

**LOOKING TO THE CROSS;**

OR

**THE RIGHT USE OF**

**MARKS AND EVIDENCES.**

BY

**WILLIAM CUDWORTH.**

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**Preface and Notes,**

BY

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“But in what order is this preaching to be conducted? To me the question seems almost superfluous and unprofitable, since the preaching of *both* should always be conjoined, For who will approve of such an imprudent judge of matters, who resolves *by the continual proclamation of the law, for some months*, to soften souls and to prepare them for Christ, and in the meantime makes no mention of Christ? Or who for a remarkable space of time soothes the ears with the allurements of the gospel only, and does not at the same time inculcate that we must live as becometh the gospel? In vain do you strike the mind with the terror of the Law, (yea, you think not even on this,) unless you also point out Jesus, to whom we must flee for refuge. Neither does even the saving grace of God shine before men, but it immediately teaches them that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they shall live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world.”—*Witsius's Irenical Animadversions*. Chap. xvii. Sec. 13.

—*Translated, with Notes, by T. Bell, Glasgow.*

## PREFACE.

THAT there are marks by which a Christian is known to be a Christian, is most certain. That there are characteristics which evidence the real state of the heart, both to ourselves and to others, is not a thing called in question by any. Where there is living religion in the soul, it will infallibly attest its existence and vitality by “marks and evidences.” If a man walk in sin, is it not plain that he is not a Christian? If a man follow the world and love its pleasures, is it not plain that he is not a saint? If a man be covetous, or unclean, or a blasphemer, or a talebearer, or a drunkard, can he be a Christian? If he be prayerless, praiseless, lifeless, is it not clear that he is also Christless?

But while these things are sufficiently plain, it is not the less true that “marks and evidences” are often sadly misused, so as to come between the soul and the Saviour, nay, at times to be almost made a substitute for his cross.\*

How many, for instance, seem to think it wrong to take peace from the gospel until they have ascertained by self-inspection the state of their own feelings in reference to Christ. [see [Note D](#)] And what is this but saying that

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\* “One great cause, I apprehend, of the prevalence of such fears in sincere people of the present age, is the great degree in which the attention is turned inward, and the small degree in which it is directed to the things of God, as revealed in the Scripture; or, to use the language of the Psalmist, *the taking counsel in their own souls*.

I do not mean to discourage all remembrance of past experiences. Much less do I mean to countenance the notions of those who cry down all evidences of grace, all marks and signs of internal Christianity, taken from the work of sanctification in the soul. I am persuaded that for any man to reject evidences of personal religion drawn from this source, he must fall very little short of rejecting his Bible. (See especially 1 John ii. 3, 5; iii. 14, 18—21, 24.) But though sanctification is the evidence of an interest in spiritual blessings, yet it is not so much by remembering our past religious experience that we shall obtain satisfaction, as by renewed exercises of grace.

The apostle, in the passages that have been referred to, when describing the means by which we are to come at the knowledge of our personal religion, makes no mention of things past, /but of things present, of which the mind is supposed to be conscious at the time. And if satisfaction be attainable only by renewed exercises of grace, our object is to ascertain the method best adapted to promote such exercises, which, I am persuaded, will be found to be a looking out of themselves to the truths and consolations revealed in the Scriptures.”— *Fuller*.

the tidings concerning Him are only “*good tidings*” to those who are in a certain condition of soul, and have previously secured a certain amount of religious feeling? Nay, what is it but saying that it is out of these religious feelings of their own that they are to extract the peace which they are seeking, and that the cross of Christ ought to give peace only when the sinner has been prepared for receiving it by the consciousness of penitence and love in his soul? If this be the case, then the grace of Christ falls short of reaching the sinner as he is; it reaches a certain length but still leaves a space between, which the sinner is to get over the best way he can; by his prayers and penances and tears. So that the sinner is not fit for Christ, nor Christ for him, *as he is*: and it would be presumption for him to believe the good news the moment he hears them, or, to take peace simply from beholding the Lamb of God.

But may we not be deceived, and is it not well to exercise caution? We may indeed be deceived, and it is well to be cautious. But what of this? Because I may go wrong on my journey, must I not set out upon it? Because I may be in a delusion must I put away from me all good news whatsoever, until I have ascertained that I am in a quite sane state of mind, and under no delusion? Do we thus act in common things? Do we thus refuse to believe the news of a friend’s recovery from sickness, or of his deliverance from some overwhelming danger?

But besides, the simpler the act of mind, the less am I in danger of being deceived. Hence, though my direct act of looking may turn out to be a delusion; my indirect act of introspection is more likely to turn out so. So that if I am to refuse the gospel, or at least to take the peace of the gospel, until I have by long and rigid scrutiny ascertained that my act of believing be a proper and authentic one; much more must I put from me that gospel with all its benefits, till I have scrutinized my acts of self-examination, and by patient analysis proved that *they* are genuine. For most assuredly if I am liable to be mistaken as to my *simple* act of believing, I am much more liable to be mistaken as to my *complex* act of examination into my own

feelings, motives, and principles.\*

In this way the cross of Christ is made of none effect by being thrown so far into the distance, and obstacles such as these interposed between it and the sinner. It would be no longer “hear and your soul shall live,” but, “hear, and having ascertained by a full enquiry and analysis that your hearing is of a right kind, and from the proper motives, then your soul shall live.” It would be no longer, “look unto me and be ye saved,” but look, and and having patiently examined your looking and found that you in looking, are in a proper state of conviction and penitence and feeling, then you will be saved.”

If, then, there be room for deception and self-delusion in the one case, there is much more room for them in the other. And thus peace and assurance would be things absolutely impossible. The danger of going wrong would be a complete and insuperable obstacle in the way of our ever going right. The danger of having a false peace, would during our whole life effectually prevent our ever having a true one.

Thus we are entangled in a hopeless snare. And between the heart’s longings after peace, and the danger of deception, we are all our life subject to bondage. It is a net which we cannot break; nay, every attempt at breaking it only draws new meshes around us. We are captives for life; shut up in the prison of our own thoughts and sensations; never allowed to wander beyond the regions of self, lest we should go astray; not permitted to come forth from this sad and dark monotony to look at the cheering sun, lest our

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\* “To attempt to ascertain the reality of our religion by the remembrance of past experiences of grace, is attempting what in most cases must needs be, to say the least, extremely difficult, and if accomplished, would be of no use. The mind is not formed for such a remembrance of its own ideas and sensations as this would require. It is true, those impressions that are singularly striking will often be remembered at a distant period; but not in that clear and lively manner in which they are felt at the time. It is only a *general* recollection of things that is ordinarily retained: to be employed therefore in raking over our past feelings, in order to discover whether we be real Christians, is almost a hopeless undertaking. Those examples which the Scriptures afford of persons recurring to past experiences were not for the purpose of ascertaining their own sincerity, but for the regaining of those sensations which at former periods they had possessed. The object of David, in his recollection of past times, was not so much that he might determine what was the nature of his experience at these times, as that he might regain his confidence in God. “I will remember thee,” saith he, “from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” God was the object he sought; and the remembrance of what he had formerly experienced of his goodness and faithfulness was the *means* he used to find him. Allowing, therefore, that the remembrance of past sensations may afford us satisfaction as to the reality of our personal religion, yet it is no otherwise than as *reviving* those sensations, by which they became renewed exercises of grace.”—*Fuller*.

looking should prove a deception and land us only in disappointment!

Thus, conviction of sin is substituted for the cross of Christ. Thus repentance comes in the place of His blood. Thus faith becomes our Saviour instead of the Son of God; nay, our self-searchings after faith are set in the room of faith, and ultimately in the room of the Saviour. The question on which the good tidings are made to turn, is not, “what has Christ done for saving you in dying on the cross;” but, “what have you done in the way of believing and repenting and self-examination, in order to complete his work and make it available?” Is not the following a true picture of this state of things?

“Thus the poor and sorrowful soul, instead of being at once led to the source of all good, is taught to make much of the conflict of truth and falsehood within it as the pledge of God’s love; and to picture to itself faith as a sort of passive quality, which sits amid the ruins of human nature, and keeps up what may be called a silent protest, or indulges a pensive meditation over its misery. And, indeed, faith thus regarded, cannot do more, for while it acts, not to lead the soul to Christ, but to detain it from him, how can the soul but remain a prisoner? True faith is what may be called colourless, like air or water; it is but the medium through which the soul sees Christ, and the soul as little rests on it and contemplates it, as the eye can see the air. When men then are bent on holding it, as it were, in their hands, curiously inspecting, analyzing, and so aiming at it, they are obliged to colour and thicken it, that it may be seen and touched. That is, they substitute for it, something or other, a feeling, notion, sentiment, conviction, an act of reason, which they may hang over and doat upon. They rather aim at experiences within them than at Him who is without them. Now men who are acted on by news, good and bad, or sights beautiful or fearful, admire, rejoice, weep, or are pained, but are moved spontaneously, not with a direct consciousness of their emotion.

So is it with faith and other Christian graces. Bystanders see our minds, but, our minds, if healthy, see but the objects which possess them. As God’s grace elicits our faith, so his holiness stirs our fear, and his glory kindles our love. Others say often, here is faith, and there is conscientiousness, and there is love; but we can only say, this is God’s grace, and that is his holiness and that is his glory.”

Besides, the enumeration of marks and evidences is one of the most

delicate and difficult things conceivable. How many troubled spirits have had reason to complain, up till their last moments, of the damage done to them in years gone by, when their anxiety began, by injudicious statements of marks and unscriptural enunciation of evidences. “I did utterly cast aside,” says an old minister, “all marks that I had read in practical books, and did examine them by Scripture, and I found most part of them unsound and not well cautioned, and some not altogether false, but inconsiderately expressed, and the reader very apt to mistake. Oh! what need is there of wisdom and light from above in giving of marks, and what a great sin it is either to write or speak marks at random.”

But even when they are rightly stated they are not to be *rested on*. This is not their use. To use them for this end is to pervert them, and, in perverting them, to mislead the soul. The moment they come in between us and the cross; or hinder our looking; or become grounds of confidence, or sources of peace, they are perverted. “These,” says old Robert Blair, “though in their own place, may, and do, prove useful to our faith and living thereby, yet, if we offer to make all of these, or any of these, the object for our soul to rest or rely upon, in order either to our salvation, our sanctification, or outgate from trouble, they are not able to support and bear up the weight.”

The wrong use of marks is injurious to two classes; *first*, to those that are groping their way to the cross; and *secondly*, to those who have found the cross, and known something of its peace-giving power.

I. *As to those who are groping their way.* The false use of marks acts in a twofold way, or rather in a different way upon two different kinds of inquirers. One class it hinders and darkens. They see the cross only through the medium of their own experiences, and hence they cannot have light. Or they look for marks as a preliminary, before looking to the cross, thinking it wrong to *look out* till they have first *looked in*; thinking it wrong to come to Christ till they have ascertained, by self-trial, whether they are in a fit condition for coming, whether their character as sensible and penitent sinners be such as to warrant them in coming. In their case it is not, “they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn,” but it is, “they shall mourn and then look on him whom they have pierced.” Thus the divine process is reversed, and the divine instrument for producing repentance is put aside until repentance be got up within them by other means of their own

devising!

