

REMARKS
UPON
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD,
THE
ONLY TRUE GOD.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
REMARKS
UPON THE
DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE,
BY THAT FAITHFUL SERVANT AND MINISTER OF CHRIST,
JOB SCOTT.

FROM THE TWO-VOLUME EDITION OF JOB SCOTT'S WORKS
PUBLISHED BY JOHN COMLY IN PHILADELPHIA IN 1831,

COMPARED WITH THE 1824 EDITION OF
ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD
PUBLISHED BY EMMOR KIMBER IN PHILADELPHIA IN 1824,
AND EDITED FOR A MODERN READERSHIP
BY JOHN JEREMIAH EDMINSTER, 2023



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PREFACE.¹

One Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism. Eph. 4:5.

FINDING an engagement on my mind, to commit to writing some considerations respecting *the one true God*, especially the true and saving knowledge of him, *the one true and only saving faith*, and *the only christian baptism*, my breathings have been frequent and fervent to the Lord, for his help and direction: certainly and sensibly knowing, by multiplied experience, that of myself, without his aid, I can do nothing that will please him, or further my own or others' salvation. Thus looking to him, who I trust fastened this concern on my mind, and has opened some gospel truths relative to these important subjects with clearness on my understanding, and humbly imploring his almighty aid, that through the influence of his Holy Spirit, what I write may be agreeable to his Divine will; and that not a word may be suffered to escape my pen that would hurt the souls of any,—I proceed first to some brief *Remarks upon the Knowledge of the One Lord, the Only True God*.

¹ This, Scott's Preface, which appears on page 278 of v. 2 of John Comly's 1831 edition of Scott's *Works*, is identical in wording to the "Preface by the Author" appearing on pages vii-viii of the single volume in which Emmor Kimber had published this essay in 1824. Kimber there appends this footnote to it: "A part of this Preface alludes to other works, — but, as the editor [Emmor Kimber himself] found it prefixed to this, he has thought it most advisable to insert it entire." Scott's "other works alluded to" (in the epigraph "one Lord, one faith, one baptism") would doubtless include "The Faith and Patience of Saints, Displayed, in Their Not Making Use of Carnal Weapons in Their Own Defence" (*Works*, v. 2, 253-271) and "The Baptism of Christ, a Gospel Ordinance: Being Altogether Inward and Spiritual" (*Works*, v. 2, 424-561).

Job Scott's reference to his "frequent and fervent breathings to the Lord" hints at the intensity of his concern to write a clear and convincing enough treatise to rescue at least some of his readers from a spiritual complacency that might leave them content with a less-than-saving "knowledge of the Lord," and so in unrelieved danger of damnation.

We modern readers may be so attached to images of a Creator whose nature is Love Itself (1 Jn 4:8) and whose declared will is to save every human soul (1 Tim 2:4), that we resist acknowledging the possibility that we ourselves, or loved ones of ours, might risk serious suffering at what is called "the Judgment" or "the Life-Review." This is an event that, we are warned by many world religions, follows the death of the body. There we may emerge (or fling ourselves, in horror or hatred of what we see then!) either into fires of hell (Matt 5:22,29-30; 6:15; 10:28, 23:33, Luke 12:5) or into "the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 13:42, 50) — notwithstanding the possibility that God may have ways of eventually bringing such suffering to a merciful end.

In any case, we easily forget that for Quakers of the first century and a half, eternal damnation was a real danger. Scott ends the present essay with a section "On Perseverance," which warns against the then-popular but unsupportable notion, "once in grace, always in grace."

Scott also argues earnestly against what he considers a false and seductive doctrine of universal forgiveness and salvation (still popular!) in his essay "Future Rewards and Punishments maintained, as evidently held forth in the scriptures" (*Works*, v. 2, 339-423). — JJE

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: SAVING KNOWLEDGE, SAVINGLY KNOWN

READER, you are about to embark on what may be the most thoroughgoing early Quaker treatise still extant on ***saving knowledge***, a term in currency among Friends (along with its cognate, ***savingly known***) until its gradual obsolescence over the course of the nineteenth century. Saving knowledge, is, of course, that knowledge of God and Jesus Christ in which, Jesus declares, eternal life consists:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3 KJV).²

But readers of the New Testament will recall reading that there is also a knowledge of God that is *not* saving:

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble (James 2:19).

And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? (Matt 8:29.)

The early Quaker movement had gathered around one man, George Fox (1624-1691), whose *Journal* records his reception of saving knowledge of God and Christ by direct revelation, whereby he also saw that —

The knowledge which the world hath of what the prophets and apostles spake is a fleshly knowledge; and the apostates from the life in which the prophets and apostles were, have gotten their words, the Holy Scriptures, in a form, but not in their life nor spirit that gave them forth. And so they all lie in confusion and are making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, but not to fulfil the law and command of Christ in his power and spirit; for that, they say, they cannot do, but to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, that they can do with delight.³

² All Biblical citations herein will be to the Authorized or King James Version, which was the translation most extensively used by early Friends, and the one used by Job Scott in particular.

³ John L. Nickalls, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (London: The Religious Society of Friends, 1975), 10-11. Fox seems not to have used the terms “saving knowledge” or “savingly known” in his own writings, although his contemporaries Samuel Fisher, Isaac Penington, William Penn, and Robert Barclay did. The sole appearance of “saving knowledge” in his *Journal* (in Fox, *Works* (1831 American edition), 1:144), may have been an emendation by Fox’s early editor Thomas Ellwood, for it does not appear in the better-authenticated Nickalls edition of the same passage (*Journal*, 110). In *The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded* (1659) Fox debunks the claim of “Priest Bennet” that “every man is enlightened only with a natural reason, and the elect are enlightened with a saving knowledge” (*Works*, 3:313), but Fox himself may have avoided the term as “unscriptural” because it did not appear in any of the English translations of the Bible then in use, and Fox was extremely punctilious about using “scriptural language.” However, his many references to men and women being brought up into the image or state of “Christ, that never fell... and into his everlasting kingdom” (*Works*, 2:319) suggest that he knew the state of saving knowledge well. “For every man and woman that receives [the

The very Spirit of God that had granted Fox *this* direct revelation also gave him faith that God would likewise grant saving knowledge to *any* sincere seeker, and Fox's subsequent preaching experience confirmed this: That is, that by welcoming the guidance of the indwelling Divine Light, men and women were putting themselves under the direct rule of Christ, their "Prophet, Priest, King, Teacher, Shepherd, Counsellor, Living Way, and Savior," by obeying whom *consistently* they could not fail of salvation.⁴

From its very beginning, Quakerism was a religion of personal experience, and not one of "notional" faith based on received doctrine. "It is a great matter to receive an understanding from the Lord; which until a man doth, his knowledge is neither true, living, nor saving," wrote Isaac Penington (1616-1679) in 1671.⁵ Robert Barclay (1648-1690) begins *A Catechism and Confession of Faith* (1673) with a first chapter entitled "Of GOD, and the true and Saving Knowledge of Him."⁶ Barclay's best-known work, the *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (in Latin, 1675; in English, 1678), follows the same pattern, making "the true knowledge of God" the subject of his First Proposition. He avers in his Second Proposition that "the testimony of the Spirit is that alone by which the true knowledge of God hath been, is, and can be only revealed."⁷

Stephen Crisp (1628-1692), in the sermon "No True Worship without the Right Knowledge of God," argues that "all, in all ages, that have attained to the knowledge of God, they have been *made partakers of his divine nature* [2 Peter 1:4] and his divine qualities," and "the law written in their heart" [Jer 31:33; Heb 10:16] "saith, submit thyself to him that redeemed thee, thou art his, thou art no more thine own; this law being written in the heart obligeth a man... to *worship God in spirit and truth*...."⁸

Job Scott (10/18/1751-11/22/1793) penned *Reflections upon the Knowledge of the Lord* sometime in the period 1788-1793, and it falls squarely into this tradition.

blessing of God] comes to know him to reign in his grace, truth, light and life, over death and darkness, and the Devil, the power of it" (Sermon to London Yearly Meeting. 1681, in Skinner and Stillwell, eds., *That Thy Candles May Always Be Burning: Nine Pastoral Sermons of George Fox* (Camp Hill, PA: New Foundation, 2001), 228.

⁴ Fox made many listings of the "offices of Christ," and Lewis Benson's massive *Notes on George Fox* (Moorestown, NJ: n. p., 1981) contains two appendices devoted to these listings. Noteworthy are the one made in Fox's famous Firbank Fell Sermon (1652; summarized in Nickalls (1975), 109), and one in Fox's Epistle No. 391 (1684), in *Works*, 8:247.

⁵ "A Few Words in General to Those That Desire the Knowledge of the True God," in *Life and Immortality Brought to Light through the Gospel* (1671) in Isaac Penington, *Works* (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 1997), 4:53.

⁶ Robert Barclay, *A Catechism and Confession of Faith*, published online by Quaker Heritage Press at <http://qhpress.org/texts/barclay/catechism/chapter1.html>.

⁷ Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (Farmington, ME: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002), 9.

⁸ Stephen Crisp, *Scripture Truths Demonstrated, in Thirty-two Sermons, or Declarations* (David Johnson, ed. Casper, WY: New Foundation Fellowship, 2022), Sermon 26.

Referencing the self-evident character of saving knowledge, Scott asks, “Does any true believer who has... ‘the witness in himself’ doubt his own adoption and sonship, or the reality of... ‘the love of God shed abroad in the heart’, because wicked men and ignorant enthusiasts have the audacity to claim the same thing?”⁹

I believe that the time has come for the return of the term “saving knowledge” to Friends’ (and all God-believers’) vocabulary, for no other would-be synonym has quite the same range of meaning. “Enlightenment,” “theosis,” and “unitive consciousness” suggest exalted states (as do many terms imported from non-Abrahamic faith traditions: *samadhi*, *nirvana*, *satori*), but *saving knowledge* can enter into a mind of quite humble condition, whenever and however the Lord sees fit to bestow it. Jesus saw from her behavior that the sinner woman at the banquet, who knew her many sins forgiven, had it (Luke 7:36-50). Luke also reports that He assured a repentant armed robber, dying on a cross next to His own: “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

How much blood has been shed, how much ink wasted, over whose knowledge about God was more correct than someone else’s! And while the theologians quarreled, humble innocents gifted with knowledge of God, unremembered by history, were brightening their loved ones’ and neighbors’ lives simply by letting their light shine!

I’ve met such people. And I myself have been given the gift of saving knowledge, though I’m sure I’ve out-sinned many of my readers in my lifetime, so it can’t be because of my own merit. Perhaps it came merely because, in mid-life, I asked for the gift of obedience to God’s will. After that, I inwardly heard the Lord’s voice assure me, “I will not let you fall into sin.” Don’t other Friends today hear that same warning and reassuring voice? And don’t they sense the absolute goodness and almightiness of the Lord without knowing how they know it?¹⁰

Don’t we resonate with Stephen Crisp’s *Thou art His, thou art no more thine own*? Perhaps we lack saving knowledge because *we’re* withholding something from *God*: acknowledgement of some particularly shameful sin, for example, perhaps one buried under years of denial — or we’re refusing to give up some secret addiction, some cherished “freedom” that we dread losing.

⁹ Paragraph (¶) 80 in the text, below.

¹⁰ The Apostle Paul (Rom 1:19-20 ff.) claims that what may be known of God is initially shown to every human being, but all who choose to sin (i.e., all but Jesus) reject this knowledge and so lose it, until “the goodness of God” leads them to repentance (Rom 2:4). Similarly, the Qur’an (7:171-172) holds that all are taught, prenatally, that God is their Sustainer, so that no one can claim at the Judgment that they were never informed. Mis-education or sin may obscure this knowledge, but never erase it. “The Condition of Man in the Fall” is treated at length, from a Quaker perspective, in Barclay, *Apology*, Prop. 4 (<http://qhpress.org/texts/barclay/apology/prop4.html>).

These are secular-minded times, and Friends in our Meeting may no longer be comfortable with the idea that we're all fallen souls (that is, "sinners") in need of something called "salvation" before we face something called "the Judgment." Indeed, if we show concern about such things, we may be shamed as selfish, considering how many structural evils (war, plutocracy, racism, environmental destruction) there are for good people to mobilize against! Why be concerned over relations with God if we're not "speaking truth to power" and shaking malefactors by the lapels? Worry over the destiny of our souls might better be taken to a psychotherapist than a fellow Quaker in our Meeting! — With such thoughts as these, concern over how we and our loved ones may fare at a Judgment is banished from our mind.

Many Christians, historically, have escaped anxiety about their fate after death by fancying that because they've had such-and-such "sacraments," or held such-and-such notional beliefs about having Christ's merits *imputed* to them while they themselves remain sinners, they will avoid reaping, in an afterlife, the evils that they have sown in this life.¹¹ Today, though, believers may more likely take refuge in a hope that God will prove all-forgiving and save everyone without punishment; or that hell, if it exists, will prove tolerable and temporary; or that reincarnation will prove a more gentle way to expiate sins than the permanent, dichotomous heaven-or-hell paradigm that traditional Christianity has long offered. I hope, by republishing Scott's essay now, to provoke more prayerful thought on the matter.¹²

In this connection, Scott's postscript "On Perseverance" (§129-§149, below) deserves attention. Many early Quaker writers expressed a belief that a sinner's "day of visitation," during which cleansing from sin (and therefore salvation) was available, might expire before life on earth ended, so repentance was not to be put off till tomorrow; neither should regenerated souls think themselves immune from falling from grace: therefore all ought to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet 1:10).

Job Scott wrote a number of essays that he did not submit for publication in his own lifetime, and *Reflections upon the Knowledge of the Lord* is merely one of them. True, Scott seems to have hoped for a future opportunity to further "digest" his ideas before publishing them, had his life not been cut short by smallpox at age 42. But a major reason for his reluctance to attempt publication seems to have been a well-grounded fear that opponents of his views within the Society of Friends might consign them to the permanent oblivion of the "yearly

¹¹ Early Quakers battled staunchly against what Scott calls the doctrine of the "imputarians," which derives from Calvinism. Fox called this "pleading for sin and imperfection" (see footnote 41, to §174, below). Scott addresses this problem in §88-§96 and §103 of his text.

¹² Among items published in the 1831 ed. of Job Scott's *Works* is an argument against universal salvation entitled "Future Rewards and Punishments Maintained, &c." (*Works*, v. 2, 343-423).

meeting chest.” He wisely took precautions to protect his reflections from being lost or suppressed, however, by putting his manuscripts into the protective custody of his father-in-law before leaving on the 1793 voyage to Ireland from which he did not return. The Quaker Heritage Press edition of Job Scott’s *Essays on Salvation by Christ* valuably preserves such evidences as we retain today of the author’s hopes and cautions about his literary legacy.¹³

In editing this text I’ve treated the 1831 publication by John Comly as more authoritative than Emmor Kimber’s 1824 edition, because printed from a better collation of manuscript copies. However, for those readers who wish to compare the easily available 1824 Kimber edition (in the Digital Quaker Collection of Earlham School of Religion, <http://dqc.esr.earlham.edu/>), I’ve indicated the pagination of that edition with numbers in angular brackets inserted where the 1824 edition’s page number changes, thus:

... such multiplied and indubitable demonstrations <2> of the being of an all-wise almighty...

I’ve numbered the paragraphs consecutively to aid the reader in tracking the sequence of steps in Scott’s argument. To remind the reader that these paragraph numbers are my editorial additions, not from either the 1824 nor the 1831 sources, they are placed within square brackets, thus: [127.].

The sources show the first publishers’ inline Biblical citations in this format: “1 Cor. i. 21.” I have modernized the format to read “1 Cor 1:21.” I’ve added new, additional inline Biblical citations for the benefit of a modern readership that may be less apt to recognize allusions to the King James Bible than the Quaker readers of 1824 or 1831 would have been. These editorially *added* citations are set off within square brackets, thus: [Jer 5:2]; [1 Cor 12:3].

I’ve modernized a few spellings, punctuations, and capitalizations in Scott’s text, and corrected a few obvious typographical errors. In the interest of not distorting the author’s voice, I have not tried to make his language gender-inclusive: God remains “he” and humankind remains “man.” Neither have I censored out his disparaging characterization of an indigenous American in paragraphs 32-33, nor mitigated the sting of his reference to “the Jews” (paragraphs 43, 59, 86, and 87) as those who rejected the ministry of Jesus and His followers (who were also Jews). For this I ask forgiveness to all who, like myself, find such language offensive when we read it today. But Job Scott was a child of his time, and I see no reason to try to make him sound like a child of our own generation.

John Jeremiah Edminster, Fifth Month 2023, as updated 1/7/2024.

¹³ Job Scott, *Essays on Salvation by Christ, and the debate which followed their publication*, etc. (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 1993). Scott’s anxiety about the “yearly meeting chest” is attested in Emmor Kimber’s introduction to the 1824 ed., page v.

