

Arminianism: The Golden Idol of Freewill

by Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)

“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, give glory for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” [Psalm 115:1]



Some expositors have supposed, that this Psalm was penned by the prophet Daniel; on occasion of the miraculous deliverance of Shadrac, Meshac, and Abednego, when they came out, unhurt, from the burning fiery furnace, into which they had been thrown by the command of king Nebuchadnezzar.

And, indeed, there are not wanting passages, in the Psalm itself, which seem to countenance this conjecture. As where we read, at the fourth verse (speaking of the idols of the heathens, and, perhaps, with particular reference to that golden image which Nebuchadnezzar commanded to be worshipped), their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands: they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they but they see not.

I dare say, that, in such an auditory as this, a number of Arminians *are* present. I fear, that all our public assemblies have too many of them. Perhaps, however, even these people, idolaters as they are, may be apt to blame, and, indeed, with justice, the absurdity of those who worship idols of silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. But let me ask: If it be so very absurd, to worship the work of other men’s hands; what must it be, to worship the works of our own hands? Perhaps, you may ask, “God forbid that I should do so.” Nevertheless, let me tell you, that trust, confidence, reliance, and dependence, for salvation, are all acts and very solemn ones too, of divine worship: and upon whatsoever you depend, whether in whole or in part, for your acceptance with God, and for your justification in His sight, whatsoever, you rely upon, and trust in, for the attainment of grace or glory; if it be any thing short of God in Christ, you are an idolater to all intents and purposes.

Very different is the idea which Scripture gives us, of the ever-blessed God, from that of those false gods worshipped by the heathens; and from that degrading representation of the true God, which Arminianism would palm upon mankind. “*Our God* [says this Psalm, verse the third] *is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.*” This is not the Arminian idea of God: for our free-willers and our chance-mongers tell us, that God does not do whatsoever He pleases; that there are a great number of things, which God wishes to do, and tugs and strives to do, and yet cannot bring to pass: they tell us, as one ingeniously expresses it:

*That all mankind He fain would save,
But longs for what He cannot have.
Industrious, thus, to sound abroad,*

How does this comport with that majestic description, "*Our God is in the heavens*"! He sits upon the throne, weighing out, and dispensing, the fates of men; holding all events in His own hand; and guiding every link of every chain of second causes, from the beginning to the end of time. Our God is in heaven, possessed of all power; and (which is the natural consequence of that) He hath done whatsoever He pleased: or as the Apostle expresses it, (the words are different, but the sense is the same) "*He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Ephesians 1:11).

Therefore it is, that we both labour, and suffer reproach: even because we say (and the utmost we can say upon the subject, amounts to no more than this: to wit, that) our God is in heaven, and has done whatsoever pleased Him. And do according to His own sovereign pleasure He will, to the end of the chapter; though all the Arminians upon earth were to endeavor to defeat the divine intention, and to clog the wheels of divine government. He, that sits in heaven, laughs them to scorn: and brings His own purposes to pass, sometimes, even through the means of those very incidents, which evil men endeavor to throw in His way, with a mad view to disappoint Him of His purposes. '*All things,*' saith the Psalmist, "*serve Thee*" (Psalm 119:91). They have, all, a direct tendency, either effectively or permissively, to carry on His unalterable designs of providence and grace. Observe: effectively, or permissively. For we never say, nor mean to say, that God is the worker of evil: we only maintain, that for reasons unknown to us, but well known to God, He is the efficacious permitter (not the agent, but the permitter) of whatsoever comes to pass. But when we talk of good, we then enlarge the term; and affirm, with the Psalmist, that all the help that is done upon earth, God does it Himself.

I remember a saying of the great Monsieur Du Moulin, in his admirable book, entitled *Anatome Arminianismi*. His observation is, that the wicked, no less than the elect, accomplish the wise and holy and just decrees of God: but, says he, with this difference; God's own people, after they are converted, endeavor to His will from a principle of love: whereas they who are left to the perverseness of their own hearts (which is all the reprobation we contend for), who care not for God, nor is God in all their thoughts; these persons resemble men rowing in a boat, who make toward the very place on which they turn their backs. They turn their backs on the decree of God; and yet make to that very point, without knowing it.