But there is another kind of inquirers on whom the false use of marks acts in another way. It renders them self-righteous and secure. They have got, or think they have got, some strong feelings, some strong convictions, and they lay hold on these for quieting their consciences; so that they are in this way actually made to stop short of the cross, from the feeling that they have got what they wanted. Thus, marks of repentance used in this way make them contented without the cross. Thus an old writer remarks on this point.—

“The Christian religion does affirm the necessity of repentance, but a repentance of another nature, and to another purpose than that which the corrupt minds of men imagine. Now, when men come to the Scripture with no other guide for the understanding of it, but their own corrupt reason, and there read of the necessity of repentance, they bring their own corrupt way of thinking about it along with them, and conceive of it, and of its connection with the promise of pardon, in the same manner that they did before. If they read or hear of the righteousness of Christ and of his blood, shed for the remission of sins, they look upon it only as something that obtains acceptance to their repentance, or makes out what is wanting in their repentance, for procuring pardon and salvation to them. Thus they make repentance still their righteousness, and submit not to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, through their ignorance, both of that righteousness and of repentance. This, no doubt, is one effectual bar that they lay in the way of their own repentance and returning to God. They may return, indeed, and be some way grieved for their sin, and some way confess it, and reform; but they return not to the Most High; for there is no returning unto God, but through Christ and by his blood,—no fruits meet for repentance but by union with Christ, and by grace reigning through his righteousness. (Rom. v. 21.) There is no ingenuous hearty confession of sin, without an eye to the redemption that is in his blood; no true mourning for sin but by looking on him whom we have pierced. It is thus impossible that the repentance can be true, which is any way depended on as a part of our righteousness before God. And it is lamentable to think how sinners abuse the Lord’s most gracious invitations to repentance, and, lay these as bars in the way of their returning to God. Thus, when the Lord, (Isaiah lv. 7,) reveals his astonishingly free pardoning mercy and grace to the wicked and the unrighteous, that he may be thereby moved to forsake his ways and thoughts, and return to him, when God assures him that in returning unto



him he shall find him gracious, the use they make of that is, that God will accept of their repentance, and for that pardon them. If they find they cannot repent aright, they cry to that God whom they imagine to themselves, to help them to repent, that thereby they may pacify their consciences, and procure pardon to themselves, and if they attain to any tears for sin, or any good purposes, or some reformation, all is well, then they have enjoyed something to make their consciences easy till they enjoy their beloved lusts, and they rest contentedly, far from God, under the covert of this returning to him,”

In both these ways then there is danger,—danger in the one case of being made afraid of coming to the cross,—danger in the other case of being made to stop short of the cross, as if all that was needful or possible had been attained.\*

II. *As to those who have found the cross.* They have believed and have been going upon their way in peace for some time. They have known the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have received himself, and for a time they “did run well.” But they have been hindered, or rather they have hindered themselves, so that in some measure they have “ceased to obey the truth,” and thus they have been letting go their hold of truth.

Imagining that now, since they have believed, they must draw their comfort from some different source, or in a different way from what they did at first, they turn their whole attention to themselves, their experiences and their graces. Forgetting that the true way of nourishing these is by keeping their eye upon the cross, they turn it inward and try to nourish them by some direct process of their own devising. Thus they are led to make much of their experiences, and to lay stress on these, as if they were to be the main source of comfort to them.

In proportion as these are visible their peace rises or falls,—their liberty of soul is enlarged or straitened, till they become so intent on observing them that they leave themselves no time to observe the cross.

Instead of being engrossed with Christ so as to forget themselves, they are so engrossed with themselves that they forget or lose sight of Christ. To see him is to have peace; and this they themselves thought at first; but now it is the seeing of something else along with him that gives peace. At first, they

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\* See Note at the end.

found him quite enough ; now they reckon something else needful along with him. At first it was the grace that was in him that drew their eyes and dispelled their gloom, now it is the grace that is in themselves.

Thus by degrees their eyes are withdrawn from the cross and fixed on something which they themselves have set up to gaze upon; their thoughts are turned away from the Saviour and are wholly occupied with themselves. Thus they put the good that they can find in themselves in place of the good that they find in him.\*

But, asks one, “ am I not to expect fruit and to look for it.” Surely you are. Faith is a fruit-bearing thing; or rather the cross which faith realizes is a fruit-bearing thing. But this is not the point. The question is, “are fruits to come in place of Christ?” Are we to draw comfort from fruits instead of drawing it from him?

Besides, is this searching for fruit the way to *produce* it? Is it not in this way that fruit is hindered and the tree withered?

“But if I find no fruit, what am I to do?” Not surely to look away from Christ. That will not mend matters. Granting that your complaint is a just one, still it is possible that you may be treating it in an improper way. And surely they treat it in an improper way who make it a reason for keeping aloof from Christ, who make it a reason for distrusting him, and who resolve that they will not *presume to confide* until they have discovered fruit in themselves warranting them to believe that they are persons in a right state for trusting, and that their character and progress in grace are such as to entitle them to cherish confidence.

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\* “The righteousness of Christ is ever perfect, present, and accepted. ‘My salvation shall be for ever, and righteousness shall not be abolished.’ (Isiah li. 5.) There may be much change in us, but there is no change in that. It is a garment that waxeth not old; it can be no more sullied than worn out. It is of the same nobility, efficacy, and acceptation with God now, as when our High-priest first entered with it into the holiest of all, and presented it to God the Father with his own hands, in the name, and for the use of his seed. Soul! whence is it thou hast leanness of frame, and distressing terrors? whence is it thou walkest in darkness and hast no light? Is it because thy foundation itself totters and sinks, or because thou standest with but one foot on it? Thou pleadest Christ’s righteousness, but what gives thee boldness so to do? Is it thy own frames, thy own graces? These thou makest as steps to help thee to Christ’s righteousness, therefore thou comest short of peace and comfort. This righteousness of Christ needs nothing of thine own to make it accepted, or to make it pleadable. David makes mention of it wholly and only. (Ps. lxxi. 16.) It is a righteousness, like its glorious Author, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; a righteousness which will enter even heaven itself with us, and will dwell for ever round us, and our most glorious covering in the sight of God, and our everlasting title (as one well expresses it) to all the blessings of eternity: the saints above are always viewed and accepted of God in this everlasting and unchangeable righteousness.”—*Hill’s Sermons*.

Thus they allow Satan to throw up a barrier between them and the Saviour. They not only refuse to trust, but they justify themselves in so refusing by pointing to their own want of fruit or advancement.

It is indeed a sad thing not to bear fruit, nor to advance; but to make these a reason for keeping aloof from the Saviour, or a reason for cherishing distrust, is utterly to prevent the cure, and to perpetuate the very evil complained of. Will distrust produce the fruits that you desire? Will keeping aloof from the Saviour tend to advancement? Will you make your condition better by such procedure? Are you likely to remove your darkness by turning away from the light on the plea that hitherto you have got no benefit from the light? Surely if the light has done little for you, the darkness will not do more. And your only hope is just turning *towards* that very light, however little hitherto you may have obtained from it.

Rest assured of this, that distrust, unbelief, despondency, want of confidence in the character of the Lord Jesus, will profit you nothing. The opposite of these will do every thing for you. Let nothing therefore ever lead you to give way to such hateful feelings, let not want of fruit, or want of progress, or want of love, or want of holiness, tempt you to doubt or distrust. These wants are most certainly to be mourned over in the bitterness of your soul; but never allowed to come between you and the grace of that Saviour who alone can remove them. In taking them to him, simply and as little children; going to him with them as burdens too heavy for you to bear, you are sure of having them taken away sooner or later; but in keeping these to yourself and brooding over them, you need not expect their removal, for you are wilfully and deliberately doing the very thing which is preventing them being taken away.

This is then the truth that we must ever remember,—CHRIST IS OUR PEACE. Let nothing be allowed to unfix our hold of this blessed truth. Without it we can make no progress in divine things. We must stand still. We must go back. The fruits of the Spirit are precious, yet they are not our peace or our resting-place. An old writer remarks most truly upon this point: “Our standing is not founded upon the subduing of our sins, but upon that foundation that never fails, and that is Christ himself; upon his faithfulness and truth. Men think they are consumed when they are troubled with sin: why? Because of their transgression. But mark what the Lord saith, ‘I, the Lord, change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.’ It is not, you change not; therefore ye are not consumed; but, I change not: I have loved you freely, I will love you freely, I cannot alter. Whom

he loves, he loves unto the end; it is in respect of his unchangeableness. Though there be ebbings and flowings of the outward man; nay, of the inward man, in the business of sanctification; yet this is certainly true, that believers are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. They are kept in holiness, sincerity, simplicity of heart; but all this hath nothing to do with the peace of their soul, and the salvation and justification thereof; Christ is he that justifies the ungodly; Christ is he that saves the soul; Christ is he that is the peace-maker, so all this peace depends upon Christ alone. Beloved, if you will fetch your peace from any thing in this world, but Christ, you will fetch it from where it is not.”

To the same effect, another old worthy writes, “This faith of free justification, and this walking in the steps of our father Abraham, causeth us infallibly to walk in the steps of the works of our father Abraham, whereby, like Abraham without the law of the ten commandments, we walk holily, soberly, and righteously in all God’s commandments, being zealous of good works. (Tit. 2, 11, 12, 13, &c.) By all this it is clear that the teachings of some are exceeding bad and dangerous, who, by a pretended zeal of works and well-doings, speak little or nothing of faith, of free justification: thinking by the dead faith it is an easy matter to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, but that all the hardness lieth in workings and well-doings ; and therefore do call for a good life, and the doing of all holy duties, zealously, but preposterously, before people be sure by comfort and joy of free justification, that they walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham; such I say, instead of making people the true children of Abraham, of the free woman Sarah, do make them bastard children of the bond-woman Hager, that must be cast out of the inheritance. (Gal. 4. 21.) Instead of making them the children of the promise, they make them children that will be under the law and works. Instead of making them children of faith and of the blessing, they make them the children of works, and of the curse. (Gal. 3. 10.) Instead of working peace with God in their consciences, they work unquietness, fears, and troubles of conscience about works: instead of making the inheritance of righteousness and life to come by grace, and the promise to be sure to all the seed, they make it to come as it were by working, and the promise to be unsure and doubtful to all the seed: instead of making them heirs of all the blessings, temporal and eternal, with faithful Abraham, they make them, as much as in them lieth, heirs of all evils and punishments, with the deceitful workings mentioned. (2. Cor. 11, 13,14,15.) Instead of making them to walk in the true good works of Abraham, they make them at the best but to walk in the seeming good works of the Scribes and Pharisees, that is, in a legal and false

sanctification, which is of high esteem and beauty amongst men, but is abomination in the sight of God.”

It may not be unnecessary, in conclusion, to make one or two statements which may prevent the possibility of mistaking or abusing the truth contained in this Treatise.

Let no one attempt to speak peace to himself when there is no peace. Let each one make sure that the peace he has, or is aiming at, is the very peace of God, coming from a knowledge of the Peacemaker.

Let no one take the great matter of religion easily or lightly, but let him regard it with all earnestness and solemnity. Let him see it with reference to his own personal welfare for eternity.