REMARKS UPON
The Knowledge of the One Lord,
THE
ONLY TRUE GOD.

[1.] Man is very fond of being thought knowing. Perhaps few in Christendom would be willing to allow they know not God. Yet many who treat with ridicule the notions of the ancients respecting their divers false gods, are, nevertheless, ignorant of the one true and living God.

[2.] We find in Scripture the possibility of swearing falsely, even in declaring that the Lord liveth [Jer 5:2]; and that none can truly and savingly *call Jesus Lord* but *by the Holy Ghost* [1 Cor 12:3]. What then is the real, substantial, and soul-saving knowledge of God?¹⁴ How is it obtained and wherein does it consist?

[3.] Is that simple conviction that attends every rational mind, that, since *something is*; since matter exists under various forms and modifications; since many masses of it are revolved, in wonderful order and harmony, without jar or confusion from age to age, around other masses of it; since in the *vegetable* world are displayed such wonderful marks of intelligence and wisdom; since in the *animal*, are evidently seen such indisputable tokens and proofs of an infinite knowledge and ability existent; since in the *rational*, such multiplied and indubitable demonstrations <2> of the being of an all-wise almighty and omnipotent productive cause, ruler, and upholder of men and all things appears, therefore *there is*, *there must be*, and it is irrational to suppose there is not, an eternal God. Is this rational conviction the saving knowledge of God? Nay, verily; thousands have this conviction arising from the foregoing, and from innumerable

¹⁴ Scriptural references to “knowledge of God” include Num 24:16; Prov 2:5; Isa 11:9 (= Hab 2:14); Jer 7:24, 31:34 (= Heb 8:11); Hos 2:20, 6:6, 8:2; John 8:32, 17:3.

considerations, and yet live without God in the world, as to the *saving* knowledge of him, and are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel [Eph 2:12].

[4.] “The world by wisdom knew not God:” 1 Cor 1: 21, and it knows him no more now, by any rational abilities or creaturely wisdom, unassisted by divine internal light, than ever it did. Worldly wisdom is as inadequate to this knowledge in one age as in another. In every age God has confounded and will ever *confound* the wise; he will “destroy the *wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*,” 1 Cor 1:19, that so no flesh, no creaturely faculties, no natural sagacity, shall glory in his presence [1 Cor 1:29].

[5.] God, and the things of God, knoweth no man, but by the Spirit of God that is in him, 1 Cor 2:11. The natural man cannot know them; they are foolishness unto him, they are only spiritually discerned, 2 Cor 2:14. God has hid them from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, Matt 11:25. “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” 1 Cor 1:20.

[6.] *Can man, by searching, even to the utmost extension of human comprehension, find out God?* [Job 37:23.] *Can he, by all the investigations of finite ability, find out the Almighty to perfection?* Nay: “*it is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?*” Job 11:7, 8.¹⁵

[7.] The saving knowledge of God is not learned, either by reading, reasoning, or searching ever so anxiously after it, in the mere strength and wisdom of man. It will forever elude his utmost penetration, till he comes to submit all his boasted abilities to the rectification and illumination <3> of a superior principle. Men may search the scriptures, and think to have eternal life in them [John 5:39], and yet, not coming unto “Christ, the light of the world” [John 8:12, 9:5], miss of that real

¹⁵ The entirety of ¶6 is missing from the 1824 edition.

knowledge which alone is [John 17:3], or can give [John 17:2] eternal life to their souls!

[8.] The scriptures truly *testify* of him [John 5:39]; but without his own illuminations, cannot possibly *reveal* him. No man can truly call him Lord but by the Holy Ghost. The letter, without the life and light, ever will kill, ever will tend to stifle that immortal birth, that babe, to which the Father revealeth the mysteries of his own heavenly kingdom.¹⁶ It was not in one age only that it might truly be said, “the letter killeth,” 2 Cor 3:6, but it does, and will do it, in all ages and nations. It has slain the *babe of life* in tens of thousands, by building up, substituting, and establishing¹⁷ notions and opinions in the stead of the one true faith, which is the gift of God [Eph 2:8], and is only of his own production, and immediate operation in the soul.¹⁸ He alone begets it. He alone is the author and finisher of it [Heb 12:2].

[9.] A zealous attachment to the *letter*, without the openings of *pure life*, tends also powerfully to kill [2 Cor 3:6] and suppress the small budding and beginning of the new life, the second birth [John 3:3], by bolstering up the creature in a round of lifeless performances, in his own time and ability. Thus because he reads, that¹⁹ the saints, who acted in and by the openings and influence of the life, did so and so practice; and because he finds here and there an exhortation or injunction to this and the other duty, the natural man falls to doing as they did; and though he that believeth shall not make haste [Isa 28:16], yet so great is the haste which this searcher of the letter, in his own unenlightened understanding, is making, that he is frequently calling upon God [Ps 91:15, Jer 33:3], and talking a great deal about him, before he has ever rightly²⁰ known him; as if the scriptures would give him to know, what a God requires of him [Deut 10:12, Mic 6:8], with whom he is

16 The two opening sentences of ¶8 are missing from the 1824 edition.

17 For “building up, substituting, and establishing,” in the 1831 ed., the 1824 ed. reads “establishing and substituting.”

18 The 1824 ed. here reads “of his own production—of his own immediate operation in the soul.”

19 The word “that” is missing from the 1824 ed.

20 The word “rightly” is missing from the 1824 ed.

unacquainted, or inform him when and how to worship a Being of whom he is ignorant! <4>

[10.] O man! thou knowest not what to pray for as thou ought, nor how to pray, but as the Spirit helpeth thy infirmities [Rom 8:26].²¹ This the Spirit often does, for those who really know God, with groanings that cannot be uttered or expressed. How widely then do they err from the line of their duty and of²² divine appointment, who at their own set times, importune the Almighty in vocal supplications and prayers, when all that the Spirit does for them amounts only to the begetting of inward groanings, which cannot be uttered! As sure as we attempt the vocal expression of such inward and spiritual groanings, we lose the lively sense, and dry up the little springs of life which accompany them, and nothing is then left but words without life, and sounds devoid of substance. Thus eminently "*the letter killeth*" [2 Cor 3:6]. Whereas the Spirit, if singly attended to, even in these *unspeakable groanings* [Rom 8:26], without any creaturely additions, *giveth life* [2 Cor 3:6]; and doubtless would not only *give* a small beginning of real *divine life*, even to those who are thus unwisely²³ dissipating it, by hastily rushing into words, but were they quietly to wait on that inward operation, whereby the Spirit is at seasons thus *helping their infirmities* [Rom 8:26], they would witness a glorious degree of the arisings and increase of divine life in their souls; yea, many times till *death would be swallowed up of victory* [1 Cor 15:54], and life and light triumph over death and darkness, to their unspeakable consolation.²⁴ This is the real and happy experience of many, who dare not presume to *add* of their *own* to the *word of the Lord*, inwardly operative and revealed; dare not be rash to utter anything before God [Eccl 5:2]; dare not *make such haste* [Isa 28:16] as to force themselves into the vocal expression of what God intended should operate only to the

²¹ The 1824 ed. reads "infirmities, and maketh intercession for thee."

²² The 1824 ed. reads "from" for "of."

²³ The 1824 ed. reads "continually" [dissipating it, etc.]

²⁴ The 1824 ed. makes two sentences of this instead of one, conveying substantially the same meaning.

production of inward groanings and divine life, and there to terminate. These do most joyfully find, that as <5> they are thus careful to act the part of true believers, *who must not make haste*, but abide in the patient waiting, in that whereby they feel the Spirit helping their infirmities, and are willing to be limited to, and by, the measure and manner thereof, either in inward groanings or vocal solicitations; that as these are truly unspeakable, and cannot be formed into words, without great loss of the inward life and energy attending them, so also is the divine and soul-felt consolation, arising from dwelling in the depths of this inward exercise and stillness, as truly unspeakable, as are the groanings through which it is attained.

[11.] But they who will make haste [Isa 28:16], who will be always ready, outrun their little portion, dry up the small spring of life, their words fall to the ground, and they wonder why they are so cold and lifeless in their devotions; whereas had they been limited by the degree of inward help and life, and content with inward breathings and groanings, they might have increased with the increase that is truly of God [Col 2:19], might have mounted upwards in living and silent approaches toward his throne and presence “with wings as eagles;” might run and not be weary, or walk, and not faint [Isa 40:31].

[12.] As this is the certain effect of waiting upon God, so directly the reverse is the consequence of running before him: for, perhaps it will bear to be again repeated, “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life” [2 Cor 3:6]. Here ends the race run of many in man's own wisdom and ability, in flat formality, if not in degeneracy into the bondage of sin and corruption [Rom 8:21], from which the Lord by the inward working of the Spirit had in some degree redeemed them.

[13.] The operation of the Spirit in the soul, is that which, in all ages, countries and persons, began and begins the <6> work, wherever anything really good and truly religious is brought forth; and nothing else can do it. Man once dead in sin [Eph 2:5], would, without this quickening influence, forever remain so, having no more ability of himself to quicken his own or another's soul, or to change his own or

others' inclinations and pursuits from bad to good, than the Ethiopian has power to change his skin, or the leopard his spots [Jer 13:23]. But God, ever gracious, visits and revisits the souls of men, by the operations of his Spirit; this begins the work, and nothing can carry it on without the constant assistance of his holy efficient principle, this divine agency of the Spirit, in and through every step, movement, and performance of religious life.

[14.] The work begins in the Spirit, effecting a change, or alteration in our inclinations, dispositions, views, enjoyments, and pursuits, and is carried on by its continued operations, advancing and more and more establishing this change, till a conversion and settlement in the divine life is effected:²⁵ and our advancement is in proportion to the degree of our submission to, and co-operation with it: that is, the work of redemption goes on no faster or further, than in exact proportion to the degree in which we are influenced by and through this efficient operation of the Spirit or grace of God, whereby he worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure [Phil 2:13].

[15.] And notwithstanding the necessity of *our submission* to the divine operation, and working out our own salvation in and through it [Phil 2:12]; yet he that thinks he can add anything of his own, he that thinks he can take one step in any stage of the race, without the Spirit's assistance, will find himself mistaken; will find he has been trusting in flesh and blood, a mere broken reed [Isa 36:6], and that he has had too high an opinion of human ability, even though he may have been foremost and loudest in exclaiming against it. <7>

[16.] He who can do anything for himself that is truly and religiously good, without divine assistance, may hope consistently enough to be *made perfect by the flesh* [Gal 3:3], or by creaturely ability, which imports the same thing; and he that

²⁵ References or parabolic allusions to the *gradual* change or *organic growth* in the believer's character that can be expected after the "new birth" may be found in Matt 13:12 = Mark 4:25 = Luke 8:18 = Luke 19:26; Matt 25:29; Luke 13:18-21; John 4:14, 14:12, etc.; and 2 Cor 3:18; Col 1:11; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:22-23, 2:2, 4:1-2, 5:10; 2 Pet 1:3-8; 1 Jn 1:9, 3:3, 3:9, 4:15, 5:4-5.

attempts to move of himself, unassisted, in the performance of any outward acts of devotion, in any vocal religious duties and performances, is, whether he knows it or not, attempting to be made perfect by the flesh.

[17.] Perhaps this may seem like a digression, but I was led into it from the consideration that the mere searching of the letter of the Scriptures [John 5:39] cannot bring a soul to the real knowledge of God, but that the letter tends, when dwelt in without the life, *to kill*; and so far these views are naturally connected with the subject I am upon — “the knowledge of God.”

[18.] But to proceed: — How shall He be known, seeing neither reading nor reasoning can make us know him?

[19.] Answer: He never was, or can ever be savingly known, but by immediate revelation; or if this word offend any, who may ignorantly suppose revelation is ceased, and not to be known in our day, though this is a most unreasonable conclusion concerning days of gospel light and privileges, I will explain: I mean here, by immediate revelation, the same as if I should, to accommodate myself to their ideas, express myself thus: God cannot be clearly and savingly known, but in and by the shinings and manifestations of his own light, “for whatsoever doth make manifest is light,” Eph 5:13. This the apostle positively asserts; and we know it is true. We cannot see any outward object without light: in the light objects become manifest. What light then is that, wherein is had the manifestation and knowledge of God? Surely it must be a light that shineth in the soul; for that which may be known of God is manifest in man. Read Romans 1:19. <8>

[20.] Seeing then nothing but light can make manifest, and that the manifestation of God is to be made within — seeing there is no eternal life to the soul, without the knowledge of God [John 17:3], what light has he afforded to the souls of men, whereby they may know him? Answer: “The true light, that now shineth,” 1 John 2:8, and “that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John 1: 9: the very

life of God, the life of the Word, that was in the beginning with God and was God. Read John 1:1-5. Hence it is clear that the light which enlightens all men is Christ, the life of him that was in the beginning, that “was and is God.” Well then might the primitive testimony and message be, that “*God is light and in him is no darkness at all,*” 1 John 1:5; and well might the primitive laborers in the Gospel of Christ be sent expressly *to turn people “from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God,”* Acts 26:18: that is, to turn their attention to that true light, that had enlightened them in degree, and would and did enlighten them much more abundantly, as their attention became thus turned to it.

[21.] But many hated this light, because their deeds were evil, and so it became their condemnation: for “this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,” John 3:19. But they that love it, obey it, and bring their deeds to it, thereby discover that they are wrought in God [John 3:21]; for the light reveals God and the knowledge of his will and approbation.

[22.] Were it not for this inward divine light, all nations must forever have been in darkness. And had it not enlightened every man, it could not be the condemnation of the wicked and abandoned. God will never condemn a soul for non-attention to a light that never shined in him, or upon him, or for the non-improvement of a talent <9> never afforded. — Some were condemned of old for the non-occupation of their talents [Matt 25:26-28], but none for neglecting, or not improving, what never was bestowed or offered to them, and so not possible to have been improved.

[23.] Indeed this cannot be; God is just. Therefore as sure as the condemnation is, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, so sure the light must enlighten all that are thus condemned, else they could not be condemned for the rejection of it.

[24.] Observe how sweetly this conclusion coincides with, and confirms John's testimony [John 1:9], that "the true light enlighteneth every man!" But some may say we know the light is sufficient to condemn, but it is not able to save nor to give the knowledge of God. Surely such are mistaken, for it is abundantly able to do both, and in those who attend to it, it most joyfully and assuredly does both.

[25.] But, can this light certainly reveal, or give the knowledge of God? Yea, most certainly; and nothing else can. He inhabits eternity, and dwells in the light [Rev 21:23, 22:5]. In the light only, therefore, can he possibly be known, or manifested to the soul. He is the light, and extends beams of his light to the eye of our souls or minds, as the outward light, the sun, does to the eye of our bodies. Hereby we may receive the manifestation and knowledge of God, and that too by his own light.

[26.] As we cannot know the sun, but by its own light and influence, no more can we know God, but by his own immediate light and influence.

[27.] Whatsoever makes manifest is light [Eph 5:13]. The light of the sun manifests the sun, and the things of this world. The light of the Lord, that the house of Israel is called upon to walk in [Isa 2:5], and that only, can manifest God.

[28.] For this reason we are exhorted, "while ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the $\langle 10 \rangle$ light," John 12:36. And further: as the influence of the sun will both harden clay and soften wax, so the internal luminary, though it is powerful in the condemnation of those who rebel against it, is the joy and consolation of those that love it: they rejoice in the increase of it. They walk therein; it is their path. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov 4:18. Now the just man's *path* is his *way* and his *way* is *Christ*; for Christ says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," John 14:6. Here we see that Christ, the light of the world [John 8:12, 9:5], and the way of the righteous [Ps 1:6], is truly that light, which is the path of the just. And though as the light of the world, or of the unregenerate, his shining in them, by

reason of many clouds and obstructions arising from themselves, may be very dim; yet whenever we come to walk in the light, as the apostle advises — whenever we take it for our path, our way, it will immediately shine more and more; and as we continue walking honestly therein, it will increase in brightness, to the perfect day. Or as the great prophet, Isaiah, expresses it, “The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people,” Isa 30:26. That is, it appears dim at first, like the moon, but as it is walked in, it not only increases to an equality, for clearness, to the light of the sun itself, but like the light that shined from heaven around the apostle [Acts 9:3], “above the brightness of the sun” [Acts 26:13]. Oh! how sweetly experience confirmeth these observations! Many cannot believe how bright the light shines in those who faithfully walk in it, because whatsoever is not experienced is disputable. *They* do not know and experience more than its glimmering in themselves, or as it were its reflected or moon-light <11> shining, because they have not taken it for their pathway through life; have not given up to walk in it; and being unwilling to believe they do not know as much, or see with as much clearness as others, they ignorantly judge the real experience of those, who in this respect, know manifold more, and see more clearly, than they have attained, or can attain to, whilst they thus rebel against the light, and call it²⁶ an idle notion, or the effect of imagination; whereas nothing is more certainly and really known, than what is thus known in the light of the Lord.

