

As these thoughts cannot be denied, so they further shew that the words under notice, like others already investigated, were nothing to Mr.'s F.'s purpose.*

2. It appears from verse 20, that they were a people to whom Christ had been preached before, and therefore might have evidenced signs of a begun work of conviction in their minds, before the discourse recorded in this third chapter was delivered, and, therefore, certainly before they heard the exhortation in verse 19.†

3. It seems strongly intimated, by Peter's language, in verses 17—20, 25, 26, that he had a distinguished people in his eye, whom God *had blessed*, and *would bless*, with pardon of sins; and to whom refreshment should come from the presence of the Lord. He encouraged them with the prospect of enjoying this blessedness, through the sufferings of Christ, who had been preached to them, and by means of repentance and conversion to God and truth. "The times of refreshing (said he), *shall come* from the presence of the Lord."

4. No man's sins can be *efficiently* blotted out, but on the ground of their being already atoned for by the blood of Christ. No one can be pardoned *through* Christ, except he be represented *by* Christ, and already pardoned *in* him. Therefore, it must be inconsistent with the gospel plan, to make the acts of the creature to precede the acts of God; and to hold out the pardon of sins to the unregenerate, and, at the same time, preach absolute election and peculiar redemption, together with *the necessity of a new created principle*, in order to all holy disposition and spiritual affection. Now, when *the arguments contained in the third and following sections*, are connected with the above observations, it is hoped, the reader will find sufficient reason to believe, that Mr. F.'s system has no support from the words standing at the head of this section.

But, as there is another way of explaining them, by understanding them as spoken of a natural repentance and moral change required of the Jews, with regard to their wicked conduct, in denying and crucifying Christ, I will take the liberty of transcribing the explanation which DOCTOR GILL has given of the passage, in his *Cause of God and Truth*, pp. 72, 74.

* Compare verse 25.

† Compare chap. ii. 36.

“The *conversion* here pressed unto, is not an internal conversion of the soul to God, which is the work of almighty power; but an outward reformation of life, or a bringing forth fruit in conversation, meet for the repentance insisted on. . . . These *Jews* had crucified the Lord of Glory, and, for this sin, were threatened with miserable destruction; the Apostle, therefore, exhorts them to repent of it, and acknowledge Jesus to be the true Messiah; that so, when *wrath* should come upon their nation *to the uttermost*, they might be delivered and saved from the general calamity; which, though these would be terrible times to the unbelieving *Jews*, yet would be *times of refreshing** to the people of God from troubles and persecutions. Though the last clause may be considered, not as expressing the *time when* their iniquities should be blotted out, but as a distinct additional promise made to the penitents, and be read with the other, thus: that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come. . . . and the sense is this: ‘Repent of your sin of crucifying Christ, acknowledge Jesus as the true Messiah, and you shall not only be saved from the general destruction of your nation, but shall have the gospel, and the consolation of *Israel* with you. Jesus Christ who was first preached to you, shall be sent down unto you in the refreshing and consolatory ministry of the word, though he in person must remain in heaven, *until the times of restitution of all things.*’”

The reader may now weigh the matter, and consider which of the senses is most congenial with the scope of the context. They will either of them agree with the form of sound words, and, perhaps, both may be understood without injuring the connexion. There is, however, no need for the arminianized sense that Mr. F. wished to introduce,† which can never be harmonized with the scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace, through that faith which is not of man, but of God.

* Times of refreshment or comfort, are proverbially taken among the Hebrews for the time of any special deliverance whether temporal or eternal.—*Hammond*.

† Page 76.

SECTION XLI.

REPENT, THEREFORE, OF THIS THY WICKEDNESS, AND PRAY GOD IF, PERHAPS, THE THOUGHT OF THINE HEART MAY BE FORGIVEN THEE.—Acts viii. 22.