Let no one be content with a false or doubtful conversion, but let him make sure. On this point I ask attention to the following sentence from Andrew Fuller, “If it be a matter of doubt with you, whether you be truly converted, far be it from me to endeavour to persuade you that you are so. Your doubts may be well founded for aught I can tell; and supposing they should be so, the door of mercy is still open. If you have obtained mercy, the same way is open for your obtaining it again; and if not, there is no reason why you should not obtain it now. The consolations I have to recommend are addressed to you, not as converted, nor as unconverted; not as elect, nor as non-elect; but as *sinners*; and this character, I suppose, you have no doubt of your sustaining. All the blessings of the gospel are freely presented for acceptance to sinners. Sinners, whatever may have been their character, have a complete warrant to receive them; yea, it is their duty to do so, and their great sin if they do not.”

Having given these cautions, let me entreat the reader to consider the following statements.

1. *A believing man will be a holy man.* Nor can anything said by the author against the improper use of evidences be understood as in the very slightest degree giving countenance to the opposite of this; as if it were possible that the freeness of the gospel could give liberty to sin, or grace be the encourager of licentiousness.

2. *A believing man will be a praying man.* To say, “I believe,” and make this supposed faith an excuse for unprayerfulness, is to deny the very end and object for which we believe, viz. that we may come into the presence of God and have unceasing fellowship with Him.

3. *A believing man will be a zealous man.* Faith makes a man zealous. Faith shows itself by zeal. Not by zeal for a party or a system, or an opinion; but by zeal for Christ,—zeal for his church,—zeal for the carrying on of his work on earth.

4. *A believing man will be a consistent man.* He will seek to abound in *all* good works,—to bring forth *all* the fruits of the Spirit,—to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where there are inconsistencies,—evil tempers,—covetousness,—selfishness,—levity,—flippancy,—carnality,—worldliness,—pride, and such like, there is but too sufficient reason to conclude that the man has not yet believed. He *says* that he believes; but that is not believing. He speaks much about believing; but that is not believing. He vaunts loudly of his assurance, and scorns every one that will not use his language; but this is not believing. He professes great zeal for the freeness and simplicity of the gospel; but that is not believing. He that has really believed will be too much in earnest, too much engrossed with the object before him, to be always telling others of his faith and his assurance, and his zeal for a free gospel.

5. *A believing man will be a humble man.* He will think little and speak little about himself. True faith carries us above this pride and self-esteem and vainglory. If he be a minister, he will shrink from proclaiming himself, and his own feelings, and his own doings; and if God has given him success, he will be the last to speak of it. Or if he be not a minister, he will still refrain from giving prominence to self in any of his proceedings. His great object will be to hide *self*; and not only to forget it himself, but to make others forget it too. The man that is still proud, boastful, vainglorious, self-confident, has good reason to suppose that he has never yet believed.

6. *A believing man will be always jealous of himself.* He will walk continually with a most watchful eye upon himself, upon the state of his heart, the state of his life, his growth in grace, his conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus. Knowing that *self-jealousy* is quite consistent with simple faith and entire peace with God, he is not afraid to cherish it. He is far more jealous of himself than others,—far more given to sit in judgment on himself than on others; though holding fast the blessed truth of a saint's assurance, he is not afraid to search himself most thoroughly, saying, like Paul, "lest by any means I should run or had run in vain." And though grasping most firmly, as amongst the surest and most fundamental doctrines of the Bible, the truths of God's eternal election and predestination unto life, as also the truth of the saint's perseverance unto the end,

he does not hesitate to say with the same Apostle “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (Cor. ix. 2.)

Thus, then, we are to walk “as becometh saints.” Nothing in the gospel can, save by man’s perversion, in the very least encourage inconsistency or unholy walking. Christ is not the minister of sin. The grace of God cannot lead to licentiousness or unrighteousness.

Nay, the more fully and simply we realize the glad tidings, the more we shall be constrained to a course in conformity with him who hath called to us. We shall feel as if *committed* to a holy life. Just in proportion as we reject marks and evidences from the *grounds* of our peace, in that proportion we shall seek to *give evidence* that we have believed, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness.

Our light must shine. It must diffuse itself around, making men to feel that we are children of the most High God. In word, in look, in life, in daily deportment, our character as men redeemed by blood and dwelt in by the Spirit, must be made apparent. All things that are lovely and of good report must be seen in us; so shall it be known “whose we are and whom we serve.”

When first we are brought to know the Lord, this light is kindled,—kindled by being brought into contact with him who is the light of the world. Having been thus kindled it must *shine*. The light may be but feeble,—it may be but little more than a spark, still it must shine. The new life is the shining. The new feelings,—the new desires,—the new tempers,—the new actings,—the new words,—the new walk and conversation,—these are the beams of light which should stream out from us upon a dark world. It is by exhibiting what is new, and heavenly, and spiritual, that we let our light shine. It is by letting the world see what a contrast we are to our former selves, that we shew them that with us “the darkness is past.”

Hence the necessity for a holy life. Even, apart from the fact that *holiness is the real health of the soul*,—and apart from the fact that as our holiness deepens and completes itself, so will our peace overflow,—it is needful that we should be holy in order that God may be glorified in the midst of a world that dishonours him, and that the world may learn from us the difference between itself and God, the difference between light and darkness.

Still let us never lose sight of this vital truth that holiness is the *health* of the soul. The *beginning* of this holiness or health is no doubt *pardon*, for with pardon and reconciliation the healing of the soul begins; but still we must

remember that pardon is not *health*. It is, if one may speak thus, the removing of the soul out of the unhealthy atmosphere with which it is enveloped and poisoned,—but it is not the same thing as actual health. When abiding under the wrath of God as we do while in unbelief, we cannot have *health*. An atmosphere pervaded with God's wrath is not one in which a soul can have health. But the taking us out of that atmosphere is not the healing. It is the cause and commencement of the cure; but the cure must, of course, consist of a change in the soul itself,—such a change as shall, either more or less, gradually bring it back to that state of perfect health or holiness in which it was ere sin entered, and to which it is God's purpose that it should be restored.

And then, if this be the case, it is evident that in proportion to our holiness will be the abundance of our peace. Not that we are to draw our peace from our holiness. That cannot be. Personal holiness can never be the foundation of our peace. But still it may be perfectly true that as our holiness increases our peace will deepen and grow more intense. The light of the body does not come *from* the eye, though it comes through the eye. It comes from the sun. The eye merely admits it. But if the eye be dim there will be less light admitted; and just as the eye becomes clearer more light will be let in. Yet still it is true that the light does not come from the eye but from the sun. So with holiness. In proportion as the soul becomes holy, in that proportion does it *admit* new peace, and in that proportion is it in a fitter condition for enjoying peace. A healthy body enjoys the beauties of the bright scenes of earth, more than a pained or sickly one, and just as it is healthy, so has it a capacity for the enjoyment of these things. Even so with the soul and holiness. While we utterly disclaim the Christ-dishonouring thought, that our holiness is the foundation of our peace, or forms any qualification on account of which peace is conferred upon us, it is yet true that just as we become holier men, we shall be the more abundantly filled with the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

Whether, then, we consult our own interests or those of others, we must *advance* in holiness. If we would have a deeper peace, we must be holier men. If we would shed brighter light upon a dark world to attract them and win them out of their darkness, we must be holier men. If we would glorify God each day, we must be getting holier each day.



## LOOKING TO THE CROSS.

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IT is a commonly received opinion that the safest way to apply Christ to our souls for justification, peace, and assurance, is by a discovery of *inherent qualities* wrought in us. Accordingly, the general method of answering this important question, *how may I know my part in Christ*, is by laying down certain marks and characters of the children of God as the proper evidences whereby it may certainly be discovered.

Though I am far from thinking that any who perceive the love of God to their souls are destitute of those marks and characters generally laid down, yet to make use of them for this purpose I apprehend to be quite wrong, for the following reasons.\*

I. Because sinners have in the gospel a sufficient ground of warrant to come to Christ, to receive him, to believe on him as their Saviour, without the least mark or evidence of any righteousness or goodness in themselves.†

If this were truly believed, it would make way for all that shall follow.

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\* A saint will doubtless have the “mark and character” of a saint Nor does the author say anything inconsistent with this. He objects to the wrong use of marks, but he does not deny their existence. He would not have us build our peace upon them, but he would have us to manifest them. “Satan,” writes an old minister, “by making me pore excessively on evidences of grace, and by occupying me in laying continually the foundation, and trying it as thinking it never sure enough, hath thereby kept me from progress in grace. . . making faith or any work in us, the foundation of my comfort, rather than the free, full, and immutable promise and good-will of God in Christ, kept me unsettled and wavering.”

† “No person is bound or allowed to defer believing, one single moment, because he finds himself in a bad situation, because the Spirit breathes not on him, or he finds not actual influence from heaven communicated to him at that season, rendering him capable or meet for it.”—*Gillespie's first Letter to Edwards* “All are bound to believe the divine testimony and to trust in Christ; and the want of spiritual light or sight does not loose from the obligation.”—*Gillespie's second Letter to do*. “No darkness, no blindness, no carnality or stupidity excuses him a moment from having as strong and lively faith and love as ever was exercised by the apostle Paul.”—*Edwards' second Letter to Gillespie*.

But whether it is believed or not it is a truth; for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John iii. 16.) By *giving*, here I understand a giving him in the word of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature, that so sinners, *as sinners*, may warrantably receive or believe in him as their Saviour. For the giving here cannot be a giving *in possession*, which is peculiar only to them that believe. But it must be such a giving as warrants a man to believe or receive the gift; such a giving, that whosoever believeth (or receiveth the gift,) shall not perish but have everlasting life.\*

It is the giving alone that makes Christ the immediate object of our faith, and the believing of him as our Saviour no presumption; which otherwise it would be, for a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. (John. iii. 27.) Our Saviour, alluding to the manna, says to a promiscuous multitude, “My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.” (John. vi. 32.) Where you may observe that as the simple raining of the manna about their camps is called a *giving* of it (ver. 31,) before it was tasted or fed upon; so Christ being declared in the gospel as the Saviour of sinners, is called a giving of him before he is or can be received or believed on. And the record of the gospel which we make God a liar in not believing, is that he “hath given us eternal life,” and this life is in his Son: that unto us a child is born, that unto us a Son is given. (1 John v. 9, 10, 11; Isaiah ix. 6.)†

This is the true report of the gospel; and the gospel strictly and properly taken, consists only in such reports, being called therefore a word of grace, a word of promise, a word of faith, a word of life and salvation; and the only obedience we can give the gospel, is to believe it for ourselves in particular, whereby it becomes the power of God unto our salvation, (Rom. i. 16,) and this gospel is to be preached to every

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\* “By the giving of Christ here, we understand not only his eternal destination by the Father, but a giving of him in the word unto all, to be received and believed in... it is such a giving, granting, or offering as warrants a man to believe or receive the gift”—*Answer to Query X. by the “Marrow” Divines.*

† “Of his giving of Christ to mankind lost, we read also, (1 John. v. 11,) This giving is not, we conceive, a giving in possession, but a giving by way of grant, whereupon one may warrantably take possession; and the party *to whom*, is not the election only, but lost mankind, for the record of God here must be such a thing as warrants all to believe on the Son of God.”—*Answer to Query X. by the “Marrow” Divines.*

creature.