[29.] How would the sage philosopher despise the ignorance of a *blind* man, who, because he did not see the sun, nor those many objects, which it manifests, would obstinately maintain, that neither the sun, nor any of those objects have an existence, but in the imagination of those who pretend they see them! And yet just as much and as loudly does this very philosopher, in the exultation of his own sufficiency, proclaim his own ignorance of divine things, whenever he judges the

²⁶ “and call it an idle notion” in the 1824 ed. = “to be an idle notion” in the 1831 ed. I have here chosen the 1824 wording as clearer. — ED.

experience of those, who are livingly acquainted with them, to be only imaginary. As sure as *he* can be that he really does see the sun, and the objects it discovers to him, so sure are those who walk in the light, that they really do see and know it, and the objects which it alone makes manifest: and they have as substantial ground to mourn over *his* ignorance, blindness, and unbelief, as he has to despise the like, in the outwardly blind man!

[30.] “How oft is the candle of the wicked put out?” Job 21:17²⁷ — put out in them who, while the light shineth, do thereby gain some real though small knowledge of God, of his will, and their own duty, but will not submit to it, and so “glorify him not as God” [Rom 1:21]. The natural consequence of their rebellion against the light, is, “they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof” [Job 24:13]. <12>

[31.]²⁸ They become “vain in their imagination, and their foolish hearts are darkened” [Rom 1:21]; thus it is by disobedience that their candle is put out; and now they are just in a fit disposition, in this state of darkness and blindness, to be puffed up, and to profess themselves wise, with those in the text, whose hearts were so darkened that they became fools [Rom 1:22]. These not abiding in the path of the light, not knowing the way thereof, nor where or with what clearness it leadeth those who do so abide and know²⁹, can ridicule this living substantial testimony, as a matter of enthusiasm and imagination. “They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities” [2 Pet 2:10; Jude 8], and to scoff at things they know not, when if they knew the reality of that knowledge and experience which is only in the light, and had the fear of the Lord before their eyes, they would not dare to speak lightly of it, or presume to ridicule it, or call it in question.

²⁷ In place of this quotation from Job, the 1824 ed. has “The candle of the wicked shall be put out,” Prov 24:20.

²⁸ Here begins a new paragraph in the 1824 ed.; it remains part of ¶30 in the 1831 ed.

²⁹ The words “so abide and know” are absent from the 1824 ed.

[32.] But blindness and ignorance have ever most confidently opposed, and absolutely denied those truths, which require real knowledge and experience to be clearly settled in. How roundly and boldly do the ignorant deny the truth of the solar system; perhaps for no other, and pretty certainly for no better reason than that of the Indian, that if the earth turned round, the succotash would fall out of his kettle. Here the philosopher may smile, and please himself with the innocent ignorance of the untutored native, even while he is building himself up, in the rejection of truths as well founded and as certainly known to be such, as any respecting the solar system, and building himself up too, by arguments altogether as futile as the poor Indian's.

[33.] Now let me ask this philosopher, dost thou certainly know, or art thou clearly settled and firmly established in any truth, which ignorance denies to be such? I doubt not but thou art. Well then, canst thou not readily suppose, <13> others may have as full assurance of things that thou art ignorant of? Or wilt thou, because thou knowest a little, restrain wisdom to thyself? [Job 15:8.] Believest thou not, that the world by wisdom knows not God? [1 Cor 1:21.] Hast thou not read of Christ's manifesting himself unto his followers, in a degree that he would not manifest himself unto the world? [John 14:22.] He surely does so in our day, and thou hast no better grounds to gainsay it, than the Indian had to deny the revolution of the earth. Thy modicum of learning and knowledge, no more constitutes thee a competent judge in divine things, than the Indian's notions and reasonings could make him a philosopher or astronomer. Thy wisdom is that very thing that God determines to hide divine things from, though he reveals them unto babes [Matt 11:25, Luke 10:21]. Indeed, in regard to many natural truths, it is not only what is commonly deemed ignorance and rusticity, that opposes and has opposed them; the wise and learned have made the most objections of any, to certain truths, unquestionably ascertained. What a noise did the great wisdom, and learning, and religion of this world make, against the doctrine of the antipodes, on the first discovery thereof! Was it not considered to be an unphilosophical and even

heretical notion? Did not learning and reason (so esteemed,) level against it, and against the sagacity that discovered it, all their weapons? Did not professed zeal for the glory of God and honor of religion, exclaim against it with all the eloquence of bigotry and superstition? And might not many other instances be adduced, wherein great learning and capacious natural endowments have conspired together, in rejection of, and the most zealous opposition to some of the most ingenious discoveries, which the most enlightened sons of science have ever made, in natural philosophy, in astronomy, hydraulics, anatomy, medicine, &c. &c.? <14>

[34.] Hence, if it be possible, let the wisdom of this world learn not to vaunt; let philosophy acknowledge her proper limitations; let all human penetration perceive, and with due humiliation on all occasions allow, that all rational ability is finite. Man is a very short-sighted being: the tree of knowledge [Gen 2:9] seems to be his delight, and yet in the midst of exultation, and when he just begins to imagine he has almost explored the secret spring of nature, and found out her most hidden properties, motions and causes, he is, in many respects, still wrapped in ignorance and error, still involved in deception and uncertainty; still blunders on, though with ever so great confidence and assurance, through a labyrinth of perplexity and confusion. Some few truths, and perhaps very few, he is indeed at length enabled to investigate, and to settle with tolerable clearness and precision. But alas! how many more escape his observation and elude his utmost exertion, his deepest penetration! [Eccl 1:13-14.] How then shall this frail child of the dust, by all the exercises of such contracted and fallible abilities, attain to the knowledge of God, or acquaint himself with the infinite Jehovah? Indeed he can never, by thus searching, find him out [Judith 8:14], or by all his reasonings unveil, or approach his presence; and yet our happiness depends upon knowing him. We are therefore enjoined “Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace,” Job 22:21. Oh! this is the proper work, the true wisdom and dignity of man! But this is only attained to, by silence and inward attention. Hence he himself, who knows how he must be revealed to us, in great condescension points out the way; and, with all the

goodness and authority of heaven, invites and enjoins our observance of it, saying “Be still and know that I am God,” Psalms 46:10. He well knows this is the way for us to hear distinctly, so as to <15> understand and improve, by the still small voice [1 Kgs 19:12], wherein and whereby in the shinings of his own light, he reveals himself to the attentive soul. And as he knows this is the way whereby he is known unto and so exalted in man, he immediately adds to the foregoing injunction of stillness, the following promissory and glorious assertion: “I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” [Ps 46:10]. Indeed hereby it is, that his exaltation comes to be effected in us. For coming through this stillness, to know that he is God, there is such infinite goodness, purity and perfection thereby discovered in him, that all that is creaturely bows before him, and he is exalted over all. But those who will be forming images of him, in their own ideas, and falling down in adoration before an image of their own fabricating, the work of their own hands [Isa 2:8], are by him in just judgment, left to the chambers of their own imagery [Ezek 8:12]; and his exaltation over all in them, as to a sensible experience in life, power and government in their souls, is thereby prevented; for “he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images [Isa 42:8];” however refined, embellished, or specious in speculation, the image thus formed may be.

[35.] An image has no life. And what passes current among many Christian professors for the knowledge of God, being but an image formed in the mind, by the willings, runnings and conceivings of the creature, in the exercise of that wisdom which knows him not, which cannot know him, and which has in all ages been toiling in vain, hewing out cisterns [Jer 2:13], and forming creeds and conclusions respecting him, which have darkened counsel with words, thoughts and reasonings, without knowledge [Job 38:2]: therefore it is, that what passes for the knowledge of God, *has no life in it.* <16>

[36.] Oh! the absurd conclusions and assertions, which this wisdom has, with great confidence, through ages, been endeavoring to establish as truth, — in particular

respecting God! Hence³⁰ what massacres, what rivers of blood have flowed, because conscience was too much alive and awake in thousands, to allow them to subscribe to opinions and systems, which they could not believe; indeed which could not possibly³¹ be true. How has learning, good sense, and even religious sincerity, been shamefully debased in the attempt to reconcile the most glaring inconsistencies, in regard to what is called the trinity, predestination, transubstantiation, and many other abstruse subjects! What shifts and artful evasions; what perversions of scripture, reason, and common sense, have multitudes descended into, who, but for this foolish³² zeal for establishing and enforcing doctrines and systems without a foundation, or none but a sandy one [Matt 7:26], might have shined had they attended to the light that makes manifest, as stars in their day and generation!

[37.] All this toil, labour, and imagery is the direct opposite to that stillness, wherein God is known and exalted over all in man [Ps 46:10]. And as sure as the true stillness leads to this real knowledge and exaltation, the opposite, willing and running, framing systems, and hewing out cisterns [Jer 2:13], in the dark conceivings of man, will lead to, and land in confusion, contradiction and idolatry.

[38.] Cease therefore, thou who desirest the knowledge of God, and of his will concerning thee, from all expectation of attaining it, but by the revelation of his Spirit that is in thee — by the openings of his divine light. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor 4:6. This is the only way of knowing him, or his glory, <17> or knowing thy duty to him [Eccl 12:13; Luke 17:10]; and it is clear by this passage, that he really does cause his light to shine in the hearts of those who have not received this knowledge, for this shining is here expressly declared to be in order “to give the light of the knowledge.”

³⁰ The word “hence,” in the 1824 ed., follows the clause “what rivers of blood have flowed.”

³¹ The word “possibly” is missing from the 1824 ed.

³² The word “foolish” is missing from the 1824 ed.

[39.] There is this light shining in the hearts of thousands, “as in a dark place” [2 Pet 1:19], “and the darkness comprehendeth it not,” John 1:5. It shineth in order to make *manifest*, and if attended to, will more and more reveal the will of God³³, and give the knowledge of his glory; and when this is obtained it affords a very great increase of light; hence it is called “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” [2 Cor 4:6]. This knowledge of God and increase of light could not have been attained, had not God first shined, by his light, in our otherwise dark hearts [Isa 45:19].

[40.] It is preposterous to suppose the light is the privilege of believers only; for none could ever have been believers, had not the light *first* shined to give knowledge, as the text plainly showeth. Hence the propriety of our Savior’s injunction, “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light,” John 12:36. He knew there was no other way for them to become children of the light. He did not tell them, ye are the children of light and therefore you have the light, but pressed it upon them, who were not yet children of it, for their own souls’ sakes, to believe in the light, which they had previous to their being children of it, in order that they might become such.

[41.] Can anything more plainly evince that it is the light which shines in the hearts of the wicked, and that only, which can give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and make them *children of the light*, than these two passages?

[42.] I am not able to conceive how any that believe the Scriptures can reasonably gainsay it, or pretend they <18> have this knowledge, whilst they professedly reject that light which shines for the purpose of giving it to mankind. Could man attain it any other way, he were more excusable in neglecting the light; but seeing nothing else “can make manifest;” — seeing these things are only “spiritually discerned;” [1 Cor 2:14] — seeing, “the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God,” 1

³³ The 1824 ed. here reads “would reveal the will of God,” etc.

Cor 2:11 — seeing, “he revealeth them unto us by his Spirit” [1 Cor 2:10], as that only which can search them; it is a matter of indispensable necessity to all that would truly know God and their own duty to him, to take heed unto this light thus “shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in *their* hearts,” 2 Peter 1:19. Nothing else can assure them of the truth of Christianity, give them a certain evidence that they rightly understand the Scriptures, or that what they are doing, as duty to God, is pleasing in his sight or not. What certainty is there in visions, voices, or even miracles, without the sanction and evidence of divine light upon the soul; seeing, whatever makes anything manifest is and must be light [Eph 5:13]?

[43.] Did the Jews know Christ? Did they not pronounce him a blasphemer [Matt 9:3, John 10:36] and mad [John 10:20]? Did they not say he had a devil and cast out devils by Beelzebub [Matt 12:24, Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15]? See of how little avail is the marvellous display of divine power, even in the working of miracles, towards the conviction of those “who rebel against the light” [Job 24:13]; and how can it be otherwise, since nothing else can *manifest* the difference between divine power and the power of darkness?

[44.] Rebelling against the light, “they know not the ways thereof,” Job 24:13. How then can they judge whether a miracle be according to its “ways,” or not? How could Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by any natural ideas, or by mere human understanding, know whether the signs and wonders wrought among them, through the power and by <19> direction of the Almighty, were really any more than the effects of magic art? It is true, Moses and Aaron did some things which the magicians could not do [Exod 8:18]. But as they had done much in imitation of what divine power effected [Exod 7:11-12], it was natural to suppose, that after a little more trial and experience, they would be able to equal all that the servants of God had done; or that if *they* should not, yet others might be found, who could. For what could they, as natural men, conclude, but that Moses and Aaron were nothing more than

magicians, a little more expert, more fully instructed and thoroughly versed in the art, than those of Egypt?

[45.] Indeed it does not appear that the greatest signs or wonders could ever have moved Pharaoh to consent to let Israel go, had not the Lord sent his plagues upon him; something that he could *feel*, and even after being thus bowed a little, how did he again rebel, and refuse to let them go, till driven to extremity of distress [Exod 12:31]; and after all he was so far from a clear sense and discernment of things, that his hosts vainly pursued after them and perished in the Red Sea [Exod 15:28].

[46.] Had the Egyptians known certainly it was the immediate hand of God that divided the sea for Israel, it is scarcely to be believed they would not have fled back affrighted, rather than dared to follow after them: for after all the former signs and plagues, and this last wonderful interposition of Omnipotence on behalf of that afflicted people, how could the Egyptians, viewing things in this light, have expected anything less upon their daring insolence, and almost unparalleled presumption in pursuing after those on whose side Eternal Power was thus evidently and eminently engaged, than that the sea would close upon them as it did, by the all-righteous will and direction of Him, whom they were thus endeavouring to disappoint in his purposes? <20>

[47.] It seems clear to me, that rebellion against the light had so blinded and hardened them, that they were far from a clear discovery of the power and ability of that hand and arm, that wrought such marvellous things upon and among them: and that many may now condemn them, who are daily stifling, in like manner that, in themselves, which alone is able to give them a better understanding than the blind Egyptians had. Indeed it will forever be impossible to have a clear discovery or manifestation of divine things, what is, or is not of God, but by the light that *manifests* them.³⁴

³⁴ ¶47 ends here in the 1831 ed. and is followed by ¶48 and ¶49. In the 1824 ed. it flows without a paragraph-break into ¶50, and ¶48 and ¶49 are absent.

[48.] Come, reader, let us bring the matter close home to ourselves. Let us suppose the Almighty speaking to our outward ears, and with an audible voice declaring, “I am God;” and at the same time denouncing eternal death upon us, if we do or omit certain things. Let us suppose, for instance, that he forbids us to meddle with the fruit of a certain tree, on pain of death; and positively assures us that this is the absolute *law*, and prohibition of the Holy One. Now, unless his Holy Spirit influence our hearts, unless his *light* make it manifest, that it is his voice, his *law*, his prohibition, how is it possible to know it? Are there no cheats, no counterfeits, in the world? We read of Satan’s transformations, his appearing as an angel of light. We read that the serpent deceived Eve, although the voice of God had expressly forbidden her to eat or touch the fruit of the tree.

[49.] Now suppose we should hear two outward and distinct voices: one saying, “Eat not,” and pronouncing death upon us if we disobey: the other saying “Eat, and be as gods, knowing good and evil;” adding, “ye shall not die:” how are we to distinguish which of these is the voice of God, and which the voice of Satan? I think I am sure, that whether these voices proceeded through an outwardly visible, living creature, or out of the whirlwind, the earthquake, the furnace, or out of the still, quiet earth or air, neither of us could tell, by the mere sound of the voice, nor by any of these appearances, which came from heaven, or which from hell.

[50.] “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, (saith John) and ye know all things” [1 John 2:20]. “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie,” 1 John 2:27. Now though such as yet know not God [1 Thes 4:5; 2 Thes 1:8] have not so received this anointing, as thereby to know all things; yet the fulness of the anointing being no other than a blessed increase, a powerful indwelling influence and possession of that same holy light, that shines, at least dimly, at times and seasons, in every dark heart, it is evident that some degree of the same anointing, whereby the primitive Christians knew all things necessary

to their salvation [2 Pet 1:3, 1:8], is the only thing that can give a clear discerning in the things of God to any soul.