THE person here addressed, was Simon the magician, whom Philip had baptized on his professing be to a believer in Jesus Christ. But, he shortly made it evident, that his motives, in making such profession, were wicked, and that he had neither part nor lot in the matter; but was in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. Now, because this wretched man was evidently an unregenerate character, and yet was by Peter exhorted to repent, it is imagined, that all the unregenerate are to be exhorted to evangelical repentance, and every other spiritual exercise.* But, this is, I am persuaded, an inference not upheld by the premises. The repentance required, did not refer to the sin of nature, and to transgressions in general, in which Simon was a sinner in common with other men; but, Peter said, “Repent therefore, of THIS *thy wickedness*, and pray God, if, perhaps, THE THOUGHT *of thine heart*, that the gift of God may be purchased with money, may be forgiven thee.” This peculiar thought of Simon’s was a heinous sin, and it appears by verse 24, that Peter threatened him with certain judgments, as punishments; which he greatly dreaded, † and, therefore, said unto Peter, “Pray ye to the Lord for me, that *none of these things which ye have spoken, or threatened, come upon me.*” But, Peter could only say, “Perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” *The averting of those things from him*, which were spoken by the Apostle, *was all that was meant by the thought of his heart being forgiven him*: forgiveness being an exemption from deserved punishment. ‡ But, I see no evidence of any thing supernatural being designed, either in the conduct required, or the benefit held out as a matter merely probable. I have already spoken of this natural repentance and providential forgiveness, or deliverance from outward sufferings in this world.

* Page 40.

† It may be that he feared being smitten as was Ananias.—Acts v. 5.

‡ Compare 1 Kings viii. 50. Exod. xxxii. 30—32. 2 Chron. vii. 14. Jer. xxxvi. 3. and Num. xiv. 19.

1. We have no account that Peter ever prayed for him, nor is it to be expected that we should, after he had told Simon he should perish,* and that he had neither part nor lot in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. Had he intended spiritual repentance and prayer, in his exhortation, he would have held forth pardon *as a certainty*, for to those spiritual exercises, forgiveness is sovereignly annexed; and not have spoken of forgiveness as dubious, saying, “*If, perhaps,†* the thought of thine heart *may be forgiven thee.*” Pardon of sin, with regard to an eternal world, is either a certainty, or an impossibility. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. There appears no room for any man to infer from Peter’s address to Simon, that all unregenerate men are to be exhorted to repent and pray in a spiritual manner. The circumstance of Simon’s conduct is not analagous with the cases of sinners in general; neither does Peter make any reference to any sin, but *that one thought*, so plainly pointed out.‡

4. Many favours, of a natural and temporal kind, are granted to men, distinct from spiritual faith in Christ. Neither can it be sinful in any man to call upon his Maker for the natural good he may want, although, with regard to supernatural things, he must be a total stranger, and, consequently, feels not the want of them; neither does God bestow them, indiscriminately, on mankind, as the mere creatures of his creating power, and as he is the common Parent of all. If historians can at all be credited, with regard to this sorcerer, he shewed himself to be an awful enemy to Christ and his followers, and lived and died in his sins. How, therefore, could the Holy Spirit inspire Peter to exhort him to spiritual repentance and prayer, when he had already determined to deny him any enjoyment of spiritual blessings? Neither will any sober-minded man expose himself to the contempt of thinking people, by calling out to his hearers, and saying unto them, *Your money perish with you; because, YE HAVE THOUGHT the gift of God may be purchased with money. I perceive ye are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Repent, therefore, of THIS your wickedness, &c.* Peter’s words

* Verse 20. † Compare Dan. iv. 27. Joel ii. 14, and Jonah iii. 9, 10.

‡ Verse 20.

seem to intimate that, if Simon *repented*, he might be forgiven perhaps, but that there was no *certainty* that he would be pardoned.

The gospel assures the penitent, and the man who shall spiritually call upon the name of the Lord, that salvation *shall* be granted. I shall not multiply remarks, but must conclude, that the above passage is no proof of the point our author wished to establish. Let the sense of words be sought, as well as the sound of them; and due attention be paid to the arguments in the third section.

SECTION XLII.

IF ANY MAN LOVE NOT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA MARANATHA.*—1 Cor. xvi. 22.

THESE words were addressed to the church of God at Corinth, to them that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. How Mr. F. came to imagine these words were adapted to uphold his crude system of opposite principles, I cannot conceive. But, he flourishes over them, by comparing the grave and spiritual Apostle, to “One of a patriotic spirit, deeply impressed with an idea of a hero’s worth, and of the service he had rendered to his country. Of such *a kind* were the *feelings* of the Apostle. He had served under his Lord and Saviour for many years: and now sensible in a high degree, of the glory of his character, he scruples not to pronounce that man who loves him not, *accursed!*” Whether this representation does any honour to Jesus Christ, to the Apostle Paul, or to our author himself, I shall leave others to determine in some respects. But, as to the import of the words, I quite believe he has failed to shew us that, with all his dexterity. It is very manifest that the words were spoken to the Corinthian saints as a church of God in Christ, and not only *to them*, but also *of them*, or, in allusion to the unacceptable characters that might probably be found in their church.† “If any man among you shall be

* *Anathema*, is a thing devoted to destruction. *Maranatha*, means, the Lord cometh.