Farther, Christ is not only given that he may be received; but He is given *freely*, that he may be received *freely*, without money and without price; (Is. lv. 1.) whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*. (Rev. xxii. 17.) In the fifth chapter of Romans Christ and his righteousness is called *a gift*, and a *free gift*, no less than six times.

Our Saviour has also declared that he that believeth this gospel, that Christ is given freely to him, shall be saved and shall never be ashamed; but that he who believes it not shall be damned. He declares that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; that the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; that he came to seek and to save that which is lost; that he will in no wise cast out him that cometh to him; that this is his commandment, that we should believe on his name; and the apostle Paul proves that a man is justified without the deeds of the law, by the hearing of faith, believing op him who justifies the ungodly.

And let us sum this together. Christ is a FREE GIFT; to the world, to sinners, to unbelievers, and this gospel is to be preached to every creature. God commands, invites, exhorts us to receive and believe in him for ourselves in particular, promising us salvation, and assuring us that we shall not be disappointed. It is sinners that he calls upon [see [Note A](#)]; it is the ungodly that he justifies. Surely then sinners have a sufficient revealed warrant for believing in Christ as their Saviour without the least mark or evidence of any righteousness or goodness in themselves.\*

II. Faith *alone* is sufficient to justify the conscience, to bring true

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\* “Is the declaration of the Divine forgiveness through the gospel work of Christ, only for humble, penitent, and well-disposed sinners? Then this saps the foundation of my hopes, cuts the sinews of holiness, and puts me on the perplexing inquiry whether I can see something in my heart and character that raises me nearer to God than my fellow-sinners, before I can find any good news for my guilty soul in the New Testament. What are all the sorrows, penitence, serious endeavours, and mortifying humiliation of a man prior to his being set at liberty by the gospel, but an attempt to make some advances towards his offended God by his own doings, in order to obtain forgiveness and a title to heaven? Is he not acting on this principle, that the work of Christ is not sufficient in itself,—known and believed,—to ease his conscience, give him hope, and introduce him to the divine favour.” —*Old Letter*.

peace, and full assurance. Nay, I may say farther, it is not only sufficient, but is the appointed method of the Lord for obtaining these things in truth and reality, so that whoever profess to have these things any other way than in a way of believing, deceive themselves.

Accordingly, the gospel is glad tidings of free-grace or favour to be believed, or credited, as appears from Rom. i. 16. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,” and Isaiah liii. 1. “who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the- Lord revealed;” and it is observable, that the apostle Paul quotes this place to prove that the Jews had not all obeyed the gospel, plainly intimating that the obedience of the gospel consists *only* in believing the tidings; which tidings are thereby made the means of conveying the privileges into the possession of every one that so believeth, without waiting for any signs, marks, or evidences, to give them a better title or possession.\*

But that this may appear still plainer, I shall consider it more particularly; and first,

That faith alone, without the concurrence of any mark, sign, or evidence, is God’s appointed method of justifying the conscience [see [Note B](#)]; and to be acquainted with this, is a most weighty and principal matter, for what is more the cause of all our distress, misery, and enmity against God, than the want of the joyful knowledge of a true reconciliation with God, and a conscience cleansed from all guilt of sin. I apprehend that justification properly terminates in the conscience here,

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\* “Is not this the case in the gospel? What does Jesus say in it? “Come thou poor, miserable sinner, weary, heavy laden, groaning under thy burden of conscious guilt—groaning that thou dost not groan more! I have already, on the cross, suffered the full punishment of sin; I have satisfied the full demands of my Father’s justice; I have made satisfaction for every sinner that desires to be saved; I have made provision for making you sensible of sin, and contrite for it, as well as an atonement for its guilt. Come to me even for *that*; and in coming to me, and trusting in my salvation, you will obtain sorrow, repentance, humility, which, otherwise, you will seek for in vain. I died for you as a rebelling enemy—not as a contrite penitent. Come, then, to me; cast yourself upon me; trust in me; and there is nothing which thou now thinkest necessary, *before* coming, which thou shalt obtain, yea, and tenfold more, *after*, and *in* coming.”—“Ho! every one that *thirsteth*, come ye to the waters.”—“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If *any* man *thirst*, let him come unto me and drink.” (John vii. 37.) “Let him that is *athirst* come, and *whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely.” (Rev. xxii. 17.) Are you not athirst; it matters not for what, if you are unhappy from an unsatisfied thirst? Yes, you are.”—*Letter of Mr M’Donald, Calcutta.*

and that that abstracted way which some have of considering it, as it exists in the mind of God, without being extended to, or perfected in our consciences, is but, though ever so true in itself, a mere speculation to us; for secret things belong to God alone, but *to us* the things that are revealed. Deut. xxix. 29.

I mention this, because that very many, instead of seeking (by faith in the blood of Jesus) justification in the court wherein they are condemned, I mean the court of conscience, content themselves with speculations of God's eternal thoughts of his people, justifying them from eternity, &c., endeavouring to pacify their own consciences, and find themselves of the number of the justified, by marks and evidences, drawn from what they find inherent in themselves, instead of the alone perfect righteousness of our Saviour, through faith. And some again are even so weak, as to imagine, that God, in some period of time, changeth his thoughts concerning them, justifying them in his own mind, commonly called the court of heaven, and they remaining still ignorant of the matter.

These things are mere speculations to us, for where is it that God's mind concerning us is to be known, but in his revealed will? where is it I find myself guilty, and stand in need of righteousness, but in the court of conscience,\* and where else is it that I am to be actually and in time justified?

The consideration of justification, according to scripture light, I take to be this, that God our Saviour undertook his office on our behalf, before the foundation of the world; that he has actually executed this office by his sufferings and obedience to all the demands of the law for us, which is called his righteousness, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of faith, &c., that God justifies us when he invests us with this righteousness, that is, puts us in possession of it by faith, which righteousness so possessed, is the matter that justifies the conscience that but for the moment before was accused, guilty and condemned. Hence in scripture sometimes God is said to justify us, because he gives and imputes this righteousness to us, and declares us righteous for this righteousness sake. Sometimes we are said to be justified by Christ,

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\* Conscience might justly be defined to be the soul's apprehension of itself, and its actions, as in the presence of God, and a subject of his law.

because he wrought out this righteousness for us; sometimes by the free gift, and by grace; because we become possessors of this righteousness by receiving it as a free gift and favour; and most frequently we are said to be justified by faith only without the deeds of the law, because by faith only we receive this righteousness as ours by, the free gift of God, and answer the demands of God's law therewith:—This righteousness is sometimes called the righteousness of God, and sometimes righteousness of faith, not because there are two justifications, or two righteousnesses, but from the reasons above-mentioned; and this way of speaking is not peculiar to the scripture, but is also common amongst men; for a man's innocency is said to justify him, the witnesses are said to justify him, and the judge is said to justify him, though they all concur but to one and the same justification. And that faith is quite *alone* in this matter, appears from God's method of putting the soul in actual possession of those things which any way concur to justify the conscience; for though God from eternity designed these things for us, and though they are actually prepared and brought to an existence without us, yet still they are unprofitable to us, until we are actually possessed of them. Now God's method of putting us in possession of these things, is described in Scripture to be by way of *gift*, (Rom. v. 16, &c.,) freely, without money, and without price, that all boasting may be excluded; and on our part these things are said to be *received*; we are said to receive Christ himself, (John i. 12,) unto as many as *received* him, &c., (Col. ii. 6,) as ye have *received Christ*, &c., we are also said to *receive* the *atonement* that is made by the blood of Christ, (Rom. iii. 1,) the *forgiveness* of sins, (Acts xxvi. 18,) the *gift* of *righteousness*, (Rom. v. 17,) the, (Acts ii. 41,) the *promise*. (Heb. ix. 15.)

Now this *receiving*, is in Scripture ascribed to *faith alone*, (John i. 12; Col. ii. 6; Rom. v. 11, &c.) and indeed how can it be otherwise, in the nature of things, for we cannot receive by desire, love, or any other disposition of mind, than believing; it being justly described, (Heb. xi. 1,) to be the *substance* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things *not seen*. How can any person receive and possess an estate, but by believing that by virtue of the deeds and writings, that he has in possession, that the estate belongs to him, and so living upon it, using it as his own. Thus he that believeth, may be said to possess Christ as really, truly, and properly, as any man ever possessed an estate, and all by virtue of

crediting the writings of scripture, containing the last dying will and testament of Jesus Christ, full of large legacies to the chief of sinners.\*

To confirm this matter yet more fully, I would consider a few more scriptures, and first. (Rom. iii. 28.) “Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, *without* the deeds of the law.” If any would say, that the justification here mentioned, does not include the conscience, but leaves the matter to be made manifest there by marks, and evidences: I answer,

1. That there is no other justification made known to us *time*, than that which is in the conscience, for all our justification *in time* is by faith.

2. Our justification must be where we are condemned, now we are not condemned *merely* in the secret mind of God but also in our own consciences, therefore our justification must be also in our own consciences.†

Hence it appears plain, that since it is by faith alone, we receive and become possessors of the free promise of God, the *word* of free justification, the *gift* of righteousness, the forgiveness of sins, the *atonement* made by the *blood of Christ*, and Christ himself, that *faith alone*, without the concurrence of mark or evidence, is not only *sufficient*, but is also God’s *appointed* method of justifying the conscience.

3. Faith justifies only as it receives and applies the righteousness of Christ for justification; now where doth faith apply this righteousness? certainly not to the mind of God, but to our own minds and consciences;

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\* “God has made this belief the medium of connection with the glorious freedom he announces. Now the belief of a thing duly attested is an act of the mind, which adds no moral merit to its possessor. Whatever there may be of moral feeling or bias influencing the mind when belief or unbelief acts, there is nothing moral in the *act* of believing itself more than in the act of vision... God by throwing our salvation on the issue of faith, proposes no moral condition, so that in acceding to it we might have whereof to glory; while by that very simple act of believing, owing to the glorious nature of the objects which it brings in contact with the mind, he ensures moral consequences of immense value.”— *Sermons on the Method of Salvation. By the Rev. D. Fraser, Kirkhill.* P. 60—62.

† Our formal or declarative justification from God is not to be till the judgment.. Then we are openly acquitted. But faith, anticipating that judgment, betakes itself to the righteousness of Christ and takes refuge in the grace of God. Thus it assures the soul of final acquittal hereafter, and so pacifies the conscience here by warranting it to reckon confidently on the declarative sentence in its favour at the seat of judgment.

and therefore justification by faith must be justification in conscience, because faith has no other office in this matter, than to justify the conscience by the righteousness of Christ; and he whose faith extends not unto the justification of his conscience, cannot in any sense be said to be justified by faith, but is as yet under the condemnation of the law.

4. Faith is put in opposition to the deeds of the law, as procuring that justification which men seek in vain by such deeds. Now the justification which men seek by the deeds of the law, is in the conscience, they seek to have a conscience void of offence towards God, &c., and the justification obtained by faith is to be in the conscience, or there is not a true opposition. The apostle's conclusion being of this nature, that the same justification which men vainly seek in whole or in part by their works or qualifications (whether called evidences, or any other name) is to be obtained by believing, without the deeds of the law, which justification, it is plain must be in the conscience.