[51.] If “whatever makes manifest is light” [Eph 5:13], then, be that which maketh manifest called unction, truth, life, love, or whatever else, it is still the one, same, saving, divine light, or else it could not give the knowledge of all things. We do not suppose “all things” here means every natural truth, or mathematical demonstration, but all things needful to the salvation of the soul, a clear discovery of God's will, of good and evil: and that this is obtained in “the LIGHT,” the holy anointing, blessed experience does most infallibly confirm. Though expressed by <21> various appellations, it is still the same thing, in substance, but not always in degree, nor in the exact manner of its operations and influences; these being much according to the different states of individuals. For “the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame,” Isaiah 10:17. “Our God is a consuming fire,” Heb 12:29, and yet he is as truly “the fountain of living waters,” Jer 2:13. Though a fire to one state, and in one sense, and a fountain of living and refreshing waters to and in another, he is but one and the same and “changeth not” [Mal 3:6].

[52.] It is not outward signs and wonders only, that we cannot know whence they are, without “divine light,” but the same difficulty in judging attends every inward impression. If one has an impulse to do this and another that, no mere human understanding in thyself or others, can determine, without “the light that makes all things manifest,” whether one, or the other, or both be right or wrong. Hence the necessity to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding,” Prov 3:5. Should a vocal voice or inward impulse enjoin any one to slay his son, I am certain that unless the light should make it manifest to be an injunction from God³⁵, the wisdom, reason, learning, and religion of man would all with one voice cry out “it is a dreadful delusion.” Indeed, the immorality of the

³⁵ The 1824 ed. here adds, “as in the case of Abraham,”

thing is the main evidence that the natural understanding would set up as a standard, whereby to determine the action to be evil; and it is good to have a reverent regard to this standard so as carefully to shun all immoralities; but we see in Abraham's case, God did command him, for the trial of his faith and obedience, to offer up his own son. Had Abraham leaned to a natural or unenlightened understanding, must he not surely have disobeyed the word of God?³⁶ Or had he consulted with <22> the wise and prudent, the devout and zealous, would they not have told him he was mad? Was not Christ condemned by the strictest among the people, as a profaner of the sabbath [Matt 12:2, 12:10, Mark 2:24, 3:2, Luke 6:2, 6:7, 13:14, John 5:16, 9:16], and his followers accused as turners of the world up-side down [Acts 17:6]? and yet the wisdom of the world is still believing itself competent to the knowledge of Divine things, able to judge and decide upon the most difficult and important points, doctrines, and duties; and to determine what is of God, and what is contrary to him!

[53.] Is natural wisdom another thing now than formerly? Are not its deductions and conclusions as contradictory as ever? Do not some sensible men altogether reject Christianity, even in theory? And is not a reason why they do so readily to be found in the many irrational and unscriptural mysteries, as they are called, which this world's wisdom has endeavored to add to, or engraft upon it? What sober, cool, thinking man can believe, that there are three distinct and separate persons in one God,³⁷ that each of these persons is God, and yet that there are not three Gods, but only one? Who can have any idea of personality, without at the same time, and in the same thought, taking in the idea of distinct, separate existences? Is there generally understood any other meaning to the word *person*? If not, and three persons can yet be but one, may we not affirm, that Peter, James, and John are

³⁶ In the 1831 ed. the two foregoing sentences are run on and joined by a comma; I am following the 1824 ed. in separating them. — *ED.*

³⁷ The 1824 ed. skips from here to ¶59 without a paragraph-break. The remainder of ¶53, and ¶54-¶58, are found only in the 1831 ed.

one? One family they may be; but suppose that together as one family, they had all power, wisdom, &c., yet who would affirm Peter has all, James has all, and John has all; that Peter is the whole family, James is the whole, and John is the whole; and yet there is but one whole, but one that has all power, &c. Or who does not see, that if the family really consists of three persons, and each of these three is the whole, then Peter is not only Peter, but he is Peter, James, and John; James also must, at this rate, be both Peter, James, and John, and so must John? Shall we not be obliged to grant that this makes three Peters, three Jameses, and three Johns?

[54.] And can any man living extricate the common doctrine of the trinity, at this day maintained by thousands, from all, or any of these difficulties, absurdities, and impossibilities? If the Father is a person, the Son a person, and the Holy Ghost a person, then here are three distinct and separate persons. Then, if the Father, as a distinct and separate person, be God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, each as distinct, separate persons, surely here are three Gods.

[55.] And further, if God always consists of three separate persons, then it follows, that seeing each of these three persons is very God, there must in every one of the three exist the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This will make nine separate persons, and so on; for again three times nine is twenty-seven, and I find nowhere to stop, *ad infinitum*.

[56.] Some zealous trinitarian may think me as wicked as the Jews thought Christ, my Lord and Savior, and be ready to pronounce me, as they did him, a blasphemer, for thus exposing the sandy foundation on which that Babel of confusion, the *common doctrine* of the trinity is built. And did I not believe that God is determined to confound the wisdom of the wise [1 Cor 1:27], I should greatly marvel that wise and sober men of every religious name in Christendom, have not long ago united in exploding such a monster of absurdity.

[57.] I verily believe, any truly conscientious Christian, whose views are clear and thoroughly rational, would yield up his life in the flames, before he would subscribe to such a creed; a creed which every attempt to explain and establish must of necessity be as absolute a confusion of language, as was that on the plains of Shinar [Gen 11:1-9], unless it can be made to appear that a person is not a distinct and separate existence: that is, that a person is not a person, or not what general consent and custom have taught us to understand by a person.

[58.] Well may we cry out, “Where are the wise?” &c. “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” [1 Cor 1:20.] If men had been content with scripture language, the simple diction of the Holy Ghost, all this confusion would have been avoided, and the enemies of Christianity would not have had such cause it to scorn.

[59.] I firmly believe that “there are three that bear record in heaven,” 1 John 5:7, not three *persons*, any more than three gods; but one eternal God over all: as to his nature, being, existence and substance absolutely and entirely ONE. “Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord,” Deut 6:4. But the subtle disputer of this world queries, if there are three that bear record in heaven, what are they, if they are not three persons? But, serious reader, I wish thee not to puzzle thyself about mysteries,³⁸ but rather advise thee, for thy soul's good, to wait upon God, in the measure or manifestation of his divine light that shines in thy heart, for the opening of the seals of the sealed book [Rev 5:5]. This light is the key of David [Rev 3:7]; it was the key that unlocked and opened unto him deep things [1 Cor 2:10], and otherwise inexplicable <23> mysteries, and even gave him more understanding than his teachers [Ps 119:99]. It is as able to open unto thee all things necessary for thee to know; but be not thou too hasty; have a care thou art not too fond of *the tree of knowledge*, lest thou also be *puffed up* with vain notions [1 Cor 8:1], and fancy thou art wise and learned in things whereof thou art profoundly ignorant. Oh this has caused thousands to reject the real openings of

³⁸ The 1824 ed. reads “about their mysteries.”

“the light!” This made the Jews reject Christ. How they disdained the meanness of his appearance [Isa 52:14, 53:2], how they hated his doctrines! “Have any of the rulers and the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, that know not the law, are accursed” [John 7:48-49]. See how full they were of their own sufficiency! They thought they *knew* something [Gal 6:3], whereby they could determine about divine things, about doctrines and messengers, whether they were of God or not, and so in their great boast of knowledge, they rejected the messenger of the everlasting covenant [Gen 9:16, 17:7, Isa 55:3, 61:8, Jer 32:40, Ezek 16:60, 37:26, Mal 3:1, Heb 13:20], whom those they called accursed, and ignorant of the law, gladly received, and thereby obtained everlasting salvation to their souls. “Great is the mystery of godliness” [1 Tim 3:16], and it had been better for mankind, had they been content with what the Holy Ghost has revealed, and does reveal, than to push their inquiries to such unreasonable and unjustifiable lengths as they have done, in the prying of that *vulture's eye, which hath not seen* [Job 28:7], and never can see into that which is *within the veil* [1 Cor 2:9, Heb 6:19].

[60.] Some glances of these things, individuals have had, in the Lord's way and time, who have taken up the cross [Matt 10:38, 16:24, Mark 8:34, 10:21, Luke 9:23, 14:27, 2 Cor 1:5-7, Gal 6:14, Phil 3:10, Col 1:24, 1 Pet 4:13] to their own will and wisdom, submitted all their natural powers and capacities to the rectification of a superior, a divine principle, and have patiently and perseveringly waited on the Lord, for the opening of the seals [Rev 5]: but, as Paul said in regard to things seen in the third heaven [2 Cor 12:2], so <24> may it be said of certain things, which have been opened in our day, with unquestionable clearness in the pure vision of divine light, to wit, that they are words or things in some sense “unspeakable” and scarcely “lawful for a man to utter,” because men cannot receive them. For this reason Christ spake in parables, that the meaning and mystery should be *hid from the wise* and *revealed unto babes* [Matt 11:25, Luke 10:21]; to whom it was *given to know those things*, whereof he so spake; but to others it was not given, as himself testified [Matt 13:10-13, 13:34-35, Mark 4:11-13, 4:34-35, Luke 8:10].

[61.] But, in regard to the three that bear record in heaven [1 Jn 5:7], some few hints may be given, which perhaps will offend none of the true babes, none of those, to whom it is *given to know* these things [Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10]; though, if they should offend *the wise and prudent*, it will be nothing new, nor yet a strange thing, seeing God will *hide these things from them*.

[62.] God is love [1 Jn 4:8, 4:16], is light, is life [John 1:4], power [Ps 62:11, 66:7, 147:5; 1 Cor 2:5], wisdom [Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19; Jer 10:12, 51:15; Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 1:24; Jas 3:17], goodness [Exod 33:19; Ps 144:2; Jer 31:14], a fountain of living waters [John 4:10-14], a fire [Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29], a refiner [Mal 3:3], &c. Yet although he is truly all these, yet he is but one [Deut 6:4], and always the same, yesterday, today, and forever [Heb 13:8]. He changeth not [Mal 3:6]. He loveth the upright [2 Sam 22:26; Ps 11:7]. He is angry with the wicked every day [Ps 7:11]; yet he is not at one time angry, and at another loving³⁹, in such wise as to make any change or alteration in himself; neither is there any thing or things in him, which is not perfectly one, and that always and forever. His nature is such, that he is an eternal fountain of love, and yet that same nature maketh him a consuming fire, and a God of vengeance to the wicked. Indeed, these two seemingly different operations of his power, are not in himself in any wise different. It is no more two acts, or operations in himself, whereby one soul is consoled and another condemned, than it is two different natures in the sun, to soften pitch and harden clay. He is to men, and to all things, according to their own state, condition and being.⁴⁰ His whole nature is in such eternal opposition to all evil, that every soul that commits it, must feel his vengeance. Yet it is not in our power, by all our evil deeds, to alter him, the unchangeable God; or to disturb his repose, by stirring up passions of anger or revenge. He cannot be at one time, other than what he is at all

³⁹ In the 1824 ed. the sentence stops here, and is followed (skipping the next three sentences) by “He is to men, and to all things, according to their own state,” etc.

⁴⁰ The 1824 ed. skips the next four sentences and resumes, “We tell of his attributes; and it is very proper that we should,” etc.

times. He is wise, just, good, &c. but these are not in him different properties. We tell of his attributes, and it is very proper that we should, in order to convey our ideas of him⁴¹ one to another. But let us not so far deceive ourselves as to conclude one attribute really exists in him, in any kind of distinction from another. We distinguish wisdom from power, among men; and so attributing these to God, many may be led to consider him, as it were, in parts; or that that there is something else than simply ONE in him. It is perhaps more strictly proper to say God *is* wisdom; *is* goodness; *is* power; *is* justice, &c. than to say he *has* these attributes. Hence the peculiar propriety of many Scripture phrases, as “God is love,” “God is light,” “Our God is a consuming fire,” &c. And it is strictly true that the wisdom of God, is God himself; his power is himself; so is his goodness, his love, his light, his life, &c. All is *one*. <25>

[63.] It is true we have a different idea of power, from what we have of wisdom; but⁴² when we say God is almighty, we don’t mean that something in him *is so*, which something else in him *is not*; but we mean that he himself, as a simple, uncompounded, indivisible Being, *is wholly so*; but when we say he is *wise*, or *good*, or *holy*, we mean that he is one eternal fountain of everything that is truly good, valuable, or excellent. He is riches, he is health, he is all in all to them that love him. Well therefore might he call himself by the name “I Am” [Exod 3:14]. This to me implies all perfection, as if he had said “I am in and of myself, what none else is or can be.”⁴³ I am love. I am light. I am all that ought to be, or can be desired, in a right mind. I am, and there is none beside me” [Isa 44:6]. — “Beside me there is no Savior” [Isa 43:11; Hos 13:4].⁴⁴ Had he gone about to describe what he was, it might have been either endless, or else have so confined as to include but a small part of

41 In the 1824 ed. the sentence stops here, and is followed, after skipping two sentences, by “But it is perhaps more strictly proper,” etc.

42 The 1824 ed. skips from here to “when we say he is *wise*, or *good*, or *holy*,” etc. two clauses down in the same sentence.

43 The 1824 ed. skips three sentences and resumes, “I am, and there is none beside me.”

44 The 1824 ed. omits the following sentence.

what seems comprehended in these two words, "I AM," which, to me, are equal to the phrase of his being "ALL IN ALL." Some may call this a wandering from the subject, but I intend to show that whatever we read of a plurality in God, or of the three that bear record in heaven, there is not anything in God that is not strictly ONE.

[64.] That the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, I readily allow. "I and my Father are one," is Christ's own language, the language of eternal truth! [John 10:30] And even the name of the Son that is born and given unto us is "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father" [Isa 9:6]. Indeed it must be so, if the Father and Son are *one*, seeing "God is one and his name one" [Zech 14:9]. Christ, as he is God, is the same with the Father, and no more a distinct person from him, than God as light and God as love, is two distinct fountains, one of light and the other of love. Hence, with the strictest propriety, his name is, and ought to be, "The Everlasting Father." Now if he is the Everlasting Father, who can distinguish him from the Father, or make him a distinct person? Observe well, that I speak of Christ now as he is God. In time he became the son of man, and partook of human nature [Phil 2:5-8]; and the wisdom of men has striven hard to make a God of man; whereas the distinction between the Godhead and the manhood ought never to be lost; for wherever it is, *language will be confounded*. God was, it is true, "manifest in the flesh" [1 Tim 3:16]: <26> but do Christians worship a God of flesh? Was the outward body of Jesus the Everlasting Father? In one place we read: "the Word was made flesh" [John 1:14], but I never could believe any more from that passage than that, as another text hath it, "He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham" [Heb 2:16]. And again: "Forasmuch as the brethren were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same" [Heb 2:14]. So I understand that he only *took flesh*, for if the Word was absolutely *made flesh*, then *flesh* was the *Word*, and the *Word* was something that *was made*. Whereas "the Word was in the beginning with God, and truly was God" [John 1:1-2], consequently was not made. If it was made, it was a creature; if it was not made, and yet was real flesh,

then “in the beginning” was flesh, flesh was with God, and flesh was God. I hope the reader is satisfied, by this time, that flesh is not God, nor any part of God. The Word was God, and this Word *took flesh*, according to that testimony⁴⁵, “Lo! I come, a body hast thou prepared me” [Heb 10:5-7]. Here is both he that came, the *Eternal Word*, and the body that was *prepared for him*. He told Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also” [John 14:9]. Surely many saw that outward body, who did not see the Father; but all who saw through the veil, so as to have a full view and clear sight of Him, for whom the body was prepared, Him who came to do the Father's will in that body, saw the Father.

[65.] “My Father (said he) is greater than I.” Here [John 14:28] he speaks of himself, in a different respect from what he did, in saying “I and my Father are one” [John 10:30]. Why will the wisdom of man through ages strive so hard, to fix the crown of Godhead on flesh and blood? Did not Jesus tell of a day and hour, of which neither the angels, nor even the Son himself knew, but the Father only [Matt 24:36, Mark 13:32]? Surely <27> Christ, the Holy *Word*, that was and is God, knows, and always did know all things. If he knew not something, which yet the Father did know, then he could not be God. Hence we may safely conclude that by the Son which he here says *knew not*, he meant the same as when he said “my Father is greater than I;” but it is certain there is no greater or less in God, nor any lack of knowledge.

[66.] But all these buildings are but Babels of confusion; and tend to prevent many sober, rational, well-disposed persons from believing in Christ at all. I have great charity for these, even for some that are professed deists.⁴⁶ I do not wonder that they are so. I could as soon believe as they do, as believe most of the creeds that

⁴⁵ The 1824 ed. reads here, “according to our Lord's own testimony.” “Lo! I come,” begins a new sentence.

⁴⁶ The 1824 ed. reads “...Babels of confusion; and as far as they tend to prevent many sober, rational, well-disposed persons from believing in Christ, I have great charity for them, even for some that are professed deists.”

have been invented by professed Christians: indeed, it is utterly impossible for most of them to be true. It is not a whit easier for me to believe the common doctrine of the trinity, so called, than that of transubstantiation. Nay, if the outward visible flesh and blood and bones of Jesus Christ must be deified and worshipped as God, I confess I think it is as much transubstantiation as anything I have met with, unless it be granted that God was flesh and blood from all eternity.

