveal, and in which his true disciples must be clothed, is the offspring of pure and heavenly motives, and these motives must be transferred to us by faith, and if we sincerely practice them in our lives, we shall, at the great last day, receive our heavenly Father's merciful reward. If this view be correct, we may conclude that the righteousness of Christ is not what many of our orthodox friends would have us believe, a substitution for our own personal righteousness, and imputed to us through the vicarious sacrifice of himself, and in which transaction we are merely passive instruments. No: the righteousness presented to us by God through his well-beloved Son, is a personal righteousness, and we must put on this wedding-garment and be clothed in this righteousness, " which must exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." In contending with the temptations of the world, we are told to put on the whole armor of God, that we may stand against the wiles of the Devil; and above all to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, that we may fight the good fight, and come off more than conquerors in this spiritual warfare; and St. Paul, from whose figurative expressions our orthodox friends draw the unscriptural notion of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, most distinctly advocates this view of salvation, for when writing to the Roman converts on the subject of religion, he is so clear and distinct that it seems almost impossible for anyone to have mistaken his views of pure religion.

That the death of Christ was the closing scene to all his labors of love, is evidently set forth in his gospel, for when expiring on the cross, he exclaimed with a loud voice, " It is finished! and gave up the ghost." Yes, by his life and death a new and heavenly way was opened, by which a guilty world might become reconciled to God, by adopting that righteousness Jesus came to reveal; for as flesh and blood constitute the bodily life of man, so the blood or gospel of Christ is the spiritual life of all true believers, and we must eat this flesh and drink this purifying blood or we cannot be his sincere disciples.

This declaration of Jesus, that all was finished, was a public announcement that he had fulfilled the law which man in his unregenerated state was not able to accomplish, and if by a sincere faith we imbibe his holy Spirit, and practice that holiness by which he fulfilled the law, we shall be his true disciples, and God will not impute to us our past sins; but it must be a faith or Godly sorrow that leads to repentance and a life of obedience, or we cannot work out our salvation, for St. Paul says, when writing to the Roman converts, " if when we were sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life," that is, by adopting his righteousness; and the declaration that God will render unto every man according to his works, clearly shews that St. Paul had a distinct belief that the righteousness of Christ must be transferred to us, and become our adopted righteousness, or we should have but little chance of salvation. By this view of salvation, we find that the merits or righteousness of Christ is not an imputed righteousness arising from the vicarious sacrifice of himself, but it is the gift of God through his well-beloved Son, by which the spirit of holiness is imparted to us through his gospel, for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, and having become the adopted children of God through the spirit of his Son's gospel, and having by faith put on his righteousness and overcome the world, we shall receive a welcome into those heavenly mansions which he is gone to prepare for all his sincere and faithful followers.

That the Spirit, or divine teaching of the gospel will impart to sincere believers such a saving holiness as the unchanging mercy of God will reward, is the obvious doctrine of the gospel, for if the righteousness of Christ be not practically transferred to us through faith, we cannot be justified by works, for faith is not the end of the gospel, but only the appointed means of our justification, or why so many strong appeals in the gospel to enforce the doctrine of repentance and newness of life, in order to make us the true disciples of Christ. That the spiritual change had taken place in the immediate disciples of Christ, is a fact which may be inferred from the observations of Jesus himself, for when drawing near the close of his earthly career, he evidently felt a strong conviction that many of them had imbibed and become changed by his purifying religion; for on one occasion when addressing his heavenly father respecting them, he said, " they are not of the world as I am not of the world," which could only refer to their spiritual birth, for originally they were frail men like the rest of mankind, and would have remained so had they not been transformed by his holy doctrine. Now I most earnestly implore the advocates of our popular dogmas of faith, to compare this plain evangelical view of the gospel with their own incomprehensible dogmas of belief, which inculcates the doctrine that our salvation depends on the imputed righteousness of Christ, which is to be imputed to us on account of the vicarious sacrifice of himself, and they will soon discover which of the two is the most in harmony with the general teaching of the gospel, for by the first we shall only have to vary a few of the figurative expressions of the scriptures in order to adapt them to this plain and simple belief, while our orthodox friends will have to alter or pervert the obvious meaning of the most clear and plain. expressions in the gospel to suit the fanciful interpretations they have put upon the figurative language in question.

If the salvation of man had depended on the imputed righteousness of Christ, arising from the vicarious sacrifice of himself, it is an extraordinary fact that Jesus never preached such a doctrine, and to suppose that he meant it but did not declare it to his disciples, is to charge him with dissimulation, which is a charge the most prejudiced orthodox believer will scarcely have the courage to avow. That the demoralizing doctrine of imputed righteousness may find to partial support in the highly figurative language of some of the apostolic writings, may be readily admitted, yet on numberless occasions the apostles used language of the most plain and simple nature, and exactly corresponds to the evangelical teaching of Jesus. In those pathetic appeals which Peter, the devout apostle of Christ, so often made to his perverse and obstinate countrymen, he did on many occasions endeavor to enforce the simple yet truly evangelical doctrine of repentance and newness of life, for the forgiveness of sins, a doctrine that forms the alpha and omega of the Christian faith, and is more or less infused into every line of the gospel. St. Paul also, in his first Epistle to the Romans; infuses into that epistle the very essence and spirit of plain and vital Christianity, though his writings afterwards became so highly figurative by combating the prejudices of the early converts, that they lose their evangelical simplicity, and furnish every sect with arguments to support their own wild and extravagant notions of religion.

This zealous apostle, when addressing the Romans respecting practices which were a disgrace to the disciples of Jesus, stated to them the judgments of God, and told them that God would render to every man according to his deeds; " to them who by a patient continuance in well doing, eternal life; but tribulation and anguish to every soul that doth evil, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God."

This is not language mystified by figurative expressions, it is plain and simple, and comes home to the bosom of every devout and sincere believer, and is such that Jesus in all probability would have used, had he been addressing the Roman converts instead of St. Paul. That the simple description which, St. Peter gives of the character of Christ, and which so well agrees with the plain doctrine which both he and St. Paul promulgated, but ill accords with that interpretation which our orthodox friends have put on Paul's Epistle

to the Colossians, wherein he says that all things visible and invisible were created by Christ, and that " he is the express image of God," from which they infer that he was the very God, the everlasting Jehovah, the creator of all things; but such an inference appears very unfair, for if they will calmly read over this chapter, they will find it stated that Christ was the first born of every creature, and the first born from the dead, which surely could not apply to the everlasting God: it is also stated, he was the beginning, the head of the Church, and that the things he created were thrones, principalities, and powers, therefore, there can be little doubt but all these expressions had a reference to the church, of which he is the head, and the mediatorial kingdom he came to create and establish.