Another text proving this, is, (Gal. ii. 26.) Knowing that a man *not justified* by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, *even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified:* and (Acts xv. 9.) God is said to purify the *Gentiles' hearts by faith;* and in (1. Pet. 22.) they are said to have purified their souls *in obeying the truth;* which *purifying* is by the *application of the blood of Jesus to the conscience,* as expressed, (Heb. x. 22.) *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, &c.*

Faith *alone* is not only the appointed means of justifying the conscience, but also of giving all true peace and joy. This will be easily allowed where the former is allowed, for it is certain, that that which justifies the conscience, must procure true peace and joy; according to the apostle, (Rom. v. 1.) therefore being *justified by faith,* we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ, and (Rom. xv. 13.) the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing.*

Faith is also the appointed means of obtaining a *full assurance,* (Heb. x. 22.) Let us draw near—in *full assurance* of faith, and, (Col. ii. 2.) that you may be comforted to all the riches of *full assurance* of understanding; compare ver. 5.



Now, if (as has been already fully proved,) the appointed means for the real possession of Christ, justification in conscience, true peace with God, and full assurance is faith alone; then seeking these things either in whole, or in part, by evidences drawn from any righteousness in us, must be a false method, hurtful to souls, and contrary to the spirit, and word of God.

III. A third reason against evidences in this respect, is, that they destroy the need or use of faith, and teach the soul to apply the mercy of God in Christ, by a way of natural reasoning.

It is certain, that many things belong to faith, that do not belong to reason, reason comprehends nothing but in a way of natural visible demonstration; but the object and cause of faith is the record of God, and demonstration of the Spirit: and if we seek these things that are taught by the Spirit, and believed upon the record of God, by way of natural reasoning, the Spirit, faith, and the promise are made void.

And that it is so in this case; of applying or appropriating the mercy of God in Christ upon evidences, will appear plainly, if we consider, that the evidences made use of, must be such as we apprehend are peculiar to the favourites of God; and such as hypocrites, or those that any way deceive themselves, are not possessed of; or else they will not serve for evidences; and if I apprehend I have such evidences as these, what use has faith in the matter? Natural reason can conclude from such premises, that I am a favourite of God, and entitled to all the privileges of such a one: and those that are serious among *Arians*, *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, have what peace they possess by such conclusions.

IV. A fourth reason against evidences in this respect, is, that there is no evidence can be drawn from any righteousness inherent in us, but what is our own righteousness, the righteousness of the law, the righteousness which *Paul* counted loss and dung, and *Isaiah* filthy rags; and that the establishing them is the establishing our *own* righteousness, and contrary to the submitting to the righteousness of God *by faith*.

I suppose it is easily granted, that what we do in our own strength is our own righteousness, I shall therefore consider what we do by the

influence of God's Spirit.

Faith itself, considered as an act, duty, or qualification, is properly our own, and so called in scripture, (Rom. 1. 8,) *your* faith is spoken of; (Mat. ix. 2,) Jesus seeing *their* faith; (ver. 22,) *Thy* faith has made thee whole, for though God is the efficient or author, yet the denomination is from the subject. God was the author of *Adam's* holiness, in the state of innocency, notwithstanding that was Adam's righteousness, and not God's. So also love and every other qualification, is by the scripture accounted ours, (2. Cor. viii. 8.) "To prove the sincerity of *your* love." (Phil. i. 6.) "After I had heard of *your* faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the Saints;" (Isa. xiv. 8.) "from me is *thy* fruit found."

The scriptures consider those that are justified by the righteousness of Christ, to be so justified because they are one with him, not merely by a legal union, as a surety and debtor amongst men, but by a mystical union, whereby they are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, (Eph. v. 30.) They are the body of Christ, (1. Cor. xii. 13.) and Christ is also their body, or their flesh and blood, (Heb. ii. 14.) for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, (Isa. ix. 6; Luke ii. 11,) and those that believe the report receive Christ himself, (John i. 12,) and he that is *thus* joined to the Lord is also one spirit with him, (1. Cor. vi. 17.)

If we take this union along with us, and consider Christ, and those that believe on him, as one mystical person, or body, head, and members, it will afford us much true scriptural light, both with respect to justification and sanctification. For in this view of things we may see that the sins of believers became properly Christ's, were laid on him, and were borne by him in his own body on the tree (not because he committed them, but) because they are the sins of the mystical body, and he having *put them away* by the sacrifice of himself, God is now just in not imputing them; the righteousness of Christ also is properly ours, and imputed to us, (not because we wrought it out, but) because it is the righteousness of the mystical body. So we are with Christ, (Gal. ii. 20,) we are *dead* with him, (Rom. vi. 8,) we are also *risen* with him, (Eph. ii. 6; Col. iii. 1,) and we *sit together* in heavenly places in Christ, (Eph. ii. 6,) and so are new created *in him*, (Eph. ii. 10.)

And here I cannot go on without dwelling a little upon the perfection we have in Christ's righteousness according to scripture light; and first

(Rom. v. 19.) For as by the disobedience of one many were *made* sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be *made* righteous. Observe hence, that we are *made righteous*, and that not by any infused habits or qualities, but by the obedience of one, even Jesus Christ. Again, (Eph. v. 25, 26, 27,) “husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it (with his own blood, Heb. xiii. 12,) and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word, that he might *make it unto himself* a glorious Church, not having *spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*, but that it should be *holy and without blame*,” not by virtue of any of our imperfect habits or qualities, but by virtue of his perfect and everlasting righteousness. Again, (Col. i. 21, 22,) and you which were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you *holy unblameable, and unreproueable* in his sight. And, (2. Cor. v. 21,) God hath *made* him to be *sin* for us, who knew no sin, that we might be *made the righteousness of God in him*. And indeed how could they be justified if it were not so? A just judge amongst men cannot justify that man with whom fault is found, and shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

Now if the one righteousness of Jesus Christ, makes us righteous, holy, glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, holy and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight, what other inherent or imparted righteousness can make any addition to this one imparted and imputed righteousness. I acknowledge *faith* is (in this life) necessary to receive and possess this righteousness, and thereby to perfect our consciences; and *hope* to receive all good things on account of this righteousness, and *love* is the fruit of this righteousness so possessed. But we stand righteous and complete before God in no other completeness than that one everlasting righteousness of Jesus Christ; and therefore those that think justification does not make us so complete before God, but that some other righteousness must be added, do not understand justification according to scripture light.

The complete and perfect righteousness of Christ is not only in this manner made ours, but the Spirit of Christ is also given unto us to bear witness of this righteousness, and perfect our conscience thereby; and as the natural spirit, or soul, is the life of the natural body, so the Spirit of Christ is thus the life of the mystical body, and brings forth in them the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c. (Gal. v. 22,) and thus the Lord being believed

in, as *our* righteousness, becomes our strength, and we become trees of righteousness, bearing fruit to the glory of our heavenly father.

I doubt not but this (though so plainly scriptural) will appear hard to be understood by some who have been accustomed to consider sanctification in a different light, namely, as something different from the Spirit of Christ, infused into us by the spirit, and abiding in us as a spiritual living principle; but this notion has no foundation in scripture, but, on the contrary, the Spirit itself is described to be our *only* scriptural principle; for we believe by the Spirit itself, love is the fruit of the Spirit through believing, faith works by love, and the difference betwixt Christian obedience and other obedience, consists in one's being the fruit of the Spirit through believing, and the other being the fruit of the law; so that it is plain, if by inherent sanctification we mean a principle of spiritual life, Christ himself is that life and our sanctification.

The Spirit of truth, who is sent to dwell in us, and abide with us for ever, beareth witness to our spirits of Christ, that our hearts, minds, or consciences may be purified or made holy in his obedience, and the sprinkling of his blood.\* The Spirit beareth witness *in* and *by* the word, our spirits receive the witness *by believing* that word; whereby our conscience becomes clean, and purged from dead works to serve the living God: we also hereby become *dead* to the law, by the body of Christ, that we *may live* to God; that being *married* to Christ, we *may* bring forth fruit unto God; which fruit is not to be made the object of reflection and reasoning to know our state, but they serve to glorify God in the world, and evidence our faith to others, or any other use but that which is the property of *faith alone*.

The apostle *Paul* makes a direct opposition, without any medium, between Christ's righteousness, received by faith, and every other righteousness whatever, including them under the name of our *own* righteousness, which is of the law. (Phil. iii. 8, 9.) "Not having my *own* righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is through

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\* "You want comfort and you look to your faith for it. If faith could speak it would say, I have none to give you: look unto Jesus, it is all in him. Indeed my friend it is. The Holy Ghost the Comforter will not glorify your faith. He will not give it the honour of comforting you. He takes nothing to comfort with but the things of Christ, and his things, not as used by you, but as given from him. This lesson I think he is teaching you. He is bringing you off from looking legally at your faith. He intends you should not regard how you believe, but to settle you in believing... The Spirit of Jesus has been teaching me to draw my comforts not from how well I believe, but from Jesus in whom I believe."—*Romaine*.—*Letter* 104.

the faith of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith:" and by the foregoing verse, it will appear, that this was the righteousness he counted loss and dung; yea, doubtless, and I account all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found *in him*, not having on my *own* righteousness, which is of the law, &c. The apostle plainly counted for loss and dung every other knowledge than the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord by *faith*, and every other righteousness than the righteousness of Christ.

The apostle wrote these things to them, that they to whom he wrote might be followers of him in this matter. (Ver. 17.) Now the apostle could not be apprehensive, that they would be apt to rely upon any other *inherent* righteousness than that which they possessed as Christians, for every man is apt to value himself upon the righteousness he has, (Rom. x. 3,) the pharisees in theirs, and the Christians to whom he wrote in theirs.

The prophet Isaiah, (chap. lxiv. 6,) in the same respect terms all our righteousness *filthy rags*, which from what has been said before, I suppose I need not be at any pains to prove. We may depend upon it, the prophet by the word *righteousness* meant the best things they had, and not merely their wickedness and hypocrisy.

And surely the establishing this righteousness of our own, by way of evidence to warrant our appropriation of Christ, or any means of justifying the conscience, &c. is contrary to the submitting to the righteousness of God by faith, for, 1. It hinders us from coming as *poor sinners*, as without money, and without price; as those that are ungodly, and have nothing to pay, in which way alone we are capable of receiving a free gift, such as the righteousness of Christ is, for while the mind is puffed up with a pharisaical, *God I thank thee I am, not as other men*, &c., the mind is not capable of stooping so low as a *sinner's foundation*, which is the only one; for Christ himself must be the first foundation-stone in a *sinner's* heart, and not his own righteousness, and Christ upon that; which is unavoidably the case, when we seek to appropriate Christ unto ourselves from evidences of any thing inherent in us.

2. It is contrary to the submission to God's righteousness, for it takes away that reliance and dependance which should be on Christ, and places it on our own righteousness; this is plain from the experience of all that are in

that false way, for when they are in distress and bondage, (as is most frequent with them), it is not because they apprehend any defect in Christ's righteousness, but because they question their own righteousness, which they imagine entitles them to the appropriation of Christ's, and so it is their own righteousness that supports or distresses them, their dependance upon Christ being merely distant and notional.