[67.] Thus clear it is, that men greatly err when they undertake to divide God into three persons, or to set up something as God, which was not God from everlasting; which it will be acknowledged flesh and blood were not; neither, indeed, can flesh and blood enter into the kingdom of Heaven [1 Cor 15:50]. Christ speaks of himself, and is spoken of, sometimes as God, and sometimes as man. This has contributed to effect the Father's purpose and determination: that is, to hide these things from the wise and prudent; and yet the wise and prudent will be prying into them! <28>

[68.] “That, which is conceived in thee, is of the Holy Ghost” [Matt 1:20, Luke 1:35]. These words to Mary show that God was the father, and she the mother of Christ; hence he was both the son of God [Mark 1:1, Luke 1:35, John 1:34] and the son of man. Hence also, although Christ is properly in some sense, and by way of eminence, the only begotten of the Father [John 1:14]; yet, is every member of his mystical body, the church, a true-born son or daughter of God; an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ [Rom 8:17]: seeing in such there is properly a divine birth, “born again of God, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, that liveth and abideth forever” [1 Pet 1:23]. “He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; hence he is not ashamed to call them brethren” [Heb 2:11].⁴⁷ “Christ, the first fruits” [1 Cor 15:23], “the first born of every creature” [Col 1:15], “the beginning of the creation of God” [Rev 3:14], hath in all things the pre-eminence [Col 1:18]. Yet every member of his body [1 Cor 12:27, Eph 5:30] is a real branch of him, the true vine [John 15:1], and being engrafted into the good

⁴⁷ The 1824 ed. omits the foregoing two sentences, beginning “Hence also.”

olive tree [Rom 11:17], they partake of the richness and fatness thereof; and grow thereby, from stature to stature, till they arrive, if faithful, “to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” [Eph 4:13]. Christ is formed in them [Gal 4:19] and is in them the hope of glory [Col 1:27]. They know that unless he be in them, they are reprobates [2 Cor 13:5]. “The world seeth me not, but ye see me,” is his language unto them [John 14:19]. This regards not his outward appearance, for the world saw him in that, and crucified him too; but the sense in which he here speaks of himself, is as he is the Eternal Word [John 1:1], the light whereof is the light of the world [John 1:9, 8:12, 9:5]; the same in substance as another expression, wherein he calls himself, “the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not” [John 14:17].

[69.] The world, and worldly Christians, and outward-court worshippers, want something outward, that they *can see with their eyes*, or readily apprehend with their natural abilities. Hence, the many inventions of outward forms, and the practice of many outward ceremonies. These being easily attained to and performed, and inward spiritual worship and waiting requiring much subjection of that which loves to *make haste*, and to be *always ready*: and a clear, full, and living acquaintance with the workings of the *Spirit of Truth*, in the inner man, not being attained, but through the death of our own wills, and a cessation from depending on our own natural wisdom and understanding. Hence, for the sake of ease, most men take up with what is almost continually presenting in the chambers of imagery [Ezek 8:12], in their own minds. Hence, the vast variety, not only of outward forms, and modes of worship, but of opinions concerning God, Christ, the Scriptures, man’s will, and many other articles.⁴⁸

[70.] This I am certain will continue to be the case, till men learn to trust to the teachings of God, who has promised to teach his people himself [Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11], and lean less to their own natural understandings. Not that the natural

⁴⁸ Paragraphs 69 and 70 are missing from the 1824 edition.

understanding is useless, and ought to be rejected; but kept in its proper place, and in proper order, as that through which the communication of divine things is made, and understood. “Ye were some time darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord” [Eph 5:8], said the apostle to the believers.⁴⁹

[71.] Here we see that the natural man, with all his learning, understanding and abilities, is in a state of spiritual darkness [Matt 6:23], so that, though through the adorable goodness of God, the divine light shineth in his heart, even in his natural state [John 1:9], yet it is but as in *a dark place* [2 Pet 1:19] — “in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not” [John 1:5]. And though the shining thereof is expressly “to give the knowledge of the glory of God” [2 Cor 4:6], many are so dark, so far from comprehending it, that they deny it to be divine; as if a natural light could give the knowledge of HIM who is a spirit [John 4:24], and can only be spiritually discerned [1 Cor 2:14]! <29>

[72.] Our understanding, our reason, and every faculty is given for valuable purposes; but still in subordination to, and dependence on the illuminations of heavenly light, in everything concerning true religion, and the saving knowledge of God [John 17:3]. A fool, and even a madman, has the sense of feeling, of seeing, of hearing, &c. yet all these senses, though in full vigor, are not always⁵⁰ sufficient to keep him from rushing precipitately and voluntarily into the fire or water, or from doing himself or others injury. Here we see how the senses are dependent on the superior powers of the mind for direction, and that their usefulness to us, in a sound state, is greatly⁵¹ owing to the mental faculties, the exercise of reason and the understanding; and yet we do not infer from this, that the senses are useless — far otherwise: they are, under proper direction, of very great use; but, without the aid of superior help, can answer but little good purpose.⁵² So it is with our superior

49 Paragraphs 69 and 70 are missing from the 1824 ed.

50 The 1824 ed. lacks the word “always.”

51 The 1824 ed. lacks the word “greatly.”

52 The 1824 ed. reads “can answer no good purpose.”

endowments; unless divinely helped, illuminated and directed, we know nothing clearly of divine things, and can do nothing religiously useful: yet this no more supposes⁵³ that we must lay aside our *mental* faculties, in things spiritual, than the little real use the *sensitive* faculties are to the idiot, or madman, presupposes that we ought wholly to discard their use in things natural.

[73.] As it is true that the fool and madman run about wild, know not whither they wander, and do little or no good to themselves or others, in things natural, even though they pretend to be, and really think they are very knowing, wise and useful; though they affect to do great things, and imagine they achieve very grand matters; apprehend themselves to be mighty monarchs, or commanding officers; so also it is equally, and not less sadly true, that many, in the busy exercise of their mere rational faculties, are vainly wandering about in many <30> zealous performances, thinking they are doing great things, and that they are very knowing in religion, and that they are of mighty importance to the future welfare of mankind; imagining that they influence the minds of great numbers, to the love of divine things, and yet, for the want of that which alone is able rightly to assist their faculties, and qualify them for usefulness, in things of this nature, all the mighty toil is as much imaginary, as much beside the realities of religion and true devotion, and as useless to mankind, in things spiritual, as are the great activity and anxious agitation of the lunatic, in things natural. And not only so, but both often do a great deal of mischief; and, in order to determine which does most, we need but compare the importance of temporal and eternal things, and look at the various species of idolatry which this religious haste and activity, without divine aid, has introduced, and still, from age to age, is introducing among men; insomuch that the many changes from creed to creed, and from form to form, are often little or nothing better, — in short, are nothing else than a change from one image and one form of idolatry to another. I suppose few, if any, who worship images, have ever thought

⁵³ The 1824 ed. reads “presupposes.”

themselves idolaters, and yet they certainly are; and so are all who attempt to worship God without divine influence and qualification [Ps 50:21]: and the same hasty, active disposition, which prompts people now to these formal performances, in their own set times, and in their own forward wills, has also introduced every kind of idolatry, imagery, and Babel of confusion, that have at any time appeared in the world. Let us look at the consequences of this will worship [Col 2:23], and of that zeal which has promoted it, and we shall easily see, which does the most harm among men. <31>

[74.] What bitterness and persecution, what bloodshed and butchery, as well as false doctrines and absurd opinions, has this ever ready, ever restless and active disposition, caused in the earth! Yea, doctrines which have induced, perhaps millions, to rest the eternal salvation of their immortal souls upon a mere broken reed [Isa 36:6], upon “imputed righteousness” without regeneration; or to sit down at ease, upon some other foundation, equally imaginary, equally dangerous; covering themselves with a covering [Isa 30:1], and not of God's Holy Spirit; whereas every other covering will utterly fail in the day of trial, though the woe denounced against such will never fail: for nothing but the one safe covering can keep that dreadful woe from the souls of any.⁵⁴

[75.] Some may think this bears too hard upon self-activity and religious haste, and that surely, in this age of irreligion and debauchery, and every evil work, men ought not to be deterred from embracing almost any religious creed and form of worship, supposing it better to worship God, (as they call it,) in any mode, and even in the mere ability of man, than not to worship him at all; especially as men will have

54 The Quakers early set themselves apart from other professed Christians by *denying* that sinners could be “justified” in the sight of God while they remained sinners, merely by having Christ’s righteousness *imputed* to them, as was claimed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648), Ch. 9, §4, 5. Fox writes in *Saul’s Errand to Damascus* (1654):

Q. ‘Whether a believer be justified by Christ’s righteousness imputed, yes or no?’ — A. ‘He that believeth is born of God’ [1 Jn 5:1]; and he that is born of God is justified by Christ alone, without imputation. (*Works*, 3:595.)

Fox called this claim of “imputed righteousness” a “pleading for sin and imperfection.” Barclay (*Apology*, Prop. 7, “Concerning Justification”) reviews the arguments thoroughly.

some object, and be in pursuit of something; and therefore, if not engaged in some kind of devotion, will be apt to take up with some of the current amusements and dissipations of the day, and settle into an habitual life of impiety and alienation from all good.

[76.] But let it be considered, we do not contend for the casting off the fear and reverence of God — far from it. But that our fear and reverence ought to be so real, so deep and awful, as to prevent our forward, hasty attempts, to come before him with outward vocal offerings [Isa 29:13], before we are assured of his requirings and assistance therein, lest he reprove us with, “who hath required this at your hands?” [Isa 1:12.] <32>

[77.]⁵⁵ The safe state is that of a careful, inward waiting for direction, looking to the Lord for help, in times of awful silence and profound stillness before him, and in reading the Scriptures and other books, or in viewing the works of creation and Providence. God alone can give the right turn and direction to our minds, and profitably influence our thoughts, meditations, inferences, conclusions, and devotions in any of these times and occasions. Haste is almost always dangerous, but waiting on the Lord for clearness, direction and qualification is always safe, and never, if rightly exercised, fruitless; though I fear many who seem very religious, in what they can do of themselves, are yet so unacquainted with the real, certain openings, directions and qualifications, which are and may be received through waiting on the Lord in the light, that they do very sincerely doubt and disbelieve them;⁵⁶ esteeming what others declare of them, to be whimsical and imaginary; and concluding there is no readier way for people to grow notional and be overcome with imagination and delusion, than to be inwardly still and attentive to what passes in their own breasts, especially as it is sorrowfully true, that divers have given them occasion, pretending a divine inspiration, a commission

⁵⁵ Paragraphs 76 and 77 form one continuous paragraph in the 1824 ed.

⁵⁶ The word “them” is missing in the 1824 ed., and the following phrase reads “esteeming what others declare of it.”

immediately from Heaven, for the performance of unreasonable, extravagant and even wicked actions.

[78.] It is indeed greatly to be regretted, that the same hasty disposition, which keeps up such a round of forms, ceremonies, and lifeless devotions, has also carried away many⁵⁷ in different ages, who have had or pretended to have had faith in inward manifestations and openings: but so far from destroying the reality of divine openings, impulses, and manifestations, these are pregnant instances of that mischief which arises from making haste, and not waiting in the patience for a clear discerning <33> and discovery of divine things. Satan is a transformer and can assume the likeness of an angel of light [2 Cor 11:14]. Is there therefore nothing certain? If so how came it ever to be known with certainty that Satan could thus resemble a pure intelligence? Surely every counterfeit implies a reality, and had there been no such thing as clear inward openings and manifestations, it is scarcely credible that wicked men, seduced by Satan, would so frequently have attempted to impose upon the world with pretended ones.

[79.] “Bristol stones,⁵⁸” says archbishop Tillotson,⁵⁹ “would never pretend to be diamonds, if there never had been diamonds.” The remark has much in it. It extends a great way, and I think as it abundantly confutes those sceptics who reject all revealed religion because there are multitudes of pretenders to it and counterfeits of it, who yet know little or nothing about it; so does it also and as amply overthrow their objections who deny any clear inward knowledge of God or infallible intimations of his will, because many have presumptuously pretended to them whilst ignorant of them.

[80.] Does any true believer who has, as Scripture asserts, “the witness in himself” [1 Jn 5:10], doubt his own adoption and sonship [Gal 4:5], or the reality of that

⁵⁷ The 1824 ed. here reads “has run away with many.”

⁵⁸ “Bristol-stones” are quartz crystals found in the Clifton limestone formation near Bristol, UK.

⁵⁹ John Tillotson (1630-1694) was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691 until his death.

inward blessed enjoyment called in sacred record “the love of God shed abroad in the heart [Rom 5:5],” because wicked men and ignorant enthusiasts have the audacity to lay claim to the same thing?

[81.] How did Paul know that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” had set him “free from the law of sin and death [Rom 8:2]?” Why, he had the witness, the certain evidence of it in himself, or he never could have known it. Neither reading or reasoning, without the living certain evidence of the Holy Spirit, could possibly ascertain him thereof. He was ignorantly once alive, without this law <34> of the Spirit of life; and though doubtless a great reader of the outward law, and a great reasoner too, yet thought all was pretty well with him: but when God revealed his Son in him [Gal 1:16] immediately, things were brought close home to his real inward state by the coming of the inward commandment, the inward or spiritual law, (for he was well acquainted with the outward before, and strict in its observance,) he found himself in a state of death, being slain thereby to that superficial life he had before falsely gloried in [Rom 7:9-11]. This stripped him of all his supposed attainments in religion, and brought him to the loss of all things [Phil 3:8]. He died to that state of darkness, and was brought into newness of life [Rom 6:4]; he won Christ [Phil 3:8] and was found in him, not having on his own righteousness [Phil 3:9], which was before thought so highly of in the creaturely ability and performance of the outward law; here he found opened in him a fountain of life and righteousness, and therein a new and divine ability. Now although he knew that of himself he could do nothing [John 15:5], yet he found living inward help and ability to do all things through Christ, that thus inwardly and powerfully strengthened him [Phil 4:13]. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus did really and not feignedly, nor imputatively, but truly and substantially set him free from the law of sin and death [Rom 8:2].

[82.] Now how did Paul know all this was real? Before this he was undoubtedly deceived, mistaken, and thought far otherwise of himself and others than according

to the truth and reality of his own and their state. Will it be urged that he was still deceived? that he still knew nothing, because he could not know anything truly in regard to religion or regeneration, while he was a mere natural man, and strove to know spiritual things of himself, in his own ability, and by his own wisdom and learning? If so, away with all pretence to reality in religion; – <35> talk no more of regeneration [Tit 3:5], divine enjoyment [Rom 14:17], the love of God shed abroad in the heart [Rom 5:5], or the peace of God that passeth all mere natural understanding [Phil 4:7]! But he was not deceived; when he came to learn in the school of Christ⁶⁰, he found his own utter inability, his need of an inward teacher, and could declare, “I know nothing by myself,” 1 Cor 4:4; and yet being well acquainted with the inward unction, the holy anointing, the divine light, he knew and learned thereby all things necessary to his salvation and duty [1 Jn 2:20]. The fulness of divine instruction and knowledge in and by the light enabled him to testify, that the shining of this true light is expressly intended to give the knowledge of God and divine things; or in his own words, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor 4:6; for he declares positively, that for this very purpose “God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,” 2 Cor 4:6. Then surely what is clearly opened in our hearts by the inshinings of this holy light, giving us according to the express design of its so shining therein, a real knowledge of God [1 Cor 15:34; Col 1:10], of his glory, of our own state, and of our duty to him, may be relied upon as matter of certainty.

[83.] If it is necessary we should know God and our duty, which will not be questioned, it is certainly attainable: if it is not attainable by all the searchings, conceivings, and reasonings of mere natural wisdom and learning, as it is not, then some other help is necessary; and if necessary, it is certainly afforded, and that

⁶⁰ The 1824 ed. reads, “But he was not deceived when he came to learn in the school of Christ; for he found,” etc.

through God's shining in our hearts [2 Cor 4:6] to give us this necessary knowledge.

[84.] Here is a ground of certainty; without this we may read, contend, dispute and reason all our days and never know God, or ourselves, never know who is right or who or what is wrong. <36>

[85.] Paul, unconverted Paul, was very confident that he was right; but when stripped of all his creaturely confidence and reduced to the *loss of all things* [Phil 3:8], he found, confident as he had been, that he knew nothing [1 Cor 4:4]: and hence he saw that every man, who thinks he knows or can possibly know anything clearly of God, or the things of God, of himself as a mere man, without divine light in his own soul⁶¹, certainly *knows nothing* about them *as he ought* to know [1 Cor 8:2]. He learned these things in a way that greatly humbled and brought down his former boasted ideas, abilities and self-sufficiency. He saw that all he was, or profitably could be in religion and divine knowledge, was alone by the grace of God. He saith, “by the grace of God, I am what I am” [1 Cor 15:10]. He knew he could be nothing good or useful, by any other means. Here by the law, influence and teaching of this very principle of divine grace, all boasting was excluded [Rom 3:27], and will be whenever man knows himself, and his inability, and absolute dependence on superior help, both for instruction and strength in religion [2 Tim 3:16], for the knowledge of God, and the performance of every duty: for indeed all works performed by man merely, are but the works and deeds of the law, by which no flesh can be saved [Gal 2:16]. It is but the old man with his deeds [Col 3:9], trying to obey, trying to climb up to heaven some other way than by Christ [John 10:1], or by the ability which he giveth [1 Pet 4:11], whereby they that are *his* can do all things through his strengthening influence [Phil 4:13]. Here is the mystery of law and gospel.