† Some of the members of this church were unsound in the faith, and some were profane in their practice, irreverent at the table of the Lord, and unkind to weak brethren, and thus shewed a want of love for Christ.

found destitute of real affection to our Lord Jesus, who is our Saviour and our King, *let him be excommunicated*; or, *he shall be accursed when the Lord comes.*" To the Hebrews he said, "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau." I consider both these passages as spoken to the faithful brethren in fellowship, and as designed to stir them up to be careful to maintain the discipline of Christ's church; or, to be heedful with whom they had religious communion: especially, to seek evidence of a genuine love to Christ, in his person, work, word, and people.

1. Had the Apostle been speaking of sinners in general, he would not have said, *IF any man love not our Lord*; for he well knew that none of the unregenerate of mankind loved Christ. But, if we understand him as speaking of certain professors, and take the words in the sense above hinted, then his hypothetical language will very well correspond with his design.

2. All men are, by nature, already accursed as transgressors, by the law of their creation-state; therefore, their not loving Jesus Christ is not the cause of their being accursed. Sinners stand under the awful curse of the law, when they first hear the gospel of Christ, and were they not already lost, the message of salvation would be no way adapted to their case. See what has been already said on Mark xvi. 16. and John iii. 18. in two former sections. If a man depart this life in ignorance of spiritual things, and so void of love for Christ, it is thus made evident, that he will be found accursed when the Lord comes, and so he would, if he had never heard the gospel at all. The gospel is not a ministration of curses; neither did Christ come into the world to bring condemnation, for that had entered long before he came.

3. The words of Paul cannot be understood as *a supplication*, addressed to God; because then the Apostle would be represented as praying for the damnation of all the unregenerate. This would be utterly hostile to his labouring to save some, and his enduring all things for their sakes. But, they may be taken, as a word of ministerial and apostolic direction, spoken to the spiritual church of God, concerning their conduct towards men who should at

any time make it evident by their behaviour, that the love of Christ was not in them. Read the 5th chapter to this same church, and compare Gal. i. 8, 9. and v. 12.

4. The words, "*let him be anathema maranatha,*" being addressed to the church, seem to intimate, that the person alluded to, was to be anathema by *their act* and deed, and in their esteem; which can only well apply to a church act, in a way of excommunication. For, Paul would hardly say to the Corinthians, concerning sinners *without the pale* of the church, *LET them be anathema*: they were so already, by God's act; nor could the church have to do with them.*

5. Mr. F. "*But love to Christ is the duty of every one to whom the gospel is preached.*" Spiritual love is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ, and is binding, as an act, on all spiritual men. Natural love, such as Adam while innocent was capable of exercising, is required of all men by the law, as a covenant of justification by works. And what is required of one natural man, is required of all, as to the nature of the disposition. And as is the nature of the relation, subsisting between the Law-giver and the person commanded, such is the revelation afforded, and such is the obligation. If the command given, refers to spiritual things, then it is founded in a spiritual relation, established by sovereign grace, in the Lord of glory; and the person commanded, is supposed to be in a spiritual state, and so created, in Christ Jesus, unto good works of faith and love. But, thus to love Christ, is a favour peculiar to his chosen seed, and will never be granted to any others; so that, wherever it is possessed, it is an evidence of a man's election to eternal life. Neither can it be proved, that God has first made an absolute election of some men to salvation, and published the sovereign decree; and then made it the duty of all, who hear this gospel doctrine, to possess the evidence of this election.

It would be strange for Christ to command those whom he never loved, and for whom he never died, to love him, with the same love, as that which is required of his chosen, whose sins he bore in his own body on the tree. "It is true," says Mr. F. "there are favours for which *the regenerate* are obliged to love him, which are *not common to the unregenerate.*"†

* 1 Cor. v. 12.

† No. 13, page 8, of this work.

SECTION XLIII.

NOW THEN, WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, AS THOUGH GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US; WE PRAY YOU, IN CHRIST'S STEAD, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.—2 Cor. v. 20.