3. It is *contrary*, because it takes away that very office which is peculiar to the righteousness of Christ apprehended *by faith*. I mean justification in conscience, peace, joy, and full assurance; as I have already proved.

V. The fifth reason against evidences in this respect, is, that they bring false peace, they cry *peace, peace*, when there is no *peace*. And this will appear, if we consider, first, that they do not bring peace from the true foundation, the righteousness of Christ, and free gift of God, but from the false unsettled foundation of our own righteousness, and therefore the peace itself is *bad, unsettled, unstable* as water, and like a wave of the sea; this cannot be that *peace* of God which passeth all understanding, nor that *rest* which arises from *ceasing* from our *own works*. Indeed if the peace arising from evidences was a true peace, and from a true foundation, the peace itself would be more constant. *A building upon a rock is not so easily shaken.*

The evidences themselves must necessarily be false, for all true evidences are the fruits of the spirit through believing (even such believing as has been before described, as apprehends Christ, and takes him into possession,) and herein lies a difference between Christian obedience, and common morality. For all peace and joy is not the fruit of the Spirit, but only that which flows from believing, (Rom. xv. 13,) from being *justified by faith*, (Rom. v. 1,) every esteem of Christ is not a fruit of the Spirit, but only that which arises from our believing knowledge of him. (1 Pet. ii. 7.) All love is not a fruit of the spirit, but only that which arises from a heart purified, (by faith,) a good conscience, (made so by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ,) and faith unfeigned, (1 Tim. i. 5,) and it is not all love, &c., even of a believer himself, that is right, but only that which is the immediate effect of his believing on Christ as his Saviour; so that where faith is not present, the fruits of faith cannot be present, and where Christ is not present, faith cannot be present; this brings to my mind what Luther says in his commentary on the Galatians, chap. iii. ver. 28, "Popish school-divines (says he) do dream, that

faith is a certain quality cleaving in the heart, without Christ.” “This is a devilish error, (says Luther,) but Christ should he so set forth, that thou shouldst see nothing besides him, and shouldst think that nothing can be more near unto thee, or more present within thine heart than he is, for he sitteth not idly in heaven, but is present in us. (Gal. ii. 20.) I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth *in* me; and here, likewise, you have put on Christ. *Faith* therefore is *a certain stedfast beholding*, which looketh upon nothing else but Christ the conqueror of sin and death, and the giver of righteousness and eternal life; this is the cause that Paul nameth Jesus Christ so often in his epistles, almost in every verse; but he setteth him forth by the word, for otherwise he cannot be comprehended but by the word. This was lively and notably set forth by the brazen serpent, for Moses commanded them that were stung, to do nothing else but stedfastly behold the brazen serpent; they that did so were healed only by that stedfast beholding and looking upon the serpent.”

Faith, therefore, (which is the first apparent fruit of the Spirit, and the means by which all other fruits appear,) being nothing else but *a stedfast beholding of Christ*, as our Saviour, a receiving and possessing him, (and not a certain quality cleaving to the heart without Christ,) then, consequently, all evidences short of or previous to knowing Christ by faith alone, are false evidences, and speak a false peace.\*

It may be here objected, that the Spirit of the Lord is certainly at work with many souls for years, who cannot say that Christ is theirs.

I answer, it is true, that the Spirit is always at work with awakened souls, more or less before they believe; nevertheless we act not by that Spirit till we receive Christ, for till we submit to, and receive his righteousness by faith, we are continually going about to establish our *own*, there being no medium; and till such a submission, the conviction and working of the Spirit from time to time, is more like the angel’s meeting Balaam with a drawn sword to stop and turn him back, than two walking together as those that are agreed. And therefore the voice of the gospel is said to be a voice behind us, saying, *this is the way, walk in it*, implying, that we have our backs upon

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\* “You keep looking at your act of believing. What is this for? Why, certainly, that you may be satisfied with your faith; and being satisfied with it, what then? No doubt, you will rest in it and upon it, satisfied now that Christ is yours because you are satisfied with your faith. This is making a Jesus of it, and is in effect taking the crown of crowns from his head, and placing it upon the head of your faith.”—*Romaine. Letter 104.*

the *true way*, (though we are ever so *sincere* and *zealous*,) till the Spirit of the Lord turn us. It is said also, that the Father must draw us to Christ, plainly shewing our natural unwillingness and resistance of the Spirit, to submit to this way of salvation. So that in this sense Luther's doctrine is very true, namely, that "the fears by which sinners are terrified, either *internally by God*, or externally by preachers, are sins, until they are overcome by faith."<sup>\*</sup>

VI. The sixth reason against such evidences, is, that they have a tendency to make a man think he is rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing, when at the same time he is poor, miserable, blind, and naked. (Rev. iii. 17.) For when a man is employed about a serious examination of himself, according to such evidences he must be supposed to be in a more inwardly composed and retired frame of mind, than at other times when employed in the world, and therefore liable to think himself possessed of those things which he finds not when it comes to action and trial. Thus many while under a serious employment of reading, hearing, meditation, &c., [see [Note C](#)] think they can answer to such and such marks and signs, and therefore conclude themselves to be in a very safe condition. But when the persons possessed of this *imaginary strength* come forth to exercise it against the world, the flesh, and the devil, it proves ineffectual; and they being disappointed in the hopes they had of themselves, become distressed, suspecting (as well they may) their former experience, until they get such another opportunity of gathering up their marks and signs again; till at last, by frequent practices of this kind they habituate themselves to a false peace, concluding from the general bent of their minds, that all is well, though they are ignorant of living in the righteousness of Christ, and by the power of his Spirit, which works effectually in them that believe; not barely in their private retirements, but in their employments, shops, and families, which works are the effects and fruits of the knowledge of our perfection in Christ our Saviour, by *faith alone*, and not causes of it, by way of evidence and reasoning.

I would recommend to the consideration of those that build upon evidences short of Christ himself, the experience of the apostle Paul, and others, while unconverted Pharisees. He declares of himself, that touching

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\* See Hist. Coun. of Trent, p. 199.



the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless, (Phil. iii. 6,) he walked blamelessly in all those things he apprehended the Lord required of him, neither was he wanting in sincerity and zeal, for he declares, (Acts xxii. 23,) that he was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, and (Rom. x. 3,) he bare the Jews record, that they had *a zeal of God*. Neither were the Pharisees a people that sought to keep the law in their own strength, for they acknowledged that all that was good in them was from God, as appears by the pharisee's prayer; *God I thank thee that I am not as other men, &c.*, here was also an acknowledgment of distinguishing favour; and the justification they sought by the deeds of the law, was that in the conscience, called by some the manifestation of our justification; for nobody can imagine they sought a justification from eternity, by their works in time, nor that they sought it by way of strict merit.

The acknowledgment of their own inability to perform what is good, and that what they did was by strength from the Lord, sincerity, and zeal, in what they did, and universal blameless obedience, according to all they apprehended the Lord required of them, and only sought thereby as by evidences the knowledge or manifestation of a gracious reconciliation with God, and all in unconverted persecutors and blind pharisees. It may be asked, where did their mistake lie, if they went so far? I answer, it lay here, they being ignorant of God's righteousness (freely given) went about to establish their own righteousness, and so submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God.\*

VII. Seventhly, such as make use of evidences in this respect, place their soul's dependance upon that which brings no glory to God, nor fruit towards man, for they place it in their own righteousness, which is contrary to a submission to God's righteousness, and which alone brings God his glory, making him just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. And they bring no fruit towards man, because they depend on an imaginary strength,

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\* "The preaching of sanctification before justification, for the evidencing of justification is that which keepeth many poor creatures in bondage for many years, and ruins many souls. How many are gone to hell who thought they were going to heaven, deceiving themselves with false assurances, and fetching their comforts from the sight of their own works and not from the grace of God in Christ by a pure act of believing? If this were the right path to justification, we should not be justified in believing, but in loving and working."—*Old Writer*.

that proves insufficient when put to the trial, (as has been already proved,) and it is observable, that such people place religion mostly in that which is unprofitable to others; for not being delivered from a selfish spirit by the free righteousness of Jesus Christ, their own safety is uncertain to them, and therefore self-preservation is their greatest care.

Thus I have given some of those sentiments that occurred against marks and evidences in this respect, and would again observe, that *I do not mean to deny or exclude such true and constant effects of an assured faith in the promise, as witness to sense and reason, in a proper subserviency, that we are a people that do not deceive ourselves, that our assurance by faith is no delusion;* according to the former similitude.\* A gentleman is so conscious to himself, that by virtue of the deeds and writings, he is possessor of such an estate, that he cannot be more assured, be not having the least doubt. Notwithstanding the receiving the rents and effects of this possession confirm in a subservient secondary way, what he is already firmly persuaded of, but was he to be so enslaved to sense and natural demonstration, that he would not believe the estate was his, but while he was receiving rents, his life would be rendered very uncomfortable, by not having his dependance on his writings or estate, and he could not properly be said to be possessor of the estate, though by virtue of the writings he has a title to it, his support hereby being made as uncertain to him as if he lived on alms.—The same may be said of that inward consciousness and knowledge a man has that he is awake or alive; his actions are a secondary argumentative evidence that he is so, but he must be looked upon as a madman, and to have lost his inward consciousness, that would not be persuaded he was alive without those actions.† In short, evidences seem to have that place that John's epistle had to the church,‡ and our good conversation is the only way to witness to the world that we are the people we profess to be; but if we do not keep these things in their proper place, but will be for finding evidences to

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\* Faith must of necessity have its *effects*. These effects will manifest themselves; but still it is not on these effects that we are to rest; nor are we to search for them in order to pacify our consciences. They must be pacified in a more excellent way.

† The *consciousness* of moving accompanies motion; the consciousness of seeing accompanies looking; the consciousness of loving accompanies the act of loving; so the consciousness of believing accompanies the act of believing. If not, there can be no certainty in anything.

‡ 1 John ii. 21, 26, 27, &c.

bring peace to our consciences, &c., we destroy the nature, need, or use of faith, and seek those things by way of natural reasoning and self-righteousness, that God has appointed by way of divine faith and free gift.\*

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## NOTES.

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### NOTE A.