That the apostles had much trouble in preventing the early converts from mixing up their erroneous notions of religion with the plain and simple doctrine of the gospel, is very evident from the writings of the apostles, as the Gospel of St. John seems to have been written in a special manner to counteract many of those anti-Christ notions of the early converts; for different to all the other Evangelists, he prefaces his Gospel, as well as his Epistles, with remarks that had evidently a reference to the erroneous notions which prevailed among believers respecting the character of Christ and his holy religion. Among the early converts to Christianity, an erroneous notion prevailed that Jesus did not partake of flesh and blood, but was an angelic or spiritual being, yet St. John, as well as the other apostle, clearly saw that if Jesus, who died on the cross, and whom God again raised from the dead, did not partake of flesh and blood, then his rising again from the dead would lose its effect in convincing his followers of a resurrection from the dead; which was one of the great objects of his mission; for St. Paul says to the early believers, if Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your hearing also, and it was to counteract the anti-Christian notion that Christ was not a being partaking of flesh and blood, that the Apostles so often insisted that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, and thereby establish the important doctrine of the resurrection, and not to prove that the everlasting and unchangeable Jehovah personally tabernacled in flesh and blood.

It is true that in the scriptures Jehovah is several times called God our Savior, an expression that is highly illustrative of the gospel views we are advocating. That the plan of redemption, as well as creation, originated with God, and was embraced in the divine purposes before man was created, is rendered evident by God appointing Jesus to be Christ before the foundation of the world, therefore all the consequences which were to flow from his becoming the Savior, were present to the divine mind of God before Jesus was appointed to that glorious office, consequently, there can be no impropriety in saying God was our Savior, because he devised the plan which, through Christ, he is now reconciling the world unto himself.

To illustrate this view of the subject still further, we may again refer to the introductory chapter of St. John's Gospel, for he says, " In the beginning was the Word," which evidently refers to the gospel, or all the holy purposes of Christ's heavenly mission, and the word was with God, clearly shewing that the same dwelt in the divine mind before the foundation of the world, and the Evangelist then adds, " and the Word was God," which appears to me perfectly consistent with that expression " God our Savior," for Christ at that time only existed in the bosom or divine mind and purposes of God.

The learned Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on the 35th verse in the 1st Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, says, " the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, is, in my opinion, unscriptural," and for the following reasons:

1st.—I have not been able to find any express declaration in Scriptures, concerning it."

2nd.—If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he cannot be Eternal, for Son, implies a Father, and Father implies, in reference to Son, precedency in time, if not in nature, too. Father and Son imply the idea of generation, and generation implies a time in which it was effected, and time also antecedent to such generation.

3rd.—If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then the Father is of necessity prior, consequently, superior to him.

4th.—Again, if this divine nature were begotten of the Father, then, it must be in time, viz. there was a period in which it did not exist, and a period when it began to exist. This destroys the Eternity of our blessed Lord, and robs him at once of his God-head.

5th.—To say that he was begotten from all Eternity, is, in my opinion, absurd, and the phrase Eternal Son is a positive contradiction.

St. Paul seems to have been impressed with views of this nature, for when speaking of Christ, he says, he was the first-born of every creature, an expression that is still rendered more explicit by his saying, also, that Christ was the first-born from the dead, for this latter effect clearly originated from the power of God, for the Apostles so often declare that God raised Christ from the dead; therefore, as we find it is so positively stated by an authority that cannot deceive us, that God raised Jesus from the dead, we may fairly infer, also, that God, by the same divine power, created his well-beloved Son, who was the express image of himself in all that pertains to holiness. Again, in St. John's gospel, we find our Savior praying to his heavenly Father, that he will glorify him with his own self, with that glory which he had with him before the foundation of the world, proving that he meant by this request, all his mediatorial glory, and not as our orthodox friends contend, to glorify him with all those transcendent glories which belong to the unchangeable Jehovah, and which angels cannot view without veiling their faces; for when Jesus was afterwards addressing his heavenly Father, respecting his disciples, he says, " the glory thou has given me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one," which we cannot imagine was that glory which was too bright for angels to view; therefore it is evident that he meant the glory

of being the appointed redeemer before the foundation of the world, and which glory the Apostles, by the power of God, shared with their divine Master in all his glorious labors of love. Yet, the appointment of a redeemer, and all the earthly consequences of the plan, dwelt in the divine mind before the world was created, and when the Holy Spirit of God descended upon Jesus, impressed with all the benevolent purposes of Salvation, he became the express image of his Father's love, and all the redeeming fullness of the Godhead dwelt in the humble, yet spotless tabernacle of Jesus Christ.

By searching the scriptures, we find that the whole plan of man's Salvation dwelt in the divine mind before the world was created, therefore, how correct are those declarations of the Apostles, wherein they use the expression, the great " God our Savior;" and how admirably they correspond with that apostolic declaration that " There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," who, in the glorious work of redemption, thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

Although a clear knowledge of the whole of the scriptures is attended with many theoretic difficulties, owing to the figurative style in which a great portion of them are written, yet there must be a plain and benevolent design in the plan of Christian salvation, for its glorious tidings were chiefly intended for the poor, consequently must be plain and simple to put them in possession of all the blessings it was intended to bestow; and in support of this view, we are told that the gospel terms of salvation are so plain, that " he who runs may read, and a way-faring man cannot err therein."

But if this statement be true, what shall we say respecting our popular dogmas of belief, for even their learned framers and expounders have been wrangling about them for more than eighteen hundred years, and the dispute is still unsettled; therefore, it is not likely that a way-faring man should understand them. Nevertheless, I still think that the teaching of Jesus Christ contains a simple and saving doctrine which cannot be mistaken, if the influence of early prejudices is not allowed to interfere in the inquiry. During the preaching of Jesus, he always expressed his great anxiety for the welfare of the poor, consequently, with evident delight he endeavored to introduce principles and motives to action that he knew would lessen the evils of the poor, and tend to make all mankind view each other as brethren travelling to their Father's mansion, and their final home.

When Jesus was endeavoring to impress upon the minds of his disciples the peculiar nature of that holy and purifying doctrine he received from his heavenly Father, he said unto them, " Ye have heard that it hath been said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also." Again, ye have heard that it hath been said, " thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemies; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the Children of your Father which is in heaven." " For if you love them that love you what thank have ye, do not even the publicans the same? be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." " Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven; but when thou does alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." " And when thou prays, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward; but when thou prays, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret, and thy father, who sees in secret, will reward thee openly." " Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward; but thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear unto men not to fast, but unto thy father, which sees in secret, and he shall reward thee openly."