One great contest, between the religion of Arminius, and the religion of Jesus Christ, is, who shall stand entitled to the praise and glory of a sinner's salvation? Conversion decides this point at once; for I think, that, without any imputation of uncharitableness, I may venture to say, that every truly awakened person, at least when he is under the shine of God's countenance upon his soul, will fall down upon his knees, with this hymn of praise ascending from his heart, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to Thy Name, give the glory: I am saved not for my righteousness, but for Thy mercy

and Thy truth's sake..”

And this holds true even as to the blessings of the life that now is. It is God that sets up one, and puts down another (see Psalm 75:7). Victory, for instance, when contending princes wage war, is all of God. *“The race is not to the swift, as swift; nor the battle to the strong”* (Ecclesiastes 9:11), as such. It is the decree, the will, the power, the providence of God, which effectually, though sometimes invisibly, order and dispose of every event.

At the famous battle of Azincourt, in France, where, if I mistake not, 80,000 French were totally defeated by about 9,000 English, under the command of our immortal King Henry V., after the great business of the day was over, and God had given that renowned prince the victory, he ordered the foregoing Psalm (that is, the 114th), and part of this Psalm from whence I have read you the passage now under consideration, to be sung in the field of battle: by way of acknowledging, that all success, and all blessings, of what kind soever, come down from the Father of lights. Some of our historians acquaint us, that, when the triumphant English came to those words which I have taken for my text, the whole victorious army fell down upon their knees, as one man, in the field of conquest; and shouted, with one heart, and with one voice, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name, give the glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake.”

And thus it will be when God has accomplished the number of His elect, and completely gathered in the fulness of His redeemed kingdom. What, do you think, your song will be, when you come to heaven? “Blessed be God, that He gave me free-will; and blessed be my own dear self, that made a good use of it”? O no, no. Such a song as that was never heard in heaven yet, nor ever will, while God is God, and heaven is heaven. Look into the Book of Revelation, and there you will find the employ of the blessed, and the strains which they sing. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

“Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by Thy Blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation”
[Revelation 9:10]

There is discriminating grace for you! *“Thou hast redeemed us... out of every kindred,”* etc, that is, from among the rest of mankind. Is not this particular election and limited redemption?

The Church below may be liable to err: and if any visible church upon earth pretends to be infallible, the very pretension itself demonstrates that she is not so. But there is a Church, which I will venture to pronounce infallible. And what Church is that? The Church of the glorified, who shine as stars at God's right hand. And, upon the infallible testimony of that infallible Church; a testimony recorded in the infallible pages of inspiration; I will venture to assert, that not one grain of Arminianism ever attended a saint to heaven. If those of God's people, who are in the bonds of that iniquity, are not explicitly

converted from it, while they live and converse among men; yet do they leave it all behind them, in Jordon (i.e. in the river of death) when they go through. They may be compared to Paul, when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus, and the grace of God struck him down: he fell, a free-willer; but he rose, a free-gracer. So, however, the rust of self-righteous pride (and a cursed rust it is: may God's Spirit file it off from all our souls) however that rust may adhere to us at present; yet, when we come to stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, it will be all done away, and we shall sing, in one, full, everlasting chorus, with elect angels and elect men, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us."

And why should we not sing that song now? Why should not we endeavor, under the influence of the Spirit, to anticipate the language of the skies, and be as heavenly as we can, before we get to heaven? Why should we condemn that song, upon earth; which we hope for ever to sing, before the throne of God above? It is, to me,

really astonishing, that Protestants, and Church of England men, considered merely as rational creatures, and as people of common sense, who profess to be acquainted with the Scriptures, and to acknowledge the power of God, should have any objections to singing this song, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake."