THESE words are brought to prove, *that sinners in general, ought to be spiritually reconciled to God, to lay down arms, and submit to mercy.* But, this doctrine, I again declare, supposes that of universal redemption, with all the kindred train of fallacies. But, how can God be said to damn the greatest part of men, because, *they* would not be reconciled *to him* in the death of his Son, when, it is acknowledged, that *he* is not reconciled *to them* through that death, nor ever can be? Their enmity and hatred against him, as their Creator, Law-giver, Lord, and Judge, he will awfully punish; but, to destroy them, because they are not spiritually reconciled *without* an atonement, as others are through interest in one, seems unlike the conduct of that God who loveth righteousness. If God would save all, all would be saved; but, if he would not *wholly* save any, all would be for ever damned. The creature is capable of destroying itself, in a sense; but God alone can save. He has already chosen the persons who shall be saved, found a ransom for them, and secured all needful means for the bringing of them safe to eternal rest, in his heavenly kingdom. No noisy parade, in the outworks of religion, can possibly increase the number of the saved, or exchange one of the objects of God's choice. Neither can the number be at all diminished. Greater knowledge may be spread among men, or greater darkness overspread the camp of Israel; but, the ransomed of the Lord *shall return*, and come to Zion, out of every age of mankind: the safety of the people is ever the same, as to the life to come. They who have the gospel, and they who have it not, are, by nature, children of wrath. If the *former* are saved, it is because they were loved of God, and chosen to salvation through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and, on the same accounts, they are blessed with the gospel, and, therefore, is it made the power of God unto their salvation.

But, in order to a right understanding of the words before us, we must attend to a few explanatory observations,

and examine the context. The words are part of Paul's epistle, written to the church of Christ at Corinth, with all the saints in Achaia. And to the church, Paul said, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." To the church he addresses himself in the first and second verses, and, if we read over the epistle, as it stands, until we come to the close of this chapter, we must see that, he speaks to the same characters. If we observe the continuation of the second person plural of pronouns, from the beginning of the chapter, we cannot but discover, that the Apostle speaks to the same persons, in the passage in hand, as he does in the first and second verses of the epistle. "Paul unto the CHURCH of God, which is at Corinth; Grace be to YOU: whether we be afflicted, it is for YOUR consolation; or, whether we be comforted, it is for YOUR consolation and salvation. And our hope of YOU is steadfast, knowing that as YE are partakers of the sufferings, so of the consolation. For we would not, *brethren*, have YOU ignorant of our trouble: YE also helping together by prayer for us—by the grace of God we have had our conversation toward YOU. For we write none other things unto YOU, than what YE read, and YE shall acknowledge even to the end, as also YE have acknowledged us in part, that we are YOUR rejoicing, even as YE are also ours. I was minded to come unto YOU before, that YE might have a second benefit; and to pass by YOU into Macedonia, and to come again unto YOU, and of YOU to be brought on my way: our word toward YOU was not yea and nay. Jesus Christ was preached among YOU. He who stablisheth us with YOU in Christ, is God—to spare YOU, I came not as yet to Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over YOUR faith, but are helpers of YOUR joy: for by faith YE stand.* I would not come again to YOU in heaviness. For, if I make YOU sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad? I wrote this same unto YOU, having confidence in YOU all, that my joy is of YOU all. I wrote unto YOU with many tears; not that YE should be grieved, but that YE might know my love unto YOU. I may not overcharge YOU all. YE ought to forgive—I beseech YOU confirm YOUR love. I write, that I might know the proof of YOU, whether YE be obedient. To whom YE forgive, I forgive: I forgave for YOUR sakes.† Need we epistles of commendation to YOU,

* Chapter ii.

† Chapter iii.

or letters of commendation from you? YE are our epistle, manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.* For we preach Christ, and ourselves YOUR servants for Jesus's sake. Death worketh in us, but life in you. Knowing that God shall present us with you. For all things are for YOUR sakes.† We are made manifest to God; I trust also are made manifest in YOUR consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that YE may have somewhat to answer them who glory in appearance: whether we be sober it is for YOUR cause. Now then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be YE reconciled to God: for he hath made him, to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. We then, as workers together, beseech you also, that YE receive not the grace of God in vain. O Corinthians! our mouth is open unto you."

Now, let any honest and impartial man, well consider the face of the context, and let him fail to understand the words under notice of any other persons, than those who constituted the church of Christ, if he can. The supplemental pronoun *you*, in ver. 20, is, Mr. F. says, *unnecessarily introduced*: he would have liked the word *men* instead of the pronoun. But, any one reading the verse with the word *men*, must observe, the former part so supplied, would read badly; and the latter part would entirely disagree: we pray *men*, in Christ's stead, be *ye* reconciled: surely, we pray *you*, be *ye* reconciled, is far preferable; but *men* would break the connexion, if *you* were not well established against them. And *that they be reconciled*, would be needful, before *you* could give place in their favour!