While Jesus was preaching, one of his sincere followers who was doubtful respecting the terms of salvation, kneeled down and said to him, " Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Happy question this for the Christian world, for we have from the holy and undissembling lips of Jesus, a clear and satisfactory answer to this important question, for he said to him, " thou knows the commandments," and kindly repeated them to him, and the young man said, " all these have I kept from my youth," and " Jesus loved him," and said unto him, " one thing thou lacks yet; sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and follow me."

In the answer of Jesus to this very important question, we have nothing said about a triune God, or an incomprehensible trinity, nor about the popular so doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice, or the selfish doctrine of election, for these are the opinions and traditions of later days; nor will our most rigid orthodox friends contend that Jesus kept back part of the will of God, or terms of salvation, as this would be charging him with dissimulation; therefore we may conclude that the answer which Jesus gave to this humble follower, was the whole truth; though it may not suit our popular dogmas of belief. That the glorious object of the gospel was to introduce principles and motives to action that would induce mankind to keep the commandments in a more pure and perfect manner than they had been by the hypocritical Jews, is evident from the preaching of Jesus, for he often told his disciples that " if their righteousness did not exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, they could not enter the kingdom of heaven." That the pharisees made great pretensions to the outward observance of the commandments, is evident, from the many exhortations of Jesus on this, point; for he told them they had rendered the law of Moses of none effect by their traditions, as they were strenuous observers of days and fasts, and of paying tithes for mint and cummins, but forgot Justice and Mercy, the weightier matters of the law. This substitution of the traditions of men for the spiritual fulfilment of the holy commandments of God, is still, we have reason to fear, a prevailing defect of our common nature, and I would most sincerely implore, and, I trust, in the spirit of Christian charity, the leaders of our popular sects to consider whether they

are not substituting the opinions and traditions of men for the holy teachings of Jesus, by attaching too much importance to the particular dogmas of fallible men, and not , paying sufficient attention to Jesus, who alone hath the words of eternal life.

The spiritualizing influence of the gospel must change our desires and affections, and we must be born again, and our works of duty must be works of faith, and done from a spirit of love to God and man, and not from worldly motives, " lest any man should boast," or we can have no just claim to be called the disciples of Christ. It is a lamentable fact for the cause of pure and undefiled religion, that so many professing Christians, who at times display a furious zeal for Christ and religion, should, in their eagerness to obtain wealth and riches, make use of such unfair and dishonorable means as many an unbeliever would be ashamed to practice; therefore it is no wonder when unbelievers see men of such apparent sanctity, manifesting a spirit of undue greediness for riches in their transactions with the world, that they should conclude, though too hastily, that the Christian religion is only a hypocritical pretense, embraced for the purpose of deceiving mankind, and thus, by plausibly spreading their baneful doctrine of unbelief Christ again becomes crucified by the hypocrisy and self-deception of his pretended friends. Nor would the precarious interpretation of the highly figurative expressions on which our popular dogmas of belief are erected, have assumed the importance they have, and drawn the minds of men so far away from the plain and holy teachings of the gospel, had not the leaders of the different sects persuaded their partisans that those awful denunciations contained in the gospel against willful and obstinate sinners, equally apply to all those who have the courage to doubt the correctness of what each party terms their orthodox creeds; though these very creeds are contradictory of each other.

That the plain yet practical doctrine which the gospel teaches is a purifying doctrine, no believer can doubt, for it actually places the chief desires and affections of a sincere believer on the glorious objects of another and a better world; therefore, he has no greedy desires for the wealth and riches of this world, for by faith, he sees that his greatest treasure is beyond the grave, consequently he practices no dissimulation to obtain what is comparatively of little worth, at the risk of losing those imperishable riches which are laid up for him in the kingdom of heaven. Nor will a sincere believer who is strongly imbued with this purifying doctrine of the gospel, indulge his earthly passions and desires at the risk of missing those never-fading pleasures which are waiting for him at his Father's right hand. In a word, he lives to heaven, for heavenly motives influence all his actions, and he becomes virtually born again, for the maxims and expectations which govern the world are not the rules by which he lives, but the cross of Christ, or that holy doctrine for the truth of which Jesus was crucified, forms the rock on which his future hopes dwell with never-ending delight. That the world was in a deplorable state of crime and wickedness at the time Jesus made his appearance, may be inferred from the many strong and powerful appeals he made to the assembled multitudes. Yet, Jesus knew the nature of mankind too well to suppose that their wicked propensities would be abandoned by simply telling them that their wicked indulgences were destructive of human happiness, therefore he told them if they did not repent and do works meet for repentance, his heavenly Father would punish them with a punishment too great to be described; consequently, such a strong and powerful appeal induced many thousands to turn their attention to the saving terms of the gospel, and the same powerful appeal is still operating upon many thousands more, down to the present period.

That there is a selfish desire in man for wealth and power, which often produces an extensive range of human misery, was evident to the tender mind of Jesus and called forth from him that extraordinary declaration, that it was " easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," a declaration that must have referred to rich men in their unregenerate state, for he adds, " with God all things are possible," knowing that his father had provided means by which a rich man might overcome this apparent impossibility, and be rewarded with everlasting life.

The benevolent doctrine which Jesus came expressly to inculcate, enjoined his rich disciples to be humble, as well as kind, and charitable to the poor, and not like the hypocrites of old, who were liberal for the sake of worldly applause, for in this world they had their reward; but their benevolence was to be stimulated by Christian love, and in their works of charity their left hand was not to know what their right hand did, and then they would be rewarded by his heavenly father at the resurrection of the dead.

If the rich and powerful were sufficiently impressed with this purifying doctrine of the gospel, viz., that everlasting life will only be given to those stewards who have, in the spirit of Christian love, mercifully employed the talents committed to their care, it would give a more salutary check to their mercenary desires of the world, and have a strong tendency to make the present condition of man a comparative Paradise below. Plain and simple as the doctrine is which Jesus has brought to light for the guidance of his faithful followers, yet he seems to have been aware that its simplicity and goodness would not secure it against perversion, and that some evasive and less purifying principle might be substituted in its stead, and that his mistaken followers, like the pharisees of old, might rest for salvation on the evasive pretensions and traditions of men, instead of fixing their hopes on the merciful character of their heavenly father, and that holiness of life which the gospel enjoins. Being aware of this deceptive propensity of our nature, Jesus has left us a rule by which his true disciples may be known, for he observes, " By their fruits ye shall know them," and " Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in Heaven." By attending to this divine rule, which Jesus has laid down for the discovery of his true disciples, we shall be led to some very important conclusions respecting true religion, for we shall clearly perceive that it is not by looking at those who put on a peculiar dress, or attend to the ceremonial forms of religion, nor at those who display an excessive zeal for mysterious dogmas they do not understand, that we shall be able to discover his true disciples.