⁶¹ The words “in his own soul” are missing from the 1824 ed.

[86.] Many high professors of Christianity, who value themselves greatly upon their rejection of works, and upon what they call faith in Christ [Rom 3:28, 9:32], are yet as “ignorantly going about to establish their own righteousness,” as ever the Jews were; and so do not “submit themselves to the righteousness of God” [Rom 10:3]. Such the apostle described <37> formerly, and such there are now; they profess great veneration for this very doctrine of the apostle, and are as ignorant of his meaning, as the Jews were of that righteousness which they rejected in order to establish their own.

[87.] It was not only after Christ came in that outward body, that the Jews, by going about to establish their own, did not submit to the righteousness of God (read Rom 10:3): it was long before also; it was whenever they depended on the mere creaturely, or outward performance of those things which God had instituted among them: for the letter without the life will kill. The offering of incense will be as offering swine's blood [Isa 66:3], unless it be done under a sense that the preparation of the heart and answer of the tongue is of the Lord [Prov 16:1].

[88.] Every religious work, done merely in man's ability, is a work ordered of the law, by which no flesh shall be justified [Rom 3:20], and yet the *doers* of the law shall be justified [Rom 2:13], though not by *the deeds of the law*. The deeds of the law can never redeem the soul from sin, nor quicken it to God. But he that is a real doer of the law, must be therein helped by a principle of divine life, must know the inward righteousness of Christ, and without being a doer of the divine law, in this ability, no man is saved; for the hearers of the law, talk what they will of faith and imputation, if they are not doers of it in this sense, shall not, as Paul says, be justified [Rom 2:13]: but the full bringing in of the better hope justifies [Heb 7:19]; for Christ is then alive in us, he is our hope of glory [Col 1:27], and by him we livingly draw nigh unto God, feel after him, and find him [Acts 17:27], know our souls made alive in him [1 Cor 15:22], and united to him; this does indeed make perfect [John 17:23, 1 Jn 4:17-18] even touching the very conscience [Heb 9:9].

[89.] Here the conscience is made clean, being washed with pure spiritual water [1 Pet 3:21], thoroughly and really cleansed by <38> the inward spiritual blood and cleansing [Heb 9:14, 10:22]. Here the soul is baptised into Christ, and livingly puts on Christ [Gal 3:27], is baptised with him into real death to all evil [Rom 6:3], else there would be no possibility of rising with him into newness of life [Rom 6:4]; for where evil is lived in and lives in us, there full newness of life is not and cannot be known: for this with all the daubings of untempered mortar [Ezek 13:10-15, 22:28], all the crying of peace, peace [Jer 6:14, 8:11], through belief in a mere imputed righteousness, is still the old man with his deeds [Col 3:9]; who is and will be in the alienation and separation from God. But where the better hope is fully brought in [Heb 7:19] and our whole man is under the influence of Christ, our inward hope of glory [Col 1:27], here the only true doer of the law is brought forth [Rom 2:13], who never fails of divine justification, because every jot and tittle of God's law is fulfilled in the soul; and indeed nothing can pass away of it, till it be thus fulfilled; it remains and will remain in force against or upon us until we thus know it fulfilled [Matt 5:18].

[90.] Christ came not and comes not to destroy, but to fulfil it [Matt 5:17]; and none can say they are not under the law, but under grace, who do not know the law fulfilled in them [Rom 6:14]. Paul says “we are not without law to God [1 Cor 9:21],” but that man who is not under the law, nor yet has known it fulfilled in him, is far from being under grace. Grace teaches the denial of all, not part only, but all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and also to live soberly, righteously and godly, even here in this present world [Tit 2:12]. How then can he that lives otherwise, and disregards or submits not to these teachings of grace, be under grace? No, no; some men have strange notions of grace, and think a state of grace consistent with a life of pollution; but Christ has told us, “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin,” John 8:34, and his apostle that, “his servants ye are, to whom ye obey,” Rom 6:16. Grace allows of no iniquity, <39> requires a clean heart, a pure conscience,

the denial of all ungodliness; and where Christ rules it must be so, for his fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and burn up all the chaff, in those who know the full work of his fiery baptism, with unquenchable fire [Matt 3:12, Luke 3:17]. This is the state of one who is not under the law, but under grace; for though he is not without law to God, yet he has passed from under it; for it is he who still in degree transgresseth it, though he may desire to know it fulfilled in him, that is under it and in condemnation; but there is no condemnation to those who are wholly in Christ Jesus. Why so? Because they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit [Rom 8:1]; this is being under grace, for here the teachings of grace are complied with; all ungodliness is denied [Rom 1:18].

[91.] This is certainly the case where there is not a walking after the flesh [2 Pet 2:10] but after the spirit; for what saith the apostle, “Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh,” Gal 5:16. Again, “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other,” Gal 5:17 — indeed so contrary that it is impossible for him that walketh in and after the spirit, to live in the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh; so that the apostle was very safe in his assertion that such should not, because he knew they could not [Gal 5:16].

[92.] Our blessed Lord also tells us, “no man can serve two masters [Matt 6:24, Luke 16:13];” but many who will think themselves his followers and servants too, plead a privilege of serving his enemy at his expense, and of being in him, whilst under the condemnation of his righteous law of light; although it is certain there is “no condemnation to those who abide really in him [Rom 8:1]:” not because he becomes “a cloak for their sins” [John 15:22], by imputation of his righteousness to <40> them [Rom 4:6-8] whilst they remain sinful in themselves; for this is as glaring an absurdity as could be, and impossible to be true; but by actually doing away their sins. He shall save his people *from*, not *in* their sins [Matt 1:21]; his work is *salvation*. This is the destruction of sin, he destroys the works of the devil [1 Jn 3:8],

makes an absolute end of sin in the soul; and brings in everlasting righteousness, true holiness, without which none shall see the Lord [Heb 12:14].

[93.] This is never imputed, indeed cannot in the nature of things be imputed, to the sinner continuing in sin. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity [Ps 32:2];” but why? Because his sins being remitted, and his soul cleansed, he is in fellowship with his God. But there is no fellowship between light and darkness, Christ and Belial [2 Cor 6:15]. God will forever impute sin to the soul that liveth in it. He is in eternal opposition to all evil; therefore evil deeds must always bring under condemnation; it is an impossibility that any man should be holy in Christ whilst he is sinful in himself. God sees us as we are, but man is prone to believe absurdities, and will in general sooner lay hold of almost any broken reed [Isa 36:6], and believe an impossibility, than submit to the daily cross of Christ [Luke 9:23], which alone can slay the enmity [Eph 2:16], and bring him into real discipleship. Indeed, what cannot that man believe, who can think himself holy in Christ, and yet be actually unholy! It is true, Christ reconciles to God [Rom 5:10], and justifies the ungodly [Acts 13:39, Rom 3:23-24]; for if we were not ungodly, what need of reconciliation and justification? The work of reconciliation is of twain making one new man [Eph 2:15], and so making peace; justification is the making him just who was not so before.

[94.] The apostle after telling the believers they were once sinners, adds, “but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified” [1 Cor 6:11]; and without this washing of regeneration [Tit 3:5], <41> this real sanctification of the spirit [2 Thes 2:13], no complete justification and reconciliation with God can ever be known.

[95.] What reconciliation does man stand in need of?—What has separated him from God?—Has anything but sin?—Will God then be reconciled to him again *in*

sin? No verily: that which doth let⁶² and separate, will forever let and separate, till it be removed out of the way [2 Thes 2:7].

[96.] It is removed, these imputarians may say, by Christ [Rom 4:24-25]. I grant it is, where Christ destroys the works of the devil in the soul [1 Jn 3:8], and nowhere else. How is it removed where it remains? This is as gross delusion, and as rank absurdity as the old doctrine of transubstantiation. That was contrived as an easy way to get to heaven in sin, and so was this, and each alike stark naught for the purpose. God is a fountain [Jer 2:13, 17:13] of unchangeable [Mal 3:6] purity [Hab 1:13]; had it not been so, sin would not separate the soul from him, or from his approbation. And no possible sophistry, no twisting, turning or daubing a thousand ways, can ever reconcile one soul to him, that remains defiled with or under the power of sin. God might as well have remained in full unity with Adam in his disobedience and alienation, as now to be reconciled to any other man in sin; the same impossibility that prevented one will forever prevent the other.

[97.] *Death, immediate death*, was the consequence of sin to Adam [Gen 2:17]; this separated him from the presence of the Lord, and made him a wanderer in the earth [Gen 4:14]; and every sin of every soul that is in its original nature deadly or a sin unto death [Rom 6:16, 1 Jn 5:16], will as surely in like manner bring spiritual death instantly upon the soul, and continue the soul under death and banishment from God, till it is removed, rooted out, destroyed, or washed away⁶³ [Rom 6:23].

[98.] Adam had his fig leaves for a covering [Gen 3:7], and ever since, his followers in transgression have been sinning and <42> sewing fig leaves together, turning this way and that to hide their nakedness. But so sure as the cherubim and flaming sword turned every way in Adam's day, against him [Gen 3:24], so certainly do they still against every soul that continues in sin. Turn which way he will, these will turn as many ways against him, for they are placed on purpose to keep the way of the

⁶² "Let" here means "hinder."

⁶³ The 1824 ed. adds the words "by Christ" here.

tree of life, and can no more suffer any other man than they could Adam, to put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, to eat, and live forever [Gen 3:22].

[99.] Every soul that feeds upon the tree of life will live forever;⁶⁴ its leaves are for the healing of the nations, but it grows in the midst of the paradise of God, where no impure thing can come [Rev 22:2]. Nothing can come there, but what the flaming sword has no controversy with; that is, none but those who have known the seed of the woman, Christ the life and light of the world, to bruise the serpent's head in them [Gen 3:15]. These are saved by the righteousness of Christ; and there is no more possibility of being saved by Christ, while sin liveth in them, and they in sin, than there was for Adam, in rebellion, to eat of the tree of life; it is one and the same thing in the very ground of it, and all the reason exists now against it that ever did.

[100.] The whole scope of salvation by Christ, is that of a real bruising of Satan under us [Rom 16:20], destroying his power in us [Acts 26:18, 1 Jn 3:8], binding the strong man [Matt 12:29, Mark 3:27], casting him out, utterly spoiling all his goods, granting us remission of sins that are past [Rom 3:25; cf. Matt 26:28; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38, 10:43], preservation in righteousness and true holiness all the days of our lives [Luke 1:75], and union and communion with God, the fountain of all good, here and hereafter forever.

[101.] True it is, if any man sin, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John 2:1-2; but this advocacy <43> and propitiation does not exempt us from the necessity of daily self-denial [Luke 9:23; cf. Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34], and real inward holiness, else Christ would be *a cloak for our sins*, whereas he himself testifies, that if he "had not come and done the works which none other man did," the people would not have had sin; "but now

⁶⁴ The 1824 ed. reads, "Every soul that can feed upon the tree of life must and will live forever."

they have *no cloak for their sin*,” John 15:22, 24. He died, not that we might sin with impunity, but that we should henceforth not serve sin [Rom 6:6], nor live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us [2 Cor 5:15]. Through the mercy of God in Christ, we have upon true faith and repentance, remission of past sins, and this holds as long and as often as upon any slip, deviation, or shortcoming, we lay hold on our propitiation, by true faith and real unfeigned repentance; and this remission is without respect of persons [1 Pet 1:17], as “elect” or “reprobate” from eternity. “He tasted death for *every* man [Heb 2:9] and is the fountain of propitiation for *all*.” “He that will come may come, and partake of the waters of life freely [Rev 22:17], without money and without price” [Isa 55:1]. We have none of us, as men, anything, wherewith to pay the price of remission of sins; if we have it, we must have it freely; it is an act of free grace and pardon, but is not bestowed on those who continue sinning on, crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting him to open shame [Heb 6:6]. It is they that *come* that partake of the waters of life, and not they that *will not come*. Christ would have gathered rebellious Jerusalem, (so universally is he a propitiation for sin,) but they absolutely *would not* [Matt 23:37]; hence, though he stood ready a propitiation for their, as for all men's sins, yet they would not have the benefit thereof, so it becomes their condemnation. For he does not force our wills, so as to destroy that free agency, without which we could not be accountable creatures.

[102.] It is utterly vain to address mankind, upon the score <44> of religion, duty, faith, and obedience, upon any other principles than those of free moral agency. If man can have no freedom of choice, say no more to him about his duty, leave him to the results of fatality; but call him not a rebel or sinner for doing what his God eternally decreed he *should do*, and therefore must *delight* to have him *do*. If man does God's will, what God ever willed and determined him to do, let his fellow creatures cease casting stones at him; cease to blame and defame him; for sure I am, he pleases his God completely, who does his will exactly; and if his kindred men would let him pass in peace through this world's vale, I make no doubt at all, but he

must and will have the favour of his God for ever; for it is not possible for me to believe, that the God of love [1 Jn 4:8, 4:16] will ever punish man, for doing his own holy will, and acting in all things, in exact conformity to his eternal counsel and decrees.

[103.] Sometimes, when I take a view of the inconsistent opinions of the wise, learned and religious of our age, I marvel and can scarcely tell why some of our greatest pretenders to reason condemn the ignorance and absurdity of the ancients, save that I know pride is fond of self-applause. I am not acquainted with any doctrine of the ancients that is more ridiculous, or more impossible to be true, than this absolute reprobation scheme, and with it, ranks the modern imputation doctrine, whereby God is represented as viewing men as pure and holy in his Son, whilst they are impure and defiled in themselves.⁶⁵

[104.] Another absurdity is three distinct persons and yet one God as before; and I am pretty certain that when the wisdom of this world can make these three crooked things straight, antichrist will be able to demonstrate that he is God [2 Thes 2:4], and nothing will thenceforward remain unachievable <45> to the queen of sophistry, the wisdom of this world [1 Cor 3:19]. She has through ages blinded the minds of her votaries [2 Cor 4:4], and will do so. What then can excuse the religious of this, and succeeding ages, in their voluntary homage to her? She will never be able to teach the things of God. For in this one respect I am a firm predestinarian. I believe, as Christ did, that God has determined to hide the knowledge of divine things from her forever, and leave her to grope in darkness;

⁶⁵ By “this absolute reprobation scheme,” Scott refers to the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination, which is expressed in Ch. 3, §3 of the Westminster Confession (1648) thus: “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death” (<https://www.opc.org/documents/CFLayout.pdf>, accessed 5/31/2023). For “the modern imputation doctrine,” see footnote 40 to ¶74, above.

and then perhaps the most so when she thinks she is nearest the pinnacle of knowledge.⁶⁶

[105.] Alas! alas! will men never see the impossibility of attaining divine knowledge, by abilities merely human? Effects can never exceed their causes; divine things are not knowable but by divine instruction and illumination [1 Cor 2:14]. But, says the wisdom of man, God has made a divine revelation of himself, of his will, and man's duty in the Scriptures. Very true; and to those to whom it was, or is made, it was or is an infallible manifestation, safe to depend upon, being attended with a certain knowledge. But what is he to do who has only the letter, and human reason to expound it? The letter killeth [2 Cor 3:6], and human reasonings, not under direction of divine light, have introduced most dreadful confusion and absurdity into the many creeds⁶⁷ in Christendom.

[106.] What but too great dependance on human ability to explain the doctrines of the gospel, has made so many of the best natural abilities, through divers ages, so systematically blind in their creeds and opinions? Is human wisdom grown a whit wiser, in divine things, than ever she was? If not, why are men as confident as ever their forefathers were, that she is all-sufficient to give them the knowledge of God, and all divine instruction?

[107.] One age condemns another as erroneous. One country, <46> one society, and one individual goes on pronouncing others absolutely wrong, mistaken, and deceived; and yet each maintains the sufficiency of human reason, or natural abilities, to understand the Scriptures and establish a system of divinity⁶⁸ consistent with unerring wisdom. This age condemns certain notions of past ages as abominable errors. Those who held said errors, thought human reason,

66 The 1824 ed. follows this sentence with "Read Matt 11:25."

67 The 1824 ed. omits "the many" (creeds in Christendom).

68 "Divinity" formerly meant "theology" as well as "divine quality or nature" (as in ¶111, ¶112, and ¶116, below)

unassisted with divine light, fully adequate to a right understanding of Scripture. The next age will probably condemn the notions of this as grossly ridiculous, and well it may, many of them! But the next age may be assured, that all the errors of this [age] arose from the rejection of the one only key of all divine knowledge, the divine light of Christ in the soul!