“I came not to call the righteous but *sinner*s to *repentance*? Here is the first ray of hope,—they are not to repent in order to be haters of sin and lovers of God—in order to be called freely by the gospel; but they are to obey the free call of the gospel in order to become such. But I daresay you admit all this. Well, then, here is the weight of the objection which causes your disquietude—“If Christ be able and willing to save, and I be able and willing to come to Him, where is the obstacle? Nowhere, if such indeed be the case. But take heed; is it not laying a condition on the gospel to say, ‘I am ready to accept the offers of the gospel, *if* I found myself *willing*’ or ‘I must have a more sincere willingness before I can believe that Christ will save me!’ Is not our reluctance the worst feature in our malady? And yet you think it is because you do not yourself remove that, that Christ will not remove the rest of it! Do you feel it to be no comfort to believe that Christ is willing, nay, waiting, to receive you at the moment the offer is made? If you do not, then you do not believe the gospel to be free. What effect ought a consciousness of your coldness and insecurity to have upon you? Why, to cling closer to Jesus, to cast a greater burden upon him. The more you lay upon Him, the more confidence do you show, and the more do you honour him. You groan under a hardness of heart,—then cast yourself on your knees, and whilst you pray to be delivered from it, oh! forget not also to pour forth gratitude to God that he hath thus made you to groan under it, made you to feel it, and arrested you in your former levity of indifference. Alas! in our concern for more, we too often forget what we *have* received. I am no stranger to that most miserable of feelings, deadness in prayer; and who can in words describe the sensation of a soul anxiously struggling with an unseen God to fulfil his promises of mercy, and yet bitterly feeling that it cannot come to him—sinking under despondency that all is in vain—that you are addressing one deaf to your voice—that it is needless to persist, for at the very moment the heart is overpowered with vain and wandering thoughts, and you do not sincerely desire what you pray for? This is indeed a feeling most miserable, but, oh! how needful! Is not this praying indeed in sincerity, from the very consciousness of sin and misery? Is not the cry of a man struggling with the billows more sincere and earnest than of a man on the bank? Look, look at the Deliverer himself; the Rock of Ages, with his hand stretched to you! grasp it, cling to it! What does he say?—I, even I, am He

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\* It is of unspeakable importance to keep in mind that our peace must flow from the direct acts of faith, not from the indirect acts of thinking about our faith. It is looking to the cross that sheds peace into the soul, not thinking about our looking. It is hearing the glad tidings that gladdens us, not thinking about our hearing, or analyzing our processes of hearing.

that blotteth out your transgressions, *for mine own sake*, and will not remember your sins.' Is it for *thine own sake*? Oh! then, I need not fear my sins and pollutions will prove an obstacle. I am grieved for them, and desire to be a thousandfold more so; but glorify thine own self. 'Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.' We are ever forgetting, that our sins are the very reason why we need a Saviour, and ought not to be *discouraged* by them as proving any obstacle to His grace, when we are enabled to resign ourselves to Him; but we ought to be *deeply humbled* for them, and it is *then* that God giveth grace."—*Life of J. M'Donald, Calcutta.*

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**NOTE B.**

"You ask me, What do you consider the properties of acceptable prayer? Now, perhaps it may surprise you when I say, that even if I could answer this in clear terms, I would not do it, in the *present* state of your mind; because, if I may judge from my own experience, this is the query of a harassed but *legal* spirit, and the direct answering of it would, in my opinion, be at least unprofitable. I shall explain myself. You have a firm speculative belief that you are a guilty, undone, and perfectly helpless sinner; by the instrumentality of certain circumstances in Divine providence (it matters not what they were,) you are led at length anxiously to labour for the salvation of your soul; you have also a clear speculative knowledge of the way by which you can attain to this; in one word, by *faith*. Granted. Your first work, then, was endeavouring to put this knowledge in practice. But how? Instead of turning your view immediately to objects presented in the gospel to excite your faith, and dwelling upon them as your only hope, you first looked whether you had this faith as a *preliminary* step, and intended then, if you found it, immediately to direct it to those objects which, in fact, must excite it. Could you, in fact, have faith, until you brought your mind to contemplate and rest upon the gracious promises and free invitations of the gospel, which are addressed to you as a sinner, in the first place, without faith, or anything else that is necessary. Must not your faith, including your firm persuasion of the truth of what God declares, and your thorough reliance on it for yourself, proceed from an immediate contemplation of that unconditional freeness and unlimited fulness, *unfettered by one specialty*, upon which the sinner should at once come and rest his burden, without a fear of non-acceptance? Was not your course, like mine, the reverse of this?—You sought for faith when it could not possibly exist, before you turned to what could excite it. You feel, then, that want of those things, in your opinion necessary to the formation of faith—a *sense* of guilt, pollution, helplessness, &c.—to compel you to have recourse to the gospel, and a belief and confidence in the mercy of God to enable you to receive it. You have recourse to prayer—you plead for those things to be given you—you plead under a deep consciousness of wanting them; and so you should; but then, your mind ought not to be resting on the mere consciousness of your harassing needs, but on the willingness of him whom you are addressing to remove them. Does not the very act of prayer presuppose your belief of this? And are you then honouring him in this act, when your mind is only filled with a distressing consciousness of your own miseries in it, and in no degree suffered, even for a moment, to rest on the truth that he is most willing, nay, waiting to remove them? But you say 'I cannot help it—I feel that I am not sincere, earnest, disinterested, in my supplications—that I am guilty of a solemn mockery,' and that my prayers, therefore, cannot be accepted? So, then, you have found out this insincerity, indifference, selfishness of motives &c. are not a part of that sinfulness which you want to be delivered from—no, no; they are quite a distinct thing, and a man must of himself be able to remove these first, and then he can have confidence that his prayer will be accepted and graciously answered! Do you really suppose so? Ah, no! here is the sunk rock of legalism.

Off with these to Jesus at once.—These are the very consciousness of guilt, the stings of conscience, the dismal unbelief which you were seeking as preliminaries, plead them with Him—tell Him these are sin, and the worse because they lie as obstructions in the very way to himself, and that ‘He came to destroy the works of the devil,’ and there they are.”— *Life of M'Donald*.

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NOTE C.

“Another thing that sinners seek to as a refuge and hiding-place instead of Christ, is the marks of true believers. They that betake themselves to this refuge are all taken up about a work of conversion and grace wrought in us, to the neglect of what Christ hath wrought for us, and of his person and saving offices. If they make mention of him, it is not in truth nor in righteousness, for the stress of their confidence as to acceptance with God, and deliverance from, wrath rests on what they think is wrought in them. They will acknowledge Christ’s strength, and the freedom of grace that way, and thank him that they are not as many others, with the Pharisee, but they cannot say that saying of faith, “*In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*” These cannot be separate, and they that neglect the one are strangers to the other also. Those that betake themselves to this refuge, if ever in their life they have been any way cast down upon the account of sin, and afterward raised up with some kind of joy and warmness of affection and good motions in duty, lay much stress on this, and they look upon themselves as converted, and in a state of favour with God, and to this they have recourse in all after trials of conscience about sin. They are not much troubled with sins that they fall into, if believers have fallen into the like, except it be those sins which expose them to shame and disgrace among men, or among the godly; their consciences are easy about any sins they fall into besides these that seem to them not to be the spots of God’s children. Neither can they be stirred up to any duties but those that they look upon as practised by all true believers, and so cannot be saved. And what is customary among those whom they look upon as true believers, weighs more with them than the commandments of God, and the rule of his word, or the example of Jesus Christ. Now, however confident these may be in this their refuge, yet one thing they lack, and that is true faith itself, which counts all things loss that the sinner may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith, and which engages the soul to seek to know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to forget the things that are behind, and to reach forth unto those that are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

An act of faith, a manifestation of Christ, his righteousness and free grace, a coming of self unto his righteousness, clear views of and lively experiences about the method of salvation through Christ, and the freedom of the covenant of grace, is another refuge that some that have been illuminated, and have tasted the good word of God, do betake themselves to instead of Christ. Thus, some, while they seem to be coming out of self into Christ and his righteousness, turn back, as it were, half way and rest upon that very experience, upon that which they take to be the acting of faith, instead of the righteousness of Christ, which they seem to be now closing with, and resting in. And when they seem to be renouncing all their own righteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, they are but taking hold of this same exercise of theirs, instead of Christ, and so they are but just where they were, only with this disadvantage, that they are more confident in this their refuge, than in any that they have betaken themselves to before. Here is the most subtle of all the workings of self. Here are the debasing thoughts of self, and a

renunciation of self, in all its former actings;—here is a rejoicing in the word of God’s grace, and of his righteousness, through the manifestation they have got of the way of righteousness;—here is a remarkable change they feel in their case to the better, and that with respect to self; here self rules peaceably and powerfully, while the soul is confident that it is brought under. And now the soul sits down contentedly without Christ, under pretence of enjoying him, and having fellowship with him. They that trust in this refuge, make themselves easy with it, without having daily recourse to the Lord Jesus, and his blood, for peace of conscience with respect to after sins, and for sin-subduing grace. They are easy without coming to the throne of grace for obtaining mercy and grace to help in the time of need. Still they have recourse to the manifestation, experience, and acting of the faith that they have had. And if they can get any sense of that, or any savoury remembrance of it upon their minds, all is well. They seek no farther, but live at ease in their distance from Christ, and under the power of their lusts. Thus they live, not by the faith of the Son of God, but they live upon that experience and that acting of faith; and so because they abide not in Christ, they are cast forth as branches and withered, having no root in themselves and not thoroughly cast into the mould of the gospel revelation, nor rooted in Christ. Their lusts, after a while, choke the word, and they lose the savour of the truth, or in time of temptation they fall away. Again, it is nothing to them that trust in this refuge, that *Jesus is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. If they be once shaken as to their confidence in the experience which they have had,—if this be wrong, all is wrong with them. If in this condition Christ be set before them, and they be called to flee for refuge to him, they think they cannot close with him otherwise than they had already done, and if that be wrong they are ready to give themselves up to despair, and to give up with any persuasion they had of the reality of religion, and to give way to the enmity of their hearts against God. Now, their righteousness, their confidence, their glory is gone, and what have they more? Thus, being cast down from their eminent refuge, they fall into perdition, if sovereign grace prevent not, and lead them unto the foundation that God has laid in Zion. Of all that goes under the name of the refuge of lies, this is the most notable, and has the fairest aspect; but none of them are so dangerous. So this is a refuge of lies eminently so called, for here the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart of man works, so as who can know it? ‘till the searcher of the hearts do discover it.

I shall mention but this one further, and that is, waiting (as is pretended) on God, in the use of the means of his appointment, till they feel a day of power upon their souls to bring them unto Christ. They will acknowledge, that they do not yet believe in Christ, and that they cannot believe, till a day of power be upon them. They hope that such a day may come; for who knows but it may? Therefore they put off believing in Christ till then; but it is good to be in the use of means, and to be lying (as is said) in Christ’s road, and endeavouring now and then to stretch out the withered hand, till the Lord be pleased to crown their endeavours with the gift of faith. Now, it will be found, that this is nothing else but a fair pretence of the deceitful and desperately wicked heart to shift the matter of coming to Christ, and is therefore a refuge of lies. For, 1st, They make their consciences easy in the enjoyment of their lusts, with this their waiting on God in the use of means,—while they have no fellowship with Christ, and do not so much as pretend to believe on him. 2. They know not, that there is no waiting on God, no lying in Christ’s road, no stretching out of the withered hand, without faith. It is not God, nor Christ, that they are waiting for in this case, but they are waiting for ability to put forth an act of faith, that this may be their righteousness. When they are pretending to stretch out the withered hand, they are attempting to work faith out of their own hearts, that it may be their righteousness, and

they expect that God will make them successful. It is impossible to attempt faith with any other view, till we really believe. 3. Though it be impossible to believe in Christ, without a day of power, and a change wrought upon the soul, by the spirit, yet, the soul cannot find that there is such a change wrought, till once it believe, for in believing, the soul is not feeling such a power and such a work as are beforehand thought of, nor is it taken up with what it feels in itself, but the thoughts are fixed upon the method of salvation through Christ revealed in the gospel, and upon the testimony of God concerning his Son in the gospel, and the soul is saying *Amen!* unto that testimony, and is heartily satisfied with it. Then, upon reflection, the soul may find that the finger of God has been there; but till this be, we cannot know that there is any change wrought upon it. So that to put off believing in Christ, till we find a change wrought in us, is to do what in us lies to keep ourselves from believing in Christ. 4. Those that make themselves easy without believing on Christ, with this their pretended waiting upon God, ought also to consider, that presently, while they are thus waiting, this word of God is true, “he that believeth not shall be damned, he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life,” and “the wrath of God abideth on him that believeth not.” So that this is a refuge of lies, a hiding place, that the waters shall overflow.