No: Jesus knew too well, from the pharisees of old, that the vilest hypocrites might pretend to these things, while their hearts were strangers to that holy and spiritualizing morality of the gospel which alone can create them anew, and render them, through the unchanging mercy of God, fit for the kingdom of heaven.

Should the correctness of these general remarks be admitted, we shall see by what a plain and simple law the practical duties of religion are established and regulated; and if we take a retrospective view of the principle on which the new version of the trinity is founded, and carefully examine its application to many of those apparently opposing expressions of the gospel which have introduced such contusion into our popular systems of Christian theology, we shall be conducted to the important conclusion that the holy and blessed trinity referred to in the gospel, means three holy and divine operating powers, all of which originated with God, and came from him, and had for their ultimate purpose the redemption and final happiness of man; and that it is through the medium of this holy trinity, recognized in the Gospel under the three distinct names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we must pay our devout adorations to the only true God, the Everlasting Jehovah, for all the blessings of life, and the glorious prospects of immortality revealed to us in his Son's gospel.

If we examine the gospel with attention, it will be evident that it reveals for our consideration and belief, a variety of facts and important truths which our reason could never have discovered from the works of nature, and our own mental operations; and it is these revealed facts and truths that constitute the foundation on which the Christian faith ought to be established. Respecting these revealed truths, there is this peculiarity attending them, viz., that all believers in the Scriptures readily admit they are revealed truths; and as such, demand our assent: but when the opinions of any sect, or the conclusions they draw from these revealed truths, assume the authority of a revelation, and are proposed to us as articles of belief of which we must not reason, and from which we must not dissent, it is no wonder that theoretic discord should prevail in the church of Christ, instead of universal harmony and love. To illustrate this view of the subject, let us, for the sake of argument, suppose that all the present race of Christians are assembled together, and that the following questions could be proclaimed sufficiently loud that all might hear them; and the answers we may fairly anticipate to these questions will perhaps be the best evidence we can have of the correctness of the religious principles we are endeavoring to establish.

1st.—Does the gospel reveal to us that God is the creator and preserver of all things, and that he sent his only begotten Son to redeem the world? and no doubt this assembly would unanimously answer yes.

2nd.—Does the gospel reveal to us that Christ, after a life of holy obedience, was crucified, and that God raised him from the dead? and no doubt all would answer in the affirmative' .

3rd.—Did Christ, after his resurrection, ascend into heaven, and will he appear again on earth, and become our judge? and all would answer yes.

4th.—Does God, through the gospel of his Son, call upon all men to repent, and forsake their sins? and the unanimous answer would be yes.

5th.—Will there be a general resurrection of the dead, and will not the wicked be subjected to a dreadful punishment, and the righteous rewarded with life eternal? and we may conclude all would answer in the affirmative.

6th.—Does not the gospel reveal to us this important fact, that if we are not born again, and undergo a complete spiritual change, we cannot enter into life eternal? and the unanimous answer, in all probability would be yes.

Nor can this unanimity be a matter of surprise when we consider that all these "are important truths revealed in the gospel, but if we propose to the Christian world the opinions or conclusions of any sect drawn from a consideration of these truths, as articles of belief, and demand the same implicit confidence in them as we place in the revealed truths of the gospel, it is no wonder that disputes and quarrels should arise in the church of Christ, for each sect will contend that their views of these truths are the most correct and evangelical. To put this principle to a further test, let this assembly of the Christian world be asked the following questions 1st.—Whether it is revealed to us in the gospel, that the Pope, or any other Earthly Potentate, ought to be considered the Head of the Church of Christ? and various would be the answers.

2nd.—Does the gospel reveal to us that our belief in the popular doctrine of the Trinity is necessary to salvation? and various would be the answers.

3rd.—Does the gospel reveal to us that all true believers are now directed by the supernatural aid of the Spirit of God, as in the Apostolic age? and various would be the answers.

4th.—Does the gospel reveal to us that our salvation depends on imputed righteousness arising from the vicarious sacrifice of Christ? to which various and many would be the replies.

5th.—Is the doctrine of election and reprobation the evangelical doctrine of the gospel? the very mention of which most probably would produce the greatest degree of confusion among this assembly of Christian believers.

Hence, we may perceive that most of the theoretic disputes and angry feelings which prevail in the Christian world about matters of faith, chiefly arise from mixing up in our dogmas of belief, the opinions and traditions of men, With the revealed truths of the gospel; and then demanding the same implicit assent to these opinions as are given to the divine revelations made by Christ. That there will always be a difference of opinion, even among sincere believers, when reasoning and judging on these revealed truths, it is scarcely possible to doubt, for it appears to me evident that God never expected that all mankind would draw the same conclusions from what was revealed in the gospel; nor can anyone prove but a variety of religions opinions are as acceptable to God as a uniformity of belief would be, providing they produce that spiritual change, or those fruits of holiness which the gospel requires. Should it be said that this mode of reasoning destroys all the value of a right faith or belief, I answer no: for Jesus most distinctly said, and left it as an important rule, that we should know his disciples by their fruits, or the simplicity and holiness of their lives, for " men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." But he did not tell us we should know his true disciples by their belief in the incomprehensible views of the trinity, however popular; nor by their belief in the dogmas of the unitarian, who contends that Jesus was merely a man; nor in believing in the doctrine of imparted righteousness; or in contending for the doctrine of election and reprobation. No: these are only the exclusive doctrines of men, drawn from these revealed truths; therefore, that system is the most evangelical which produces most abundantly the real fruits of holiness; or else that divine rule left us by Jesus to distinguish his disciples, is not a faithful guide. These fruits of holiness, however, which a true disciple will exhibit, and by which he is to be known, are not founded on those principles of morality which govern the world, whose good and charitable actions are too often done for the applause of men; for charitable actions done from motives like these, partake of the nature of sin, as they are done to gratify the vanity of our unregenerated nature; but that benevolence which is spiritual, and which produces those fruits of holiness that are so pleasing to God, does not let its left hand know what its right hand does, but humbly waits, unnoticed by the world, for the approving smiles of Heaven, instead of seeking for the applause of men. If this rule of our divine Master will enable us to know a true disciple by the fruits or deeds of holiness which his life exhibits, it will also point out to us many professing Christians who are not his true disciples, for when we see a man who appears religious, and boasts that his faith is the most correct, grinding the poor from a principle of avarice, and above all, practicing dissimulation to obtain wealth and riches, we may conclude, by the above divine rule, that such a man is not a true disciple, whatever may be the theological dogmas of his head, and that in all probability he is deceiving himself, by trusting to the mystical effect of some incomprehensible creed, or he is thoughtlessly practicing, what, in his reflecting moments, he knows will ensure his future condemnation.