[108.] Nothing ever did, or can make things clearly manifest, but light [Eph 5:13]. Natural light manifests natural things; divine light, and that alone, divine things. He that thinks he knows any divine truth, without divine light, supposes an effect without an adequate cause. A man may as soon beget an angel, as divine knowledge, or the knowledge of divine truth, can be propagated without divine light and influence. This is the *stone* that the wise human builders, in all ages, have rejected and set at naught [Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Pet 2:7]. Hence they have built without a firm foundation; hence, sooner or later, their buildings have fallen; and so will those of this and the next age also, unless they wait for and depend upon divine illumination. This is the key of David [Rev 3:7], which opened to him great mysteries, and made him wiser than his teachers [Ps 119:99].

[109.] I pray the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to open the eyes of poor benighted mankind, and bring the people off from this unhappy dependence upon unenlightened human understanding, both in themselves and in their teachers!

<47>

[110.] Oh! how mournful, that even though God graciously, by a light truly divine, shineth in our hearts [2 Cor 4:6], to give us divine knowledge, yet multitudes, age after age, will still rely on the broken reed [Jer 36:6] of human sufficiency! Can any man wonder, if deists or even atheists abound in Christian countries, and mock at all revealed religion?

[111.] What is this religion that God has so clearly revealed in the Scriptures? Human wisdom has never yet settled it and never will. One says, it is here in my creed; no, says another, it is here in mine, and greatly different from thine; a third cries, no such matter, it is only to be found in this of mine, and is diametrically opposite, in many respects, to both of yours; mine is the genuine result of pure reason, yours the offspring of fallacy and deception. This they nearly all think of each other's, and their own, and all maintain the sufficiency of reason to discover truth. Here they all err. Right reason is ever conformable to truth, but men's reason unassisted is often unable of itself, to discover even many natural truths, and always utterly so, in regard to divine truth. And hence, all ages will be liable to endless error and confusion, until divine light alone is depended upon, to discover divine truth. "Then will the nations of them that are saved walk together in the light of the Lord" [Isa 2:6]. But till then, I expect infidels and deists will have ample cause, either to ridicule the pretended clearness of every human creed in Christendom, or to exalt their own boasted rational religion of nature, or denial of all religion, over the inconsistent systems of man-made divinity⁶⁹.

[112.]⁷⁰ Oh that the time past might suffice, wherein Christians have vainly attempted to "hew out to themselves cisterns [Jer 2:13]!" If this world should even prove eternal, human wisdom would forever be unable to hew out a single cistern that can hold the living water of salvation [Isa 12:3], the true Christian divinity.⁷¹
<48>

[113.] I know some have been ridiculed for pretending to advance reasons against the sufficiency of reason for the discovery and direction in divine things, as if this insufficiency, if real (as it certainly is), must therefore render reason useless. Whereas reason, under divine influence and illumination, is abundantly

⁶⁹ See footnote 54, above.

⁷⁰ Paragraphs 112 and 113 form one continuous paragraph in the 1824 ed.

⁷¹ See footnote 54, above.

subservient to the cause of truth, indeed is that, without which, man cannot understand any doctrines, either in naturals or spirituals.

[114.] By asserting the absolute inadequacy of reason, unassisted by divine influence, to discover divine truths or the meaning of parables and deep mysteries [Ps 49:4, 78:2; Matt 13:11-13; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; 1 Cor 2:7; Col 1:26, 2:2, 4:3; 1 Tim 3:16; Rev 10:7], ever designed by Eternal Wisdom to be hid from mere creaturely wisdom, it is not at all intended, nor indeed implied, either that these are in the least inconsistent with reason, or that reason is not to be an assistant in propagating truth. On the contrary it is our rational faculties, that receive the illuminations of divine light, and being thereby rectified, are brought to comprehend, in a greater or less degree, what this light is, and the certainty and reality of its teachings: that it is truly divine, an emanation from God, the very life of the Eternal Holy Word, and that its teachings are all perfectly agreeable to the mind and will of God. Whereas, without attention to this light, so as thereby to obtain this rectification of our faculties, we are utterly unable to comprehend the light, what it is, and the infallibility of its discoveries and dictates. It shines in the hearts of such *as in a dark place* [2 Pet 1:19], *in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not* [John 1:5]. Hence many of the brightest sons of genius, learning and mere rational improvement, are so unable, with all their philosophy, to comprehend what this light is, that they strenuously deny, in flat contradiction of that sacred record which they call the only rule, that all men have a divine light shining in the heart; or that the light, which enlighteneth <49> every man that cometh into the world [John 1:9], is the very life [John 1:4] of the eternal *Logos* or Word, that was with God, and was and is God [John 1:1]; and yet *we know* that if it were not, it could not possibly “give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ” [2 Cor 4:6].

[115.] This shining light in man is that very *face of Jesus Christ*, in which we receive, and out of which no man possibly can receive, this knowledge of the glory

of God [2 Cor 4:6]. God hath “spoken unto us by his Son [Heb 1:2],” hence the Son is *called the Word of God* [John 1:1, 1:14, Rev 19:13], that by which the Father speaketh to the states of all men individually. The life of this Eternal Word shining in all, speaks plainly God's will unto them and their duty; and unseals unto *their* understandings, *who believe in it*, the otherwise sealed book [Isa 29:11; Dan 12:4; Rev 5:1], it being, as before observed, the key of David [Rev 3:7]. By this it is, that our rational faculties are so opened and enlarged in divine things, that we see with clearness and comprehend what we could not otherwise do, by all our study and investigations. Our faculties being depraved, in a state of alienation, we reason according to our various customs, prepossessions and inclinations.

[116.] Reason of itself is so inadequate to the knowledge of divine mysteries or truths, that her most dignified champions are at this day, and for many ages have been, strenuously combatting each other's most finished systems of divinity⁷² (so called by them) . Like the potsherds of the earth, they dash one against another, greatly to the confusion and reproach of every Babel in Christendom. Such is the wisdom of God, that “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand” [Matt 12:25; Mark 3:24; Luke 11:17]; but after all the pains taken by the very masters in Israel [John 3:10], to establish a kingdom, a *house upon the sand* of human reasonings, their buildings do and will fall [Matt 7:26-27]; “for God will *destroy the wisdom of the wise* and <50> *bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*” [1 Cor 1:19]. A superstructure thus erected on the sand may have been so propped up by sophistry and art as to maintain a considerable degree of credit and even veneration, for several ages; but sooner or later all such grow out of estimation, as the fallacy of their pretended support has been perceived. People's eyes have been so far opened, as to see some part, more or less, of the deception, and so the tottering building has tumbled, and *great* has sometimes been *the fall thereof* [Matt 7:27].

⁷² See footnote 54, above.

[117.] And yet, alas! for the frailty of human nature, with all its boasted abilities, its rational, and as some would have it, almost infallible faculties! —no sooner has the absurdity of one once celebrated system been clearly discovered, and the system itself therefore rejected, but the minds of the same men, who have just seen and rejected the one, have readily (such is the tyrannic sway of human reasonings, once believed sufficient for the discovery of divine truths,) with eagerness and avidity, embraced another Babel of confusion, as ill-founded and as unsupported as the other. And some have thus revolved, from one confused system and absurd opinion to another, till they have, in the course of life, embraced much of the many false doctrines which have prevailed in their day, and some have finally landed in an opinion, as foreign from truth, as any they have rejected, or perhaps come about to the first they held; and I doubt not but multitudes will still go the round of this uncertain circle, seeing there is but one infallible way for any to escape it entirely, and that is, for all who think seriously of religious things, to attend to truth in the inward parts [Ps 51:6].

[118.] Pilate asks [John 18:38] “what is truth?” Christ says “I am the way, and the truth, and the life [John 14:6].” He surely is so. He speaks truth in all, whether they will hearken to it or <51> not. He enlightens all: and his words of truth in all, and his light in all, will in time and eternity be the condemnation of all that live and die regardless thereof, or rebellious against it; for the word which he has spoken in the heart shall judge us all at the last day [John 12:48].

[119.] Many ignorantly deny this, and that Christ is by his light [John 1:4, 1:9], grace [Tit 2:11] or spirit in all. Oh how little they are aware that some do certainly know that they could not possibly deny these truths unless they were ignorant of the true knowledge of the Father and the Son [Matt 11:27; John 14:7-9]. All that rightly know them, know that the same which formerly condemned them for all evil, even though they then knew not what it was and positively denied its divinity, is now known to be Christ in them, the hope of glory [Col 1:27], their light, their

life, and consolation. They know and are well acquainted with him; they have the witness in themselves [1 Jn 5:10]; others may deride, but they still *know* and *believe*, yea, “know in whom they do believe,” know that it is he and not another. Moreover, they know that there is no clear knowledge of him without this inward acquaintance with him.

[120.] Some deny his actual indwelling in the saints [1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 13:5], and his inward appearance in all the wicked to condemnation [Rev 1:7]; this is no less than at once avowing that they themselves know him not. They talk of him as at a distance, as if they knew him by the Scriptures only after the flesh; he was once known *after the flesh*, “*yet now henceforth know ye him no more*,” said the apostle [2 Cor 5:16], and himself said, “He dwelleth with you and shall be in you,” John 14:17.

[121.] “Behold, I stand at the door and knock!” [Rev 3:20.] — Is this only through the Scriptures? By no means, it is universal, at the door of all hearts, in all ages of the world. Burn the Bible and He still will knock. Though we heartily bless God for the use of the Scriptures, in our own language, <52> and are highly edified and comforted in reading them, when opened by the light of Christ, but we may be deprived of these. Many good Christians have been so all the days of their lives, and many others for many years, by one circumstance or other; but no man, no circumstance, or complication of circumstances, can deprive us, if we love God, of the true light that enlightens all [John 1:9]. A light to lighten the very gentiles, and the true glory of God's inward Israel [Luke 2:32]; yea, in *them* the very *hope of their glory* [Col 1:27]. And it is in order that he may come in and sup with them, and they with him [Rev 3:20], and thus become the hope of their glory too, that he knocks at the doors of all, who have not yet opened to him, nor received him.

[122.] There is a vast difference between his indwelling in those who have willingly received him, in the way of his coming, in whom he has taken up his abode, and the manner of his being, appearing and knocking in those who do all they can to get rid

of him, keep him out, and stifle his convictive voice and knockings. So that, though he must be really *in* all such in a certain sense and manner, at whose doors he knocketh, for his knocking is not an external thing or act, (it is called knocking to convey the idea of his striving, in love to the soul, so to come into full possession of the heart and affections, as cordially and joyfully to sup with the soul and the soul with him); yet, I say, though he is and must be really in all, in a true sense, at whose hearts he thus knocketh, still this hinders not but that he does truly “come in” to those who open to him.

[123.]⁷³ He is in all; and if it were not so, he could not by his light be the condemnation of sinners, but he is not in *their* affections, nor their guide in their actions; and this is the entrance which he delights in, and is knocking and pleading for, and until he obtains it in good degree, he cannot be their actual Savior [Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31, 13:23; Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20; 2 Tim 1:10], or their hope of glory [Col 1:27]. <53>

[124.] Thus we see he is all in all [Eph 1:23], both in condemnation and justification; for being in all, such as are governed by his holy influence, must unavoidably feel peace and reconciliation; whilst such as strive against him, resist his spirit [Acts 7:51], and do despite thereunto, must as unavoidably feel condemnation [John 3:19]. Thus he is a flaming sword, turning every way to guard the tree of life [Gen 3:24], against all that have anything in them that wars against the life of the Lamb in their own souls.

[125.] The Lamb, or in other words, the life of the Lamb, is the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God, for the healing of the nations [Rev 22:2]. Nothing can heal the nations but Christ the Lamb [John 1:29, 1:36; Rev 5:6-13, 14:1, 17:14, 21:22-23]. He is the life, he is the healer, the binder up: “I wound and I heal, I kill and make alive” [Deut 32:39]. This, Christ the Life may say in regard to

⁷³ Paragraphs 123 and 124 form one continuous paragraph in the 1824 ed.

the work of life in every true Christian: something in depraved man must be wounded and slain, and something in him must be healed and made alive, before he can live to God in that life that is hid with Christ in God [Col 3:3]. Now, what can kill, but he that can bind the strong man, and cast him out, and spoil his goods [Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27], — he that can finish sin and make an end of transgression? And then, who or what can make alive, but he that brings in everlasting righteousness instead thereof? And if this be so, then it is clear that Christ the light, the life, the tree of life, the bread of life [John 6:35, 6:48], the righteousness and justification of him that believes in the light and so becomes a child of the light [John 12:36], is also the condemnation of him that believes not in, but rebels against the light [John 3:19-20]. And there is no getting rid of this condemnation, but by wholly submitting to the ministration⁷⁴ thereof; if it be rightly submitted to, with full purpose of heart, to bear the indignation of the Lord, because the soul has sinned against him, it will in due time be clearly seen, how it is that the <54> ministration even of condemnation is glorious [2 Cor 3:9]; and that because being rightly endured, it leads the soul directly on to the ministration of justification, which is much more glorious [2 Cor 3:9-11].

[126.] Here the poor, tried, but submitting soul, even in the very agonies of extreme condemnation and righteous judgment, still says with Job: “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” [Job 13:15]; and with Peter, or the disciples, “to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” [John 6:68]. Here a hope takes place, that he who kills will make alive [Deut 32:39]; and this hope was never yet disappointed in any, who have rightly endured the day of the Lord's indignation and fierce wrath against sin [Rom 2:8]; for this, rightly endured, never fails to destroy the devil and all his works [1 Jn 3:8]; thoroughly, not in part only, but thoroughly to cleanse the floor of the heart [Matt 3:12; Luke 3:17]. This slays the enmity — here the life is lost, is slain, and crucified, on the cross of Christ [Eph 2:15-16]; and this soul must

⁷⁴ The 1824 ed. reads “manifestation” for “ministration.”

and will live [John 14:19]; nor can all the gates of death prevail against [Matt 16:18] his life in God [Col 3:3] — he thus abiding in the death and loss of his own life [1 Jn 3:14].

[127.] This is salvation by Christ — this is being saved by his life; it is immutably ordained, “he that will save his life shall lose it” [Matt 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33; John 12:25]. There is a great ado about imputation of Christ's righteousness to souls defiled with, and living in sin [Rom 4:6-24, 2 Cor 5:19]; but the life in sin, yea the very life of sin, must be lost, or else eternal life will be lost. It is the very doctrine of him whom many are striving to make, to “serve with their sins,” and as a “cloak for their sins” by imputation; though himself has declared, that now he has come and done what he has, “they have no cloak for their sins” [John 15:22].

[128.] The doctrine of imputation, rightly understood, is very precious to the true believer in Christ; though he knows it belongs not to a state of present sinfulness, but to those <55> who are washed and made clean [John 13:10, 15:3; 1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:22; Rev 1:5, 7:14], and to no soul any whit further than he is so, really so. This soul feels the blessed benefit of imputation, and of non-imputation also. This is the blessed man to whom the Lord will not impute sin [Ps 32:2; Rom 4:8]; no, he forgives his sins [Ps 32:1; Matt 6:12-15, 9:2-6, 12:31-32; Mark 2:5-11, 3:28, 11:25-26; Luke 5:20-24, 6:37, 7:48, 11:4, 12:10, 23:34; Acts 5:31, 13:38, 26:18; Eph 1:7, 4:32; Col 1:14, 2:13; Jas 5:15; 1 Jn 1:9, 2:12]; here is the remission of sins that are past [Rom 3:25] through the forbearance and mercy of God in Christ [Matt 26:28; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77, 3:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 10:43]; here his former sins are covered [Rom 4:7], as it were, or blotted out [Acts 3:19], or passed by; here he is reconciled to God by the death of his Son [Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-21; Heb 2:17]; the mighty, immense score of his old sins, however formidable, is not equal to the love of God in Christ [Rom 8:39], and so is not suffered to prevent his being saved by the life of Christ. Indeed, every soul that is saved, is saved by his life inwardly revealed; for though the reconciliation to God in regard to past offences

is, and must be, by the death of Christ [Rom 5:10], and that not without our being buried with him by baptism into real death to sin [Rom 6:4; Col 2:12], filling up what remains behind of his sufferings [Col 1:24], yet the joy of God's salvation is only known in and by the life of Christ in man, Christ in us the hope of glory [Col 1:27]. He that rightly believes in Christ, not every historical believer, not everyone that believes with man's faith, or the faith of the creature, but everyone who believes with that faith, which is livingly felt to be of the operation of God, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters" [John 7:38]. This Christ has promised; it cannot fail. Every true believer witnesseth it; it is in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life [John 4:14]. He can say, "Spring up, O well!" — he can sing livingly unto it: here is the new song [Rev 5:9, 14:3], the song of salvation. This is being saved by the life of Christ. These can never despise the doctrine of imputation in its true meaning; they bow down before the throne of the Lamb forever [Rev 4:10, 5:14]; they acknowledge the remission of their manifold sins; they give, they sing glory to God on high [Luke 2:14], in that he so loved us, that he gave his <56> only begotten Son for us [John 3:16]; they ascribe their reconciliation wholly to Christ, but can never be such idle dreamers [Jude 8], as to imagine that he saves people *in* their sins, or that his merits are imputed to such as are daily crucifying him in the spirit, so as to justify them in the sight of God. <57>

ON PERSEVERANCE.