Furthermore, when Paul says, "Be ye reconciled to God, *for*, or *because*, he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:" he certainly intended to include the persons to whom he addressed himself, in the latter part of those words, as well as in the former exhortatory part. Otherwise, I see not the force of his argument, nor, indeed, any just reason for so introducing the vicarious undertaking of Jesus, and the righteousness arising to his people through his being made sin for them. But, if ver. 21, does include the persons

* Chapter iv.

† Chapter v.

addressed in verse 20, then, it is a clear case that, the persons exhorted in the words before us, were saints, members of the church at Corinth, and justified men in the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and this I believe is the true import of the Apostle's words.

Again, Paul, speaking of himself and his fellow-labourers in the work of the ministry, says, "We then, as workers together, beseech *you* also, that $\Upsilon\Xi$ receive not the grace of God in vain." With these words, compare what he says to the same people in his first epistle, chap. xv. 1, 2. But, surely, the Apostle did not say to men in a natural state of enmity against God, "I beseech *you* also, that $\Upsilon\Xi$ receive not the grace of God in vain;" and that in an epistle expressly written to the church of God. It is certainly better to understand these words as spoken to saints, who were partakers of grace, and had received the doctrines of grace, than to imagine that the Apostle was speaking to men who knew not the grace of God. Besides, I nowhere read, that Paul ordered this epistle, which he directed to the church, to be read to the ungodly, who are said to be without; though he did sometimes direct that his writings sent to one church should be read in another.*

Mr. F. has observed that, "Dr. Gill expounds the reconciliation exhorted to, of submission to *providence*, and of obedience to the *discipline* and *ordinances* of God." And, I am persuaded, the Doctor has not misexplained the exhortation, as the context abundantly shews. There is often great reason to exhort the children of God, to faithfully confess, and humbly submit to, the truths of divine and sovereign grace; and also to the holy commandments of the Lord Jesus, their Saviour and King. We have many, in our own times, who are far from being reconciled to the whole counsel of God, who are yet called pious, and some such are members of churches. The true discipline and government of Christ's kingdom is very little regarded, and great efforts are making to level all mount Zion's inclosures, and lay open God's garden to the world. To contend for the ancient forms of godliness, is deemed an idle employment; the laws of a spiritual church are only non-essentials at best, and are often represented as unworthy of the regard of soaring minds. There is, therefore, room for the Apostle's exhortation still, without carrying

* Col. iv. 16. 1 Thess. v. 27.

it over to the camp of the ungodly. Some are zealously moved against the preceptive will of God, altogether; and others are aiming to make the powerful gospel into a precept; these are approaching to the *neonomian* sentiment.* But, the gospel can no more become a commanding precept, than a commanding precept can become a gracious promise. To be reconciled to God's commandment, requires an enjoyment of the Spirit of Christ: and there is plenty of room for the exhortation of the Apostle, even among saints. The dispensations of providence are often trying, and the people of God are too apt to be unreconciled under them: so that on this account also, it may be said: Be ye reconciled to God; and we are exhorted to *continue* reconciled in all those respects. But Mr. F. imagined, Paul spoke to unregenerate men, and he has made some strange remarks, which may now (some of them) be briefly noticed.

Mr. F. "The object of an embassy in all cases is peace."†

Ans. Ministers are not sent to make peace, but to preach it as already made: not to offer it on terms to be performed by sinners, but to proclaim it as freely granted on the footing of Jesus's perfect atonement. He has made peace for his people, by the blood of his cross, and sends his servants to proclaim what he has done.

Mr. F. "The allusion in this case, is manifestly to a righteous prince, who should condescend to speak peaceably to his rebellious subjects, and as it were, to intreat them for their own sakes, to be reconciled."‡

Ans. This is but very badly adapted to the mystery of gospel reconciliation, which is not to be effected by arguments, or by overtures, made to rebellious minds. Besides, for a prince to speak to his rebellious subjects, with the view of bringing them to a loyal behaviour, is for him, at least, to make it appear that he is their lawful and loving sovereign, and is peaceably disposed towards them. But, is this the case in the gospel mystery, as it stands in God's covenant with Christ, and in Christ's conduct towards men, in his manner of coming to his kingly authority? I read that he is anointed King of Zion; and that "he died, rose, and

* Making the gospel A NEW LAW. *Daniel Williams, D. D.* who founded the library in Redcross Street, and who died in 1716, was one of the principal defenders of this Arminian notion.

† Page 54.

‡ Page 55.