Jesus, viewing with a prophetic eye the consummation of all things, and ever anxious to impress on the minds of his disciples the real character of his holy religion, placed before them, in the most sublime and simple manner, the coming events of that awful day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known, and when all nations shall be gathered together before him; and he will separate the good from the bad, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and he will place the righteous on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. And when this final separation shall have been accomplished, then he as judge, will say to those on his right hand, " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, I was sick and ye visited Me, I was in prison and ye came unto me;" then shall the righteous answer him, saying, " Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink, when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee, or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?" And the King shall answer and say unto them, " Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting life, prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Then shall they also answer him, saying, " Lord, when saw we thee an hungered or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Then shall he answer them, saying, " Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me;" and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. With such a plain and explicit declaration as this respecting the holy doctrine and intent of the gospel, and that, too, from the lips of its divine author, is it not truly surprising that the Christian world should have been wrangling for nearly two thousand years about the real nature and character of this religion, and fiercely contending for dogmas of belief they do not clearly comprehend, and on which they cannot agree; for if the doctrine and principles laid down by Jesus, in his description of the last day, are correct, and bold is the man who dares say they are not, it is evident we shall not be judged by this or that dogma of belief, but whether we have fulfilled that new commandment of love and duty which Jesus left us to follow; and if we have done this in the true spirit of holiness, whatever may be our peculiar views of the gospel, we shall find ourselves placed on the right hand of him who will say to us on that day, " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." If this evangelical doctrine was generally adopted, and made our guide in the pursuit of pure and undefiled religion, the chief contention in the Christian world would then be, not for modes of faith, but whose life should best display the heavenly teachings of the gospel, and in this spiritual contest

those endless bickering about abstruse points of faith, which destroy the harmony of Christian churches, would be lost in the glorious light of Christian love.

To a sincere and reflecting believer, the final day of judgment must be one of the most sublime and interesting scenes that can occupy his limited powers of comprehension, for to contemplate the fact, that all who have ever lived on earth will be assembled together, is enough to overwhelm our minds by the extent and magnitude which such a scene presents to our present feeble powers of contemplation. But, when we take into the account that as death leaves us judgment will find us, and that all will appear in their true and real characters, the scene becomes interesting beyond all human conception.

That all will then be anxious to be placed on the right hand, no one can doubt, but if we are to believe the Judge, before whom the secrets of all hearts will then be opened, he will only place those on his right hand who have done Justice, loved Mercy, and walked humbly with God, and fulfilled that measure of duty in the undissembling spirit of Christian love, which the gospel requires. And in this heavenly assembly, many a humble and neglected soul will be found whom the hypocritical world treated with disdain, and was ever ready to say unto him, stand thither, for I am holier than thou. While among those on the left hand, it is to be feared many hypocrites will be found, whom the world thought religious, and who substituted for pure and undefiled religion a bigoted and furious zeal, instead of a humble and holy life, and who will be ready to exclaim, " Lord, Lord, we have ever displayed a burning zeal for thy holy name;" but the judge will say unto them, " I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Although it becomes evident, from this general view of religion, that the endless disputes which have so long perplexed the Christian world, have chiefly arisen from making religion to depend more on incomprehensible dogmas of belief than the performance of holy duties, which are of a practical nature: yet, it may be asked, have all the religious world mistaken the true spirit and character of the gospel until now, and if the reply was made agreeably to the prevailing practice of bigotry, the answer would be in the affirmative, as every bigot contends that his opinions are the only ones which are correct.

But I trust we have not so learnt Christ, for it is my belief that there will be found under all denominations of Christians, many who have attained that measure of holiness which the gospel requires, in order to recommend us to the unchanging love and mercy of God; for Jesus, who never deceived any one, said to his disciples, " that it is not he who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father, who is in heaven." Having seen by the view we have taken of the gospel, how plain the great truths of pure and undefiled religion are, and to what a simplicity of faith they naturally conduct us, we shall now be the better able to judge how far our popular systems of Christian theology correspond to the simplicity of the gospel, and should the comparison lead to conclusions not favorable to our popular dogmas of faith, I hope they will not be ascribed to an uncharitable spirit of opposition, but to a sincere desire to discover the true meaning and import of that gospel which alone contains the words of everlasting life.

In pursuing the history of our present popular systems of belief, we shall find that the doctrines embraced by the church of Rome, are the oldest, and at present, the most extensively adopted. It is to this church we are indebted for that extraordinary and incomprehensible view of the trinity which is so strongly opposed to all the plain teachings of the gospel, and which we have seen rests chiefly on the perversion of a few passages of scripture, most of which were delivered in a figurative style, agreeably to the manner of the eastern writers. Next, her pretensions to work miracles at the present time, is also an assumption unsupported by scripture and the evidence of facts, and depends for support on a few expressions that had a reference to the apostolic age, when such powers were given for the promulgation of the gospel; also her doctrine of confession, which has been, and still is, so awful in its moral consequences, is a doctrine no-where to be found in scripture, as practiced by this church; and to enable her to enforce these unscriptural dogmas of belief upon the people, she has cunningly prohibited the use of private judgment in matters of faith, which, in the past ages of ignorance- and superstition, was the means of giving her unlimited power in many countries, to the great injury of pure and undefiled religion, and at the same time, has been the grand source of a wide-spreading infidelity. These remarks, however, I trust, will not be attributed to that spirit of sectarian bigotry which, in imitation of the Church of Rome, would doom all to everlasting perdition because they do not see with its eyes, nor bear with its ears, and believe its peculiar dogmas of faith. No: although our Roman Catholic brethren may have their minds burthened by the errors of their church, which they have not courage to shake off; yet, if they feel the purifying influence of the gospel, and their hearts and lives become so far changed by its holy doctrines as to be in the scripture sense born again, and bring forth the fruits of holiness, they will, without doubt, shine among the brightest stars in the kingdom of Heaven, for having gloriously triumphed over their own frailty, and rejected all the delusive apologies for sin invented by this church.

After these remarks, the Protestant or Lutheran Church, as established in England, presents itself to our special attention, and although she may have adopted a system of belief less entangled with human errors than the Church of Rome, yet, her belief is still at variance with the plain design and simplicity of the gospel. In her theological doctrines, she still retains the same incomprehensible notions of a trinity and unity* as those embraced by the Church of Rome, joined to a mixture of other religious tenets, which, when taken as a whole, are destructive of all simplicity in matters of faith, and has a tendency to render many of her adherents either skeptical or fanatical, both of which are opposed to real evangelical religion.