Still more wonderful and deplorable it is, that some, who even make profession of spiritual religion, and talk of an inward work of God upon their hearts, should so far lose sight of humility and of truth, as to dream, either that their own arm helped the Almighty to save them, or at least that their own arm was able to have hindered Him from saving them. What can reflect deeper dishonour upon God, than such an idea? And what can have a directer tendency to engender and to nourish the pride of heart which deceiveth men?

It pleased God to deliver me from the Arminian snare, before I was quite eighteen. Antecedently to that period there was not (with the lowest self-abasement I confess it) a more haughty and violent free-willer within the compass of the four seas. One instance of my warm and bitter zeal, occurs just now to my memory. About a twelvemonth before the divine goodness gave me eyes to discern, and an heart to embrace the truth, I was haranguing one day, in company, (for I deemed myself able to cope with all the predestinarians in the world), on the universality of grace, and the powers of human free agency. A good old gentleman (now with God) rose from his chair, and coming to mine, held me by one of my coat buttons, while he mildly addressed me to this effect: "My dear Sir, there are some marks of spirituality in your conversation; though tinged with an unhappy mixture of pride and self-righteousness. You have been speaking, largely, in favour of free-will: but, from your arguments, let us come to experience. Do let me ask you one question. How was it with you, when the Lord laid hold on you, in effectual calling? Had you any hand in obtaining that grace? Nay, would you not have resisted and baffled it, if God's Spirit had left you in the hand of your own counsel?"

I felt the conclusiveness of these simple, but forcible interrogations, more strongly than I was then willing to acknowledge. But, blessed be God, I have since been enabled to acknowledge the freeness and omnipotence of His grace, times without number; and to sing (what I trust will be my everlasting song when time shall be no more), "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy Name give all the glory."

We never know so much of heaven in our own souls, nor stand so high upon the mount of communion with God, as when His Spirit, breathing on our heart, makes us lie low at the footstool of sovereign grace, and inspires us with this cry, "O God, be mine the comfort of salvation, but Thine be the entire praise of it."

Let us briefly apply the rule and compass of God's Word, to the several parts, of which salvation is composed; and we shall soon perceive, that the whole building is made up of grace, and of grace alone. Do you ask, in what sense I here take the word grace? I mean, by that important term, the voluntary, sovereign, and gratuitous bounty of God; quite unconditionated by, and quite irrespective of, all and every shadow of human worthiness, whether antecedaneous, concomitant, or subsequent. This is, precisely, the scriptural idea of grace: to wit, that it (i.e. salvation in all its branches) is "*not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God, Who sheweth mercy*" (Romans 9:16). And thus it is, that grace reigneth, unto the eternal life of sinners, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord (see Romans 5:21).

1. In canvassing this momentous truth, let us begin where God Himself began: namely, with election. To whom are we indebted, for that first of all spiritual blessings? Pride says, "To me." Self-righteousness says, "To me." Man's uncoverted will says, "To me." But faith joins with God's Word in saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name, be the whole glory of thy electing love ascribed: Thou didst not choose us, on supposition of our first choosing Thee; but, through the victorious operation of Thy mighty Spirit, we choose Thee for our portion and our God, in consequence of Thy having first and freely chosen us to be Thy people."

Hear the testimony of that Apostle, who received the finishings of his spiritual education in the third heaven:

"There is a remnant according to the election of grace. And, if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it [i.e. if election] be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise, work is no more work" [Romans 11:5-6]

Let us sift this reasoning; and we shall find it invincible. There is "*a remnant,*" i.e. some of fallen mankind, who shall be everlastingly saved through Christ. This remnant is "*according to election*". God's own will and choice are the determinate rule, by which the saved remnant is measured and

numbered. This election is an "*election of grace*," or a free, sovereign and unmerited act of God. The Apostle would not leave out the word *grace*, lest people should imagine that God elected them on account of something He saw in them above others.