[129.] It is by some believed that none can fall from a state of grace, so as not to be finally restored, or saved. I think this opinion contrary to Scripture, and very dangerous to mankind; and therefore, however some very sincere-hearted Christians may believe it, I hope none will be offended at the following remarks.

[130.] Christ hath said, “every branch in me that bringeth forth fruit, my Father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit,” John 15:2. And on the other hand, of every branch that bringeth not forth fruit, he testifieth “that he taketh it away” [John 15:6]. Now I ask, What is meant by taking it away? Christ is the vine, his members are the branches [John 15:5], and none are branches in him, but such as are really his members, for he exhorts them to abide *in him* [John 15:4] — “every branch in me,” &c.

[131.] It seems therefore clear, that *taking away*, is separating from Christ the vine; — certainly *taking away* is a removal. From what then, or from whom removed, if not from Christ? Could any other removal, or taking away, than a separation from him— a removal from a place, or state of engraftment into [Rom 11:17], and dwelling, or abiding in him the vine, have been meant, or spoken of by our Lord in this place, and on this subject?

[132.] It must be this or nothing. And this is agreeable to Paul's testimony, Rom. 11:17 to 22, where speaking of such gentiles as were truly grafted into Christ, partook of the fatness of him, the true olive tree, and so <58> stood by faith, the apostle was yet so far from supposing that they would certainly and unavoidably persevere, so as finally to be saved, that he pressingly exhorts them thus: “Thou standest by faith; be not high minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee” [Rom 11:20-21]. Nor does he stop here, though this seems to me enough to evince, to every candid and unprejudiced mind,

that Paul was deeply sensible of a possibility, and even a danger, that some of these might fall away: but he proceeds, “Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness; if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off” [Rom 11:22]. How clear, how positive! What words, what arrangement of assertions could he have used, more strongly to confute every idea of *once in grace always in grace*?

[133.] These were actually grafted into Christ; did partake of his richness and fatness, did stand by faith, therefore surely were *once in grace*; yet he warns them of their danger: “be not high minded, but fear.” And to convince them that they were really in danger, and had something to fear, tells them, that the continuance of God's love and favour to them was conditional; “if thou continue in his goodness:” — and in the most peremptory manner assures them, “otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” Cut off from what? why surely from the good olive tree, into which they were grafted; or as Christ himself expresseth it: “every branch that bringeth not forth fruit, my Father taketh it away.” Is it possible to be cut off, and taken away, and yet to remain in, and united to Christ, the true vine and good olive tree? By no means. What greater grounds then, have such who have been once in him, and are thus cut off and taken away, to depend upon final acceptance with him, for what they <59> once were, than those who never were grafted into him? seeing they are the very persons who “crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame,” Heb 6:6, which is the very reason the apostle elsewhere giveth, why it is impossible, as he positively declares it is, “to renew them to repentance?”

[134.] How are they then ever to be saved? Is it not clear, that for such “there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment,” Heb 10:27, which will assuredly overtake, and shall devour all such adversaries. Indeed, it is admirable, that Christians can believe, that such apostates are in covenant with God — in a state of grace, and must be saved!

[135.] It is urged in support of this opinion, that Christ tells the believers, that “none can pluck them out of his hand” [John 10:28]. This is granted, none can. A true believer, remaining such, was never plucked out of his holy hand, and never will be; either by Satan to devour [1 Pet 5:8], or by wicked men, to afflict and annoy. Satan may tempt and roar — ill men may censure, despise, and (if God permit) even slay [Luke 21:16-18], but still he holds them in his hand; in all their trials, persecutions, and even in death they are safe, and all things work together for their good [Rom 8:28].

[136.] It is remarkable, that Christ is speaking here of his *sheep*, which he several times calls his “own sheep,” — declares “they hear his voice and follow him, and will not follow a stranger;” — declares *he* puts them forth, and goes before them; and repeats it, that they *follow him*. Read John, chapter 10.

[137.] Now, is it possible for those who are put forth by him — hear his voice — continue steadfastly following him, and will not hearken to, nor follow a stranger, to be *plucked out of his hand*? I conceive it is not possible. But what has this to do with such who, trusting to their having <60> been once in Christ, grow high minded [Rom 11:20], and presuming upon the certainty of their eternal salvation, continue not to follow Christ in the regeneration [Matt 19:28]: — hearken not to his voice, but listen to the stranger [John 10:5], the voice of the old seducer who, as he persuaded Eve, that, though she disobeyed the law of God, she would not die [Gen 3:4]; so he now persuades these, that though they sin, they are sure of eternal life? What security is there, in a promise made only to such as hear the voice of the Shepherd, and so steadfastly follow him, as not to hearken to, but flee from the stranger, unto those who thus daringly revolt from him, go back (as did some formerly), and walk no more with him [John 6:66]? Of these, however confidently they may presume upon the certainty of their eternal salvation, as they do not continue in the goodness of God, the apostle pronounces, “they shall be cut off” [Rom 11:22].

[138.] Do we not read of many who, being once true children of God, afterwards became apostates? Does not the Scripture declare, that the righteousness of men who depart from it, shall not be mentioned? Ezek 18:25. And God's ways are strictly just and equal herein, though many then were ready to say, "the way of the Lord is not equal" [Ezek 18:25, 18:29, 33:17, 33:20]. And many now cannot see how he can cast off sinners forever, because of their revoltings, seeing they were once righteous men, and chosen of him. But it seems, this inspired prophet thought it very *unequal*, that a man, because he was once righteous, and in a state wherein, had he continued, he should surely have lived and not died, should, notwithstanding "he turned away from his righteousness, committeth iniquity, and doeth all the abominations that the wicked man doeth" [Ezek 18:24], be so distinguished from other wicked men, as still to live in favour and covenant with God! And indeed, this *would be unequal*, and a manifest respect of <61> persons, too gross to be ascribed to God [Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1 Pet 1:17]; and hence the prophet asks, in regard to such an one, who thus turns from his righteousness, and does the very things for which the wicked die, "*shall he live?*" Ezek 18:24. He knew it could not consist with the justice of Him, whose ways are altogether equal, to order things in such an unequal and partial manner; and therefore he not only asks, as if he abhorred the idea, "shall he live?" but immediately adds, as expressive of the justice of God, "all his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned;" and then positively declares, "in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

[139.] Here is the end of such wicked men as were once really righteous, and acceptable to God, and who, had they so continued, would have lived for ever: but turning aside, they *die in their sins!* And can those who die in sin, be saved in Christ? Nay verily; where he is gone, they can never come [John 8:21].

[140.] Judas once partook of the gospel ministry and apostleship, and had it not been for his transgression, would doubtless, have continued therein; but it is

declared, that by transgression he fell therefrom, Acts 1:25. Could anyone partake of the true gospel ministry, and apostleship, and not be in a state of grace? or fall therefrom by transgression, and remain in a state of grace? It is evident he was once in a better state, or he could not have had part in the ministry and apostleship of Jesus; nor could he else have fallen therefrom. And did he not so transgress and fall away, as even to become a devil [John 6:70], and go to his own place, being emphatically called the son of perdition [John 17:12]? yea, had it not been good for him, had he never been born [Mark 14:21]? Indeed, we may think so, even though it had not been so asserted in Scripture. <62> For what can be conceived more dreadful, than after obtaining and receiving part in the glorious gospel ministry, so grievously to transgress and fall therefrom, as to become a devil, and betray into the hands of sinners [Matt 26:45, Mark 14:41] the Lord of life and glory, the author of that very ministry!

[141.] I conceive a great degree of the sin of Judas, and that which was a very peculiar and dreadful aggravation of it, was his having been *once in grace* and highly favored; he knew far better things; and yet, mournful to think, the reward of iniquity prevailed against his knowledge of the truth, and drew him from his duty, after all his happy experience. And it is true of all others, who have known a good state, and fall from it, as well as of Judas; their guilt is abundantly increased, by their having been once living partakers of the *divine nature* [2 Pet 1:4]; their condemnation is proportionably great, and the inveteracy and malignancy of their fallen condition, is so much the more incurable, by how much more they have known of the good things of the heavenly kingdom. Hence, says the apostle, “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,” Heb 6:4-6. We cannot reasonably doubt but that some such do fall away; for why else did the apostle declare the impossibility of

their renewal; or how could he assert positively, “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh?” and how could they *crucify him* to themselves, unless they had livingly known him in themselves? But that this was their experience, <63> is evident, from their having “tasted the heavenly gift, been partakers of the Holy Ghost, the good word of God, and powers of the world to come:” —these knew the “substance of things hoped for,” and so had the true faith; but like those mentioned, they “made shipwreck of it” [1 Tim 1:19]; which could not be if they never had it. By all which it is evident, that man may fall from a state of faith and grace, even to an impossibility of renewal unto repentance;—these with Judas, must go to their own place [Acts 1:25], and receive the reward of their backslidings, as such as have turned the grace of God into wantonness.

[142.] Some insinuate that none can ever make shipwreck of true faith [1 Tim 1:19]; but only of a seeming or false faith; — but the apostle adds *a good conscience*; “holding faith (says he) and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck.” Their faith was with a good conscience, else they could not have put it away from them; nor could they ever have had the good conscience, in the sight of God, with only a seeming, or false faith; hence it is clear that they had true faith, and a good conscience, and made shipwreck thereof.

[143.] Peter speaks of false teachers, and of their bringing in “damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them” — bringing “upon themselves swift destruction,” 2 Peter 2:1. Now, let such as hold the impossibility of falling finally away from grace, upon the argument that none are ever in a state of grace but a certain elect number, and who therefore cannot finally fall, consider whether Christ has bought any that were in an eternal decree of reprobation: if he has not, but has bought only a small number, who belong to an eternal decree of election, how came any of these to bring in damnable doctrines? how can they deny the Lord that bought them? and above all, how can *they* bring upon <64> themselves “swift destruction?” If Christ bought none, but such as he brings into a real state of grace,

and if such as were once in such a state, are always so, then a man may bring in damnable heresies, deny the Lord that bought him, and even bring upon himself swift destruction, and yet be in a state of grace at the same time!

[144.] But the apostle goes on describing the dreadful and forlorn state and condition of such seducers, and those who follow their ways: he calls them “Cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray,” 2 Peter 2:14-15. It seems they had known the right way: and if they forsook it, and strayed from it, well might he say “the mist of darkness is reserved for such as these forever,” 2 Peter 2:17. But he adds: “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error,” 2 Peter 2:18 &c. And he declares, that “if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” [2 Pet 2:20-21]. It is asserted, that they had clean escaped, and were again allured, and that being thus again entangled in the pollutions of the world, after they had escaped them by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, their latter end was worse than their beginning. It seems they had the true knowledge of the Savior, and had thereby escaped those pollutions, and known the way of righteousness, and yet turned from the holy commandment. And as it were to confirm it in the fullest manner, that men <65> might do all this, and absolutely fall from a state of grace and real cleansing, the apostle winds up the subject with these positive assertions: “But it happened unto them, according to the true proverb, the dog is returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” [2 Pet 2:22]. What more could he have said, to evince the possibility of falling from grace, and that individuals actually did fall, even after they were washed, and had clean escaped from them who live in error. Well therefore might he, and with great propriety he

did, (after having thus fully and clearly established the possibility and danger of falling, and put the believers in mind what manner of persons they ought to be, in all holy conversation and goodliness; looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, &c.) concludes his last epistle to them with this pressing exhortation- “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen,” 2 Pet 3:17- 18.

[145.] Let us mark his words: “lest ye also being led away” [2 Pet 3:17]. The word *also*, seems to refer to the example of those he had spoken of, as having been already led away and allured; having turned from the holy commandment, like the dog that greedily swallows again what he had vomited up, and like the sow, that though ever so thoroughly washed, returns to her wallowing in the mire [2 Pet 2:22].

[146.] The good apostle was anxious that others’ harms should prove a warning to his brethren, and pressed them by the example of such as had actually forsaken the right way, after once walking in it, to see well to their standing, lest like these, they might by any means “be led away <66> by the error of the wicked, and after all their good experience, fall from their own steadfastness” [2 Pet 3:17]. And we need not marvel that he concludes his address to them with this wholesome advice, seeing he was so far from a vain hope of *once in grace, always in grace*, that he knew the latter end of those once in grace was worse than their beginning, if they turned from it [2 Pet 2:20]; and viewed them in a worse state, than those who never knew the right way, or the way of true righteousness, and so had not forsaken it.

[147.] The apostle to the Hebrews says: “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain *fearful looking* for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour

the adversaries. He that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace?" [Heb 10:26-29.] Now if such as have really received the knowledge of the truth may sin wilfully, so as that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but on the contrary a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, that will devour the adversaries [Heb 10:26-27] — if there is a much sorer punishment than was *death*, without mercy, under the law; if some who were once even *sanctified* by the blood of the everlasting covenant, may and do even tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, whereby they have been sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite to the spirit of grace; — and if these are worthy of this much sorer punishment, what becomes of the doctrine of *once in grace always in grace*?

[148.] Is he in a state of grace and acceptance that is treading underfoot the Son of God? [Heb 10:29.] Is that a state of grace, <67> wherein the blood of the covenant is counted unholy, and wherein despite is done to the spirit of grace? Perhaps scarce any crime can be named, that may not be included in this description. Perhaps there may be no kind, or degree of wickedness, alienation, or depravity, that is not here comprised; and yet this is the very person that was once sanctified, by that very blood of the covenant, which he now counts an unholy thing [Heb 10:29]. Oh! sorrowful apostasy! I marvel not at all, that the apostle in the following words, put such in mind of "him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will repay, saith the Lord." [Rom 12:19.] For surely, if ever he can justly take vengeance on any, it must be on such as these, who were once his peculiar and sanctified servants and people [Tit 2:14, 1 Pet 2:9]; but who have thus vilely forsaken him — so the apostle adds, "and again, the Lord shall judge his people" [Heb 10:30.] And if he judge them in righteousness, as he surely will, he can never acquit such notorious offenders as these. Hence, awfully pertinent is the next

solemn sentence: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” [Heb 10:31.]

[149.] Further, it is evident, that when Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he thought it possible even for himself to become *a castaway*: 1 Cor 9:27, and that from a feeling sense of his danger, he carefully kept “under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest by any means he should have been drawn away from the gospel; and even after he had preached it to others, have been himself a castaway,” Rom 8:38, &c. And yet he afterwards knew a state, in the course of his experience, in which he felt firmly persuaded, that neither death, nor life, &c. would be able to separate him from the love of God [Rom 8:39]. For though the Epistle to the Romans is placed before those to the Corinthians, I find by the arrangements of some writers, it is believed Paul wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Corinthians, before he <68> wrote that to the Romans; and I entertain no doubt, but that Paul and others have attained to a state, from which they could not fall; — but I am as firmly persuaded that there is a state of grace, favour and real sonship, from which man may, and some have fallen, and that even Paul and those of whose perseverance he was so fully assured, had been in that state, and might have fallen and become castaways. And this, I conclude, is one thing which has led many into a too early persuasion and confidence, that they cannot fall; that they find by the sacred records, that some did attain to that state and assurance, and so they conclude that all who are once truly in a state of grace, are thus far arrived; not carefully observing the several degrees and growths in grace, from that of children, to young men, and so on to fathers; and hence it comes to pass, that many an infant in Christian experience and attainment, is bold and confident; and instead of maintaining a proper fear, and a right engagement to keep under the cross, lest he or she should become a castaway, is unwisely assuming the utmost assurance that belongs to any, even to fathers in Christ [1 Cor 4:15]. And too many have hereby been lulled asleep, in a very imperfect state; — have sat down at ease in sin, and made little or no advancement

in the race that was set before them [Heb 12:1], since the moment when they first confidently concluded that they were converted [Matt 18:3, Acts 3:19]. Some of these have settled into flat and lifeless formality, and some have centered in the bondage of corruption [Rom 8:21], and returned to the wallowing in the mire [2 Pet 2:22] of their former pollutions. And it is past all controversy with me, that this short stopping by the way, and turning back again to Egypt [Num 14:3-4], will cast away many a one at the bar of final retribution, who have begun well and run well [Gal 5:7] for a season.

FINIS.