This church, however, with all her faults, which have chiefly resulted from the errors of former ages, has been the means of producing much good in this country, by imparting to the mass of the people a more abiding sense of real practical religion, and a more honorable character in their dealings with the world, than what I believe is to be found in any other country; for there has been, and still are, many able and learned divines with clear heads and enlightened understandings, who have, without enforcing the belief of her mystified creeds, taught the plain and simple doctrine of repentance and newness of life as the only means of recommending us to the unchanging mercy of God, who, at the final day of judgment, will reward every man according to the deeds done in the body. Consequently, such a doctrine as this does not fill the head with mystical dreams of forgiveness, while the heart is a stranger to that love of justice and mercy which the gospel so solemnly enjoins, for this truly evangelical doctrine of the gospel, which affects the heart as well as the head, never quits a true believer, but unites his everlasting happiness with his earthly duties, and not like that mystical faith which is too apt to make us believe that our salvation depends on our assent to some incomprehensible dogmas of belief, or the mysterious effects of feelings we do not understand.

That our present church establishment but ill accords with the simple and love-diffusing spirit of the gospel, must be obvious to every sincere believer, and that the very unscriptural position of this hierarchy has resulted from the errors of former days, is equally evident. Yet, fortunately for the cause of pure religion, the present temporal position of this church gives to her rulers an opportunity of doing much for the spread of real evangelical religion. Had the clergy belonging to the church of England been under the control of a superstitious, or fanatical laity, any attempt to have simplified her incomprehensible dogmas of faith, and placed her religion on the pure evangelical doctrine of the gospel would have been fruitless; but from the present temper of the times, and the independence of her temporal situation, there is now a most favorable opportunity for this church to purify her faith from the gross errors of past ages, and to make the simplicity of her doctrines correspond to the evangelical teachings of Jesus, and the rapidly-increasing knowledge of the present generation.

For instance, the adherence of our established church to the Athanasian creed, is, in many instances, doing a serious injury to the cause of the gospel, for the well-educated youths of this country are rapidly advancing in the paths of general knowledge, in which they find all the glorious works of creation conspiring to aid their progressive endeavors, while in this most important part of all knowledge, an incomprehensible dogma of faith to which they are generally required to subscribe, throws an impediment in their intellectual progress; therefore, they do not feel inclined to be interrupted in their onward career by the perplexing doctrines of this creed, but turn aside into the paths of skepticism, in which they unfortunately too often get bewildered, and at last are led into the dark labyrinths of infidelity. Yet, such is the sublime and heavenly doctrine taught by Jesus, that if it be but once established by this church in its simplicity and purity, she would become a shining light to direct the intellectual progress of the present aspiring age, for the importance and sublimity of her doctrine would then place her dogmas of belief at the head of all knowledge, which glorious pre-eminence she would retain, until man's present imperfect views are changed for the brighter scenes of everlasting day. After this church has simplified her various articles of belief, and rendered her establishment more congenial to the simplicity of the gospel, the all-important doctrine of a new birth, or being born again, which is so clearly taught by Christ, would not be impeded in its benign influence by mystical creeds, which too often divide the church of Christ into furious and uncharitable parties, instead of making its members the holy, humble, and forgiving disciples of Jesus.

In reply to these rational views of the gospel, it may be asked by those members of this church who hold certain peculiar tenets, how can we be born again, or attain that holiness which will recommend us to the favor of God, except it be allowed that the holy Spirit of God operates on believers at the present day with the same converting and supernatural influence it did in, the days of the Apostles. To answer this question in a satisfactory manner, we must again appeal to the scriptures, and not trust for an explanation to the popular creeds of fallible men; and I feel confident if we do, this, we shall find that the belief of, many of our orthodox friends on this important question, as well as that of the Trinity, is not agreeable to the real evangelical doctrines of the gospel. By consulting the records of divine truth, it will be evident that the soul of man came from God pure and holy, for nothing impure can come from him; - and we shall also find that this pure, and heavenly portion of divinity became so polluted by its union with the frail body, that even his chosen people did not keep the commandments which God had given them by Moses; but God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, knew that there was a natural desire in the soul of man to regain its original purity, if the carnal propensities of the body were subdued, and kept in proper subjection; therefore, to bring about this desirable result, God revealed to us, through his beloved Son, those heavenly motives to duty, and those promises of love and mercy, which alone can produce this change, and insure to us everlasting life.

That the soul of man is a ray of heavenly light, which shews him when he breaks or keeps the holy commandments of God, is also an evident truth, for the Jews, who broke the commandments, had this divine gift of conscience within them, for it is a divine lamp by which all men may see whether they are doing their duty, if it be not overclouded by an undue indulgence of their carnal appetites and passions; therefore, the great object of the gospel was to supply mankind with pure and heavenly principles, that would extract or subdue these baser propensities of their earthly nature, and allow this ray of heavenly light to shine in their hearts, by establishing them in sanctifying works of love. To this heavenly nature of the soul, St. Paul bears ample testimony, for when speaking of the unconverted gentiles, who had never heard of the gospel, he says, " If they, by nature, do the works of the law, they are a law unto themselves, and will be judged without the law;" which is clearly recognizing the fact, that the soul is a ray of heavenly light imparted

to all men, and would, by its conscientious warnings, direct them in the true path of salvation, if it were not darkened and perverted by the carnal propensities of their earthly nature.

That we are naturally frail from our birth, and that we have a strong propensity to sin, from the very constitution of our nature, is the uniform language of the scriptures, and we must be convinced of this natural tendency to do evil, or else we shall not see the necessity of a Redeemer, and of putting on his righteousness, and of being born of the Spirit, or transformed by the holy teachings of his gospel; but I cannot think with our orthodox friends, that we came into the world loaded with the enormous guilt of Adam, or what they call original sin, for if that had been the case, Jesus would not have taken little children in his arms, and' said, " of such is the kingdom of Heaven!" and that our innocence must become like theirs, or we should not inherit eternal life.

To aid us in the subjection of our carnal appetites to the purposes and end of holiness, Jesus has unfolded to us the lovely and merciful character of his heavenly Father, and the certainty of a resurrection from the dead, and of the final and never-ending happiness of all those who embrace his divine truths, and practice in the spirit of holiness what they believe.