"Well, but" (may some say) "admitting election to be by *grace*, might not our foreseen good works have a little hand in the matter? Might not God have some small regard to our future good behavior?" No, answers the Apostle, none at all. If election be by "*grace*," i.e. of mere mercy, and sovereign love; then it is no more of "*works*," whether directly or indirectly, in whole or in part; "*otherwise, grace is no more grace*." Could any thing human, though ever so little, be mixed with *grace*, as a motive with God for showing favour to Peter (for instance) above Judas; *grace* would all evaporate, and be annihilated, from that moment. For, as Augustine observes:

"Grace ceases to be *grace*, unless it be totally and absolutely irrespective of any thing and of every thing, whether good or bad, in the object of it."

So that, as the Apostle adds, was it possible for election to be "*of works*," then would it be "*no more*" an act of "*grace*"; but a payment, instead of a gift: "*otherwise work were no more work*." On one hand, "*work*" ceases to be considered as influential on election, if election is the daughter of "*grace*"; on the other hand, "*grace*" has nothing at all to do in election, if "*works*" have any concern in it. *Grace*, and conditionality, are two incompatible opposites; the one totally destroys the other; and they can no more subsist together, than two particles of matter can occupy the same individual portion of space at the same point of time.

Which, therefore, of these contrary songs, do you sing (for all the art and labour of mankind, united, can never throw the two songs into one)? Are you for burning incense to yourselves, saying, "Our righteousness, and the might of our own arm, have gotten us this spiritual wealth"? Or, with the angels and saints in light, do you lay down your brightest honours at the footstool of God's throne with; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name give glory, for Thy loving mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

Certainly, election is the act, not of man, but of God: founded, merely, upon the sovereign and gracious pleasure of His own will. It is "*not of works lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:9); but solely of Him, Who has said, "I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15). God merits of us, not we of Him: and it was His free-will, not ours, which drew the impassable line between the elect and the pretermitted.

2. God's covenant love to us in Christ is another stream, flowing from the fountain of unmingled *grace*. And here, - as in the preceding instance, every truly awakened person disclaims all title to praise; shoves it away from himself, with both hands; and not only with his hands, but with his heart also;

while his lips acknowledge, "Not unto us, O Thou divine and coeternal Three, not unto us, but to Thy Name, give glory!"

How is it possible, that either God's purposes, or that His covenant concerning us, can be, in any respect whatever, suspended on the will or the works of men; seeing, both His purposes and His covenant were framed, and fixed, and agreed upon, by the Persons of the Trinity, not only before men existed, but before angels themselves were created, or time itself was born? All was vast eternity, when grace was federally given us in Christ ere the world began (see II Timothy 1:9). Well therefore might the Apostle, in the very text where he makes the above assertion, observe, that the holy calling, with which God effectually converts and sanctifies His people, in time, is bestowed upon us, "*not according to our works,*" but according to God's own free purpose and eternal destination.

Repentance and faith, new obedience and perseverance, are not conditions of interest in the covenant of grace (for then it would be a covenant of works); but consequences, and tokens, of covenant interest:

"For, the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election [which is the standard of covenant mercy] might remain unshaken, it was said unto her, 'The elder shall serve the younger'; as it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'" [Romans 9:11-13]

Now, whether you consider this passage as referring to the posterity of Jacob and Esau, or to Jacob and Esau themselves, or (which is evidently the Apostle's meaning) as referring to both; the argument will still come to the same point at last; namely, that the divine counsels and determinations, in whatever view you take them, are absolutely irrespective of works, because God's immanent decrees and covenant-transactions took place, before the objects of them had done either good or evil. Of course, all the good, that is wrought in men, comes from God, as the gracious effect, not as the cause, of His favour; and all the evil, which God permits (such are His wisdom and His power) is subservient to promote, instead of interfering to obstruct, the accomplishment of His most holy will. I mention God's permission of evil, only incidentally in this place: for, properly, it belongs to another argument. My present business is, to show, that the good, and the graces, which God works (not permissively, but effectually) in the hearts of His covenant people, are the fruit, not the root, of the love He bears to them.