Now, to such refuges as these, do sinners betake themselves and neglect Christ; and in these things do they glory; but God forbid that we should be left to ourselves, or that we should glory in anything, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us, and we to the world!

This doctrine concerns you that betake yourselves to the refuge of lies, and ye are of two sorts.

1. Some of you perhaps have made yourselves secure with your refuge of lies, and are dwelling at ease in your hiding-place. Thou hast found the life of thine hand, therefore thou art not grieved. But thus saith the Lord, “I will declare thy righteousness and thy works, for they shall not profit thee.” (Isaiah xxxvii. 10,12.) Your house wants a foundation. It serves only for fair weather, but there is a flood—a storm of fire and brimstone coming, and God has directed it against thy refuge to beat it down. Therefore be advised to hearken to the divine warning, and, Noah-like, to be moved with fear while the time of God’s long-suffering lasts, and to comply with God’s hearty invitation to come into the ark that he has prepared, and to betake yourselves for shelter unto the refuge that he has provided in Zion. He that believeth shall not be confounded; but the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.

2. Others of you, it may be, are only yet building this refuge, still laying a foundation, and cannot get it laid to your satisfaction; working and toiling yourselves to make up a hiding-place, and always finding defects, and patching them up, so that there is no end of your labours, and yet you are doing nothing to the purpose. Will *your* hands, think ye, build the refuge that God’s hand shall not overthrow? You say, you seek him to help you, and you hope he will help you to build your refuge. But will he help you to build up another refuge to the disparagement of that which he hath laid in Zion? But you will say, he does help us, for without him we can do nothing, and we have experience of his helping us. Now he is only striving with you, to bring you to his foundation, and you employ his own weapons against him, and resist the Holy Spirit, and stumble at the stumbling stone. Cease, therefore, from working thus, and rest in that which the Son of God hath already wrought. He saith unto thee “It is finished,”—believest thou this? But you will say, must we not do something ourselves? No question, you are called to do much, but nothing to shelter you from wrath, nothing to procure eternal life to you, for that is already

done; and to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Doubtless you are called to work, but the first thing you are called to by the gospel, and the principal of all good works, is faith in a crucified Christ; for this is the work of God that ye should believe on him whom he hath sent. But you will say, is not Christ a king as well as a priest? He is a king, but you know nothing of his kingdom, and the manner of it, while you know him not as a priest on his throne, and as the king of righteousness.

You will never heartily yield to his yoke, nor will you know how to take it on, till you find rest in what he has done and suffered by believing on him. O therefore do not dispute yourselves away from Christ! Let not this complaint be taken up against you. He said to this people, “This is the rest wherewith ye shall cause the weary to rest, and this the refreshing, yet they would not hear.”

3. Others of you this doctrine concerns.—You who are baffled out of your refuge of lies, and are giving way to despair, going forth from these confidences with your hands upon your heads giving over all hopes of salvation, because to you it seems impossible, and ye say we are cast off. True it is, thy salvation is impossible by anything that thou hast done or canst do. Thou hast indeed destroyed thyself. But with the Lord there is help for such as thou art. Lift up thine eyes then, and behold the foundation that God has laid in Zion. A foundation of hope for hopeless sinners. Does it seem impossible that such an one as thou art should ever be reconciled to God? Behold these two infinitely distant natures of God and man in the person of Christ, the Mediator between God and man, and that for this end, that God might be reconciled to sinners. However wide the breach betwixt God and thee, yet can it not be healed by this means? Is the demand of the law too great for thee to answer? Canst thou never fulfil it? Does the peremptoriness of the law’s sentence make thy heart sink within thee? Lift up thine eyes, and see the Son of God, made of a woman, made under the law, in the room of sinners, even the chief of them, while they were without strength, ungodly, and enemies. See him finishing transgression, making an end of sin-offering, by bearing the punishment of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. Cannot that which is wanting in thee be numbered? Nor that which is crooked be made straight? Lift up thine eyes, and see him in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. He that spared not his own Son, shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And shall anything be impossible with him to do for us after this? Is not this a glorious foundation of hope for such a sinner as thou art? Now, unto thee is the word of this salvation sent. “Behold,” saith Jehovah, “I lay in Zion for a foundation a tried stone,” &c., and he that believeth shall not make haste. “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”

4. This doctrine concerns them that are resting on the foundation that God has laid in Zion. And these are,—1st. Such as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and are coming unto Christ as unto a living foundation-stone; and in all their straits it is the language of their hearts, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!” They have recourse to the blood of Jesus for purging their consciences from dead works. 2. They are jealous of themselves in the matter of self-righteousness, and are much concerned to be found in Christ, not having their own righteousness. 3. They have experience of this, and they seek to experience it more and more, viz. that the conscience-pacifying blood of Christ is also sin-mortifying, and quickens the soul to serve the living God. Whatever discouragements you may be under, yet surely you have the greatest security for your salvation. God hath said, “you shall not be confounded:” as long as the foundation that God hath laid in Zion abides, you are safe, whatever come of the refuge of lies.”—*Anonymous Sermon of the last Century.*



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NOTE D.

“To believe Christ’s ability to save us may appear a very easy thing to those to whom sin hath not appeared sin. The reason is, they being strangers to sin, are strangers also to the cost of redemption from it. But those who are truly convinced of sin find it a very difficult matter; and they experimentally know how hard, of all things hard, it is to believe that Christ is able to deliver them from it. The Spirit only can assist them on this point; and, it costs them much searching of Scripture, much prayer for the Spirit’s enlightening influences, before they gain any settled, confirmed, and abiding belief of this truth. The reason is, because the remonstrances of conscience, the accusations of Satan, the natural unbelief of the heart, a secret leaning to self-righteousness, together with the whole body of sin, variously and for ever oppose it.

We often find within us a doubting of Christ’s *willingness*, when there seems to be a persuasion of his *power* and ability. But I am apt to think, that we shall find, by attending more to, and knowing more of, the workings of our hearts, that we doubt the former, because we do not sufficiently believe the latter. Let us, therefore, above all other things, study the *person* of Christ, and endeavour to get a deeper insight into the mystery of godliness; and we shall find that our peace and comfort will increase with our knowledge, and that true godliness will be effectually promoted. All peace that proceeds not from this source is carnal security; and all appearance of godliness is only the form without any life and power.

So far as we live by faith, we live upon Christ only, without respect to anything else in us, in heaven, or in earth. He is our all in all,—our all in every thing, in every consideration, and in every circumstance. He is our all to support us under every difficulty, and to comfort us under every discouragement that meets us from guilt, from sin, and every enemy. And in proportion as we make him our all, is our comfort in the face of guilt, our strength against corruption, and our victory daily over all our enemies. But we shall never be brought to make him our all, until we have a discovery made to our minds of the dignity, glory, and majesty of his person, as the only begotten Son of God, “full of grace and truth.” This adds greatness and infinity to grace and truth; it is the grace and truth of the Son of God, and he is *full* of both; so that his grace and truth are equal to himself. Infinity is filled with grace and truth; therefore this grace and truth must be infinite too. When the soul sees Christ by faith, in all the dignity of his person, and the fulness of his grace, then, and then only, will the believer live upon him as his all in all. And when he is brought to this state, and continues in it, he may cheerfully bid defiance to all his enemies. But, alas! with what difficulty is he brought to this state! How hardly is he brought as a lost sinner to rejoice daily in the Lord his righteousness!

The life of faith is so strange and mysterious, a life wholly unknown to every other creature in heaven and earth, but the true believer. It is so opposite to our reason, and so contrary to every notion of our natural hearts, that his progress in it is very slow, and almost imperceptible. When he can no longer depend upon his own doings for righteousness yet still he wishes to possess something in himself on which to build his hopes and confidence, and will look to the work of the Spirit in the heart, making that the foundation which is only the superstructure. But we must well remember that there neither is, nor ever will be, any other foundation but the obedience and death of Christ only, for a sinner—in himself always guilty—to stand upon, for his acceptance with God. Other foundation can no man lay. The holiest saint in heaven stands in equal need of it as the most profligate sinner. The building on this foundation is true, vital

holiness. But great care must be taken, that the superstructure is not placed in room of the foundation, and that we mix not with the foundation any part of those materials fit only for the construction of the building. Our mistake here is, I believe *frequent*; and very imperceptible it may alas be, but always distressing to the soul in its effects. It is more dangerous, because it wears the appearance of sanctity, comes under the pretence of great esteem for holiness: but it is only Satan transformed into an angel of light; and it is sure to weaken and distress the soul, if not quite ruin it. Holiness in all its parts neither is, nor ever can be, in any degree, the matter of our justification before God. For our acceptance with him we must for ever stand, in time and eternity, on the only sufficient righteousness of the Son of God. But to this our natural hearts are most of all averse; and the soul, to whom sin appears sin, finds no small difficulty in relying simply upon Christ's righteousness, without respect to any thing else whatsoever. It would gladly have something to mix with it. It knows not how to lay the foundation without some cement of its own, something *within* or *without* itself, something it hath done or intends doing. But the attempt is utterly fruitless. These things are wholly distinct in themselves, and must be distinctly considered by the soul. The confounding of them will only dishonour the grace of Christ, disturb our peace, and weaken our strength for obedience.

It is comparatively easy to see with the understanding that these things are altogether different; but to bring the heart to the point, is quite another thing. To act in the face of guilt and sin, as those who practically believe this truth,—*here* is the difficulty. And the reason of this difficulty, I am convinced, greatly proceeds from our deficiency in the knowledge of the person of Christ, and from the weakness of our faith in his ability and sufficiency. For were we once convinced of this, what should hinder our being fully satisfied. Why should we look for any thing besides? Had you a rich friend, with whose ability and willingness to supply all your wants, you were fully satisfied, would you not wholly cleave to him, and would you not live comfortable without any fear of poverty and distress? Doubtless you would. Such would be your conduct towards Christ also, as to your spiritual wants, did you entertain honourable and suitable thoughts of him. For the point is not, what your wants are, but whether he is able to supply them. Be your wants what they may, yet if he is able to supply them, the case is not desperate, there is no room for despair. Be convinced of Christ's sufficiency, and smile in the face of your complicated misery, being fully satisfied with *him only*. God is satisfied, and why should we be dissatisfied? Did we but know the worthiness and excellency of his Son as well as he does, we should be as well satisfied and delighted with him as he is. He wants, he requires nothing else. And his language respecting him on the behalf of his people, is, "In whom I am well pleased." Is he well pleased? And why are we not so too? Alas! It is because we know him not. Did we but know his person, and, believe in him as the only begotten of the Father, we should be able to say with Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."—*Charles of Bala*.

**THE END.**