These important discoveries have, through the medium of the gospel, been rendered so clear and satisfactory, that every sincere believer readily associates, by faith, the duties of life with those glorious expectations and promises of a better world, and the idea that his divine teacher will be his final judge, and that he will be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, is always present to his mind, and so far subdues all his carnal propensities, that in the gospel sense of the expression, he becomes born again, of his soul assumes that original purity .which had been overwhelmed by the frail propensities of the body. Hence we arrive at this very important conclusion, viz: that our salvation, or redemption from evil to good, does not depend so much on any supernatural aid of the holy Spirit we may now receive from Heaven, as it does on the holy doctrine of the gospel, (which " is sharper than a two edged sword)" extracting or subduing what is bad in our unregenerated nature, and allowing our souls to display that holiness of character which the gospel requires. This appears to me a plain and rational view of the intent and purpose of the gospel, for if that measure of holiness which we are required to attain in order to recommend us to the mercy of God, were to depend on the irresistible and supernatural influence of the holy spirit, as some of our orthodox friends believe, the importance of the gospel would be nearly done away, but as the preaching of the gospel to every nation was so strongly enjoined by Jesus himself, and so earnestly practiced by all the apostles, it is evident that it was the appointed means by which all the world were to become the sincere and faithful disciples of Christ.

Nor can it be a matter of surprise to any reflecting Christian, that this redeeming change which takes place in a sincere believer, by the influence of the gospel, should be of a simple yet effectual nature, when he considers that the gospel scheme of salvation was planned by infinite wisdom, and sent by infinite love; for God perfectly knows our nature, and in his loving mercy, would certainly adopt it for our welfare in this world, and final happiness in the world to come.

I know it is argued by many, that the holy Spirit does, by its supernatural influence, still direct true believers in the choice of their faith; but how stands the fact if we allow past experience to be our guide in judging of this question? Let the history of the religious world speak for itself, and we shall find that the most furious and uncharitable dissensions have taken place among different sects and parties, respecting their modes of faith, though all of them have laid claim to this infallible guidance of the holy Spirit, in the selection and adoption of their various systems of belief; but can we for a moment suppose, that this holy Spirit, the special" messenger of peace and love, can be the source of all those angry and uncharitable dissensions which disturb the world, by directing believers to such opposing and strife-begetting dogmas of belief.

That many pious Christians have advocated the doctrine of irresistible and instantaneous conversion by the supernatural influence of the holy Spirit, is a well-known historical fact, and perhaps none have advocated this principle more strongly than the Rev. Mr. Fletcher and the Rev. Mr. Wesley; yet they both lived to see the practical error of such a principle, for Mr. Fletcher remarks, when writing to a friend, " That I am just finishing an Essay on Truth;" and adds, " My apprehensions of things have not changed since I saw you last, save that in one thing I have seen my errors an over eager attention to the doctrine of the Spirit has made me, in some degree, overlook the medium by which the Spirit works; I mean the Word of Truth, which is the wood by which the heavenly fire warms; I rather expected lightning than a steady fire by means of fuel; I mention my error to you, lest you too, should be involved therein. May the Lord help us to steer clear of every rock!"

Mr. Wesley, when speaking about faith, says, " Faith which bringeth not forth repentance and love, and all good works, is not that right loving faith, but a dead and devilish one."

The work containing these sentiments was afterwards abridged and published by Mr. Wesley, which is a strong presumptive proof that they were then congenial to his own mind. Mr. Wesley also published Extracts from Mr. Edwards' Treatise, concerning Religious Affections, which is a still further proof that he had changed his early opinions on this subject. Mr. Edwards says, " The chief grounds of the confidence of many self-deceivers, are impulses and supposed revelations, sometimes with texts of scripture, and sometimes without. These impulses they have called the Witness of the Spirit. And it is found, by abundant experience, that those who are led away by impulses and imagined revelations, are extremely confident; for they suppose that the great Jehovah has declared those things unto them, and that having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue."—Page 220. "But men's works are the

highest evidences by which they are to try themselves; certainly, that which our supreme Judge will make use of to judge us by when we come to stand before him, we should chiefly make use of to judge ourselves by." Consistently with these sentiments, when Mr. Wesley was charged with telling people they must "judge of their regeneration by sensible impulses, impressions, ardors, and ecstasies," he denies the charge altogether, whether as applied to himself or "any in * Page 268.

connection with him," and says, "I fondly thought that this was at least generally true, and therefore contributed my mite to roll away' what I thought unjust reproach' from the Methodists as a body." This sentiment was confirmed, by finding that the Conference had republished part of Mr. Edwards' Treatise in their Magazine for 1793, p. 250 and 299, plainly with a design to show that "Men's works are the highest evidences by which they are to try themselves." And so lately as the year 1800, they published the following minute:— Q. 13.—Do we sufficiently explain and enforce practical religion, and attend to the preservation of order and regularity in our meetings for prayer and other acts of devotion?

A.—Perhaps not; we fear there has sometimes been irregularity in some of the meetings, and we think some of our hearers are in danger of mistaking emotions of the affections for experimental and practical godliness. To remedy or prevent as far as possible these errors, let Mr. Wesley's Extracts of Mr. Edwards' Pamphlet on Religious Affections, be printed without delay, and inculcated among our people.

The error, of admitting that emotions, or internal feelings, are of a higher authority in matters of faith than the whole of the revelations made through the gospel, has lately been most awfully exemplified by Mr. Elias Hicks, in America, and must, if properly viewed, have a powerful effect in making believers very cautious how they admit a principle into religion which may be so much abused.

The following extract from Mr. Southey's Life of Mr. Wesley, does credit to the heart and feelings of that pious man:—"We may die," he says, "without the knowledge of many truths, and yet be received into Abraham's bosom; but if we die without LOVE, what will knowledge avail I Just as much as it avails the devil and his angels. I will not quarrel with you about any opinion, only see that your heart be right towards God,—that you honor and Love the Lord Jesus Christ,—that you love your neighbor, and walk as your master walked, and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions. My soul loathes this frothy food: give me solid and substantial religion: give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man: a man full of mercy and good faith, without partiality and without hypocrisy, a man laying himself out in the work of Faith, the patience of Hope, and the labor of Love! Let my soul be with those Christians wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of! WHOSOEVER thus doth the will of My Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother and Sister and Mother!"

That the apostles were favored in a supernatural manner by the aid of the holy Spirit of God, is a fact that will be readily admitted by all sincere believers in the gospel, for they gave numerous proofs of this fact by working many miracles; and as the Church of Rome still lays claim to this supernatural aid of the holy Spirit, she plainly' sees the necessity of working miracles to establish her power. Hence those miracles, or pious frauds, as Protestants call them, which this church still endeavors to practice upon its weak and *

deluded members; but the arguments brought forward to show that the Romish Church can give no satisfactory proof to an enlightened believer in the gospel, that she is favored with a supernatural aid of divine power, may also be applied with equal force against the pretensions of those Protestants who claim this supernatural aid of the Divine Spirit, for they can no more demonstrate than the Church of Rome, that they are favored with such an apostolic power; nevertheless, they contend that their own internal feelings and opinions (which differ from each other as much as their faces) is a sufficient proof of the fact, and demands our most unqualified, assent, while the claims of the apostles, or their proof of an apostleship, was only allowed by the evidence of miracles.