3. To whom are we indebted, for the Atonement of Christ, and for redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins? Here likewise, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us!" It was God, Who "*found a ransom*" (Job 33:24). It was God, Who provided His own justice with a lamb for a burnt offering. It was God Who accepted the Atonement at our Surety's hand, instead of ours. It was God Who freely imparts the blessings of that completely finished redemption, to the comfort and everlasting restoration of all those who are enabled to trust

and to glory in the cross of Christ. Against such persons divine justice has nothing to allege: and on them, it has no penalty to inflict. The sword of vengeance, having been already sheathed in the sinless human nature of Jehovah's equal, becomes, to them that believe, a *curtana*, a sword of mercy, a sword without a point. Thanks to the reconciling mercy of God the Father, and to the bleeding grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! Human freewill and merit had nothing to do with the matter, from first to last.

4. As pardon exempts us from punishment, so justification (i.e. God's acceptance of us as perfect fulfillers of the whole Law) entitles us to the kingdom of heaven. The former is God's *papesis*, or passing by of our transgressions, so as not to take notice of them; and God's *aqeats*, or letting us go finally unpunished. But justification (which is the inseparable concomitant of forgiveness) is not merely negative, but carries in it more of positivity, and exalts us to an higher state of felicity, than mere pardon (was it possible to be conferred without justification) would do. It is God's *okatoats*, or pronouncing of us positively and actually just: not only innocent, but righteous also. St. Bernard, somewhere, preserves this obvious and just distinction. His words, I remember, are, that God is: "No less might to justify, than rich in mercy to forgive."

Now, the great enquiry is, whether God be indeed entitled to the whole praise of this unspeakable gift? Whether we should, as justified persons, sing to the praise and glory of ourselves; or to the praise and glory of God alone?

The Bible will determine this question, in a moment; and shew us, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are the sole authors, and, consequently, should receive the entire glory of our justification: "*It is God [the Father] Who justifieth*" (Romans 8:33): i.e. Who accepts us unto eternal life; and that "*freely, by His grace... through the redemption that is in Christ, and through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, without works*" (Romans 3:24, 4:6): i.e. without being moved to it by any consideration of the good works, and without being restrained from it by any consideration of the evil works, wrought by the person or persons to whom Christ's righteousness is imputed, and who are pronounced just in consequence of that imputed righteousness.

Justification is also the act of God the Son, in concurrence with His Father. St. Paul expressly declares, that he sought to be justified by Christ (see Galatians 2:7). The second Person in the divinity joins, as such, in accepting of His people through that transferred merit, which, as Man, He wrought for this very end. Now, let me ask you, did you assist Christ in paying the price of your redemption, and in accomplishing a series of perfect obedience for your justification? If you did, you are entitled to a proportionable part of the praise. But, if Christ both obeyed, and died, and rose again, without your assistance, it invincibly follows, that you have no manner of claim to the least particle of that praise, which results from the benefits acquired and secured by His obedience, death, and resurrection. The benefits themselves are all your own, if He gives you faith to embrace them; but the honour, the glory, and the

thanks, you cannot arrogate to yourself, without the utmost impiety and sacrilege.

God the Holy Ghost unites in justifying the redeemed of the Lord. We are, declaratively and evidentially, justified “by *the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:11): Whose condescending and endearing office it is, to reveal a broken Saviour in the broken heart of a self-emptied sinner, and to shed abroad the justifying love of God in the human soul (see Romans 5:5). Herein the adorable Spirit neither needs, nor receives, any assistance from the sinners He visits. His gracious influence is sovereign, free, and independent. We can no more command, or prohibit, His agency, than we can command, or forbid, the shining of the sun.

The conclusion, from the whole, is; that not our goodness, but God’s mercy; not our obedience, but Christ’s righteousness; not our towardliness, but the Holy Spirit’s beneficence; are to be thanked, for the whole of our justification.