It is a fact well worthy of notice, that superstition and fanaticism are strongly opposed to each other, though both originate from different views of the same scriptures, which plainly shows that they do not mutually partake of the love-breathing spirit of the gospel, for they want that "charity which thinketh no evil," for where superstition prevails, fanaticism makes but little progress, and where fanaticism prevails, superstition finds but few converts, though each party wields powerful weapons for making proselytes to their belief, or driving men into the labyrinths of infidelity. Therefore, an enlightened and sincere believer ought to prepare his mind to withstand the influence of these errors, and this can only be done by becoming clothed in the righteousness of Christ, for his own righteousness, which is a mixture of good and evil, will not protect him against these foes of pure and undefiled religion; for it is only by looking unto Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith," that we can expect to be crowned with victory in this spiritual warfare.

Jesus, knowing the love-promoting character of his holy religion, said unto his disciples, just before he left them to return to his Heavenly Father, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, and .by this shall all men know ye are my disciples." Therefore, we may conclude that all professing Christians, or religious parties who are influenced by an uncharitable spirit of dissension, are not his true disciples. Unfortunately, this plain injunction of Christ to his disciples seems to have been perverted, as well as many other parts of the gospel, for instead of professing Christians applying this holy. injunction in that extended spirit of love which Jesus intended, by embracing every humble and sincere disciple whose garments have been washed white iii the blood of the lamb, or whose souls have been purified by the holy doctrine of his gospel, they too generally Confine their regard to those only who

belong to their own church or party, to the great injury of true religion, by including many in their party love who are unworthy of the name of a disciple, while they are indifferent, or too often feel a degree of hatred to those believers who only differ from them on some disputed point of doctrine, although their lives prove they are the true disciples of Jesus. Yet, thank Heaven, there will be found in the ranks of all professing Christians, many whom Jesus will love, and who will have their lamps trimmed and their lights burning, and be ready to enter with the bridegroom whenever he shall come, whether it be in the busy day, or in the dark and silent midnight hour.

If the fruits of holiness, instead of dogmas of faith, were to be the test of a true disciple, then many whom we ought to love would be found under every creed and climate, and the injunction left by our divine Master would be fulfilled in the spirit of its beloved author, who emphatically told his followers, that none but those who did the will of his Heavenly Father, should enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

To a sincere believer in the gospel, whose mind has not been burthened by the religious fancies of enthusiasts, or carried away by the useless ceremonies of superstition, it must be a source of lamentation to behold such wild and incoherent systems of belief offered to the world under the sacred name of Religion, as it furnishes unbelievers with so many specious and powerful arguments that are hurtful to the cause of pure and undefiled religion; for the history of the Christian church shews how dangerous it is to let our feelings, which are too often imaginary, be the chief guide in establishing our belief, as the extravagant and irrational views such a principle has led to are a sufficient proof that its conclusions do not always correspond to the plain and simple doctrine of Jesus, which was ever consistent with the deductions of the soundest understanding.

That the chosen people of God were specially favored with the law, by Moses, to direct them in that path of duty which is so well-pleasing to God, is a fact handed down to us by sacred history. Nevertheless, there was a cloud hung over this dispensation through which their vicious minds could not penetrate, and which in some measure obscured their future destinies; but the glorious light of the gospel has dispelled this cloud, and laid open to the eye of Christian faith, the realities of another and better World.

To obtain an entrance into this delightful abode, must be the anxious wish of every sincere believer, and the divine rule by which we are to know the true disciple of Jesus, is most admirably adapted to inform us whether we are likely to have a welcome into this heavenly kingdom; for if we find that our fruits are bad, or that principles of a sinful nature are still cherished in our hearts, and practiced in our lives, we may rest assured, whatever may be the religious notions of our head, that we have but little chance of being blessed with an entrance into those heavenly mansions. This knowledge of our own character will be put to the most satisfactory test if we retire to our closets, and examine, by the word of truth, our own hearts and affections, and our dealings with the world, for God, and ourselves will be alone engaged in the examination, and though we may deceive the world by outward signs of religion, yet these hypocritical appearances will not, serve us at such an awful moment as this. Now we must be sincere, and under the full conviction that we are born again by the purifying grace or holy doctrine of the gospel, or we can have no well-founded expectation that our merciful Father will honor us with everlasting life. By such an examination as this, we shall restore the gospel to its primitive importance, for it is the means of salvation to all those that believe, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, for its words "are spirit, and they are life," and will continue as such to all sincere believers, even to the end of the world.

Yes: they are that living water, which if we drink of freely, we shall never thirst again. They are that living bread which came down from Heaven, to feed the souls of believers with heavenly food. They are that flesh and blood we must eat and drink to purify our souls. They form that wedding garment in which we must be clothed. They are that helmet we must put On, to fight that good fight, and overcome the world. In a word, it is the holy and purifying doctrine of the gospel, which is still the fundamental means by which God, through the mediation of his only begotten Son, is reconciling the world unto himself; and these obvious yet beautiful figures of the real evangelical doctrine of the gospel, would not have been so mystified, had they not become entangled with our popular notions of the trinity; but, agreeable to the new version we have given of the holy and blessed trinity mentioned in the gospel, we find it consists of three divine operating emanations, all coming from God. and having for their unity of purpose the final happiness of man and are recognized in the gospel under the three distinct names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and no doubt intended to be the medium through which all true believers must worship the one living and true God, the everlasting and unchangeable Jehovah.

Should the new principles of illustration brought forward during this search after divine truth, carry with them a sufficient proof that they have been dictated by a sincere desire to promote pure and undefiled religion, and that they are a nearer approach to the real evangelical doctrine of the gospel, than any of our popular creeds, I trust and sincerely hope that they will provoke such further inquiry, as shall, in some measure, be the means of inducing the heads of our Established Church to take knowledge of the present favorable opportunity, and begin the glorious work of adapting her incomprehensible dogmas of belief to the simplicity of the gospel, which will protect her from the inroads of superstition, and fanaticism on the one hand, and skepticism on the other; and show that they are the true promoters of that spiritualizing religion, which alone can insure to us solid happiness in this world, and, through the unchanging mercy of God, life everlasting in the world to come.

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