And it is no easy lesson, to say, from the heart, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us!” Self-righteousness, cleaves to us, as naturally, and as closely, as our skins: nor can any power, but that of an Almighty hand, flay us of it. I remember an instance, of a clergyman, now living and eminent, above many, for his labours and usefulness. This worthy person assured me, a year or two since, that he once visited a criminal, who was under sentence of death, for a capital offence (I think for murder). My friend endeavoured to set before him the evil he had done; and to convince him, that he was lost and ruined, unless Christ saved him by His Blood, righteousness and grace. “I am not much concerned about that,” answered the self-righteous malefactor; “I have not, certain, led so good a life as some have; but, I am certain, that many have gone to Tyburn, who were much worse men than myself.” So you see, a murderer may go to the gallows, trusting in his own righteousness! And you and I should have gone to hell, trusting in our own righteousness, if Christ had not stopped us by the way.

I dare believe, that the above mentioned criminal, had the subject been started, would also have valued himself upon his free-agency. Free-agency, it is true, he had; and he was left to the power of it, and ruined himself accordingly: Free-will has carried many a man to Tyburn, and (it is to be feared) from Tyburn to hell: but it never yet carried a single soul to holiness and heaven. “*Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself*”; free-will can do that for us; “*but in Me,*” says God, “*is thy help*” (Hosea 13:0). His free grace must be our refuge and our shelter from our own free-will: or it were good for the best of us that we had never been born.

In one word, all the glory of our pardon and justification belongs to the Trinity, and not to man. It is one of God’s crown jewels, unalienable from Himself; and which He will never resign to, nor share with, any other beings. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that He ever should: for how can any of depraved mankind be justified by works (and without being so justified, we can come in for no part of the praise); how, I say, can any of us be justified

by our own doings, seeing we are utterly unable even to think one good thought until God Himself breathes it into our hearts (see II Corinthians 3:5).

Suffer me to observe one thing more, under this article: viz. that if God's Spirit has stript you of your own righteousness, He has not stript you in order to leave you naked, but will clothe you with "*change of raiment*" (Zechariah 3:4). He will give you a robe, for your rags; the righteousness of God, for the rotten righteousness of man. Rotten indeed we shall find it, if we make it a pillar of confidence. I will say of it, as Dr. Young says of the world, "Lean not upon it": lean not on thy own righteousness: if leaned upon, "it will pierce thee to the heart: at best, a broken reed; but oft a spear. On its sharpest point, peace bleeds and hope expires."

Self-reliance is the very bond of unbelief. It is essential infidelity, and one of its most deadly branches. You are an infidel, if you trust in your own righteousness. You a Christian? You a Churchman? No; you have, in the sight of God, neither part nor lot in the matter. You are spiritually dead, while you pretend to live. Until you are indued with faith in Christ's righteousness, your body, (as a great man expresses it) is no better than "the living coffin of a dead soul." A Christian is a believer (not in himself, but) in Christ. And what is the language of a believer? "Lord, I am, in myself, a poor, ruined, undone, sinner. Through the hand of Thy good Spirit upon me, I throw myself at the foot of Thy cross; and look to Thee for Blood to wash me, for righteousness to justify me, for grace to make me holy, for comfort to make me happy, and for strength to keep me in Thy ways."

5. For holiness, the inward principle of good works; and for good works, themselves, the outward evidences of inward holiness; we are obliged to the alone grace and power of God most high. We do not make Him a debtor to us, by loving and performing His commandments; but we become, additionally, debtors to Him, for crowning His other gifts of grace, by vouchsafing to work in us that which is "*well-pleasing in His sight*" (Hebrews 13:21).

Say not; "Upon this plan, sanctification is kicked out of doors, and good works are turned adrift." Nothing can be more palpable and flagrantly untrue. Newness of heart and of life is so essential to, and constitutes so vast a part of, the evangelical scheme of salvation, that were it possible for holiness and its moral fruits to be really struck out of the account, the chain would, at once, dissolve, and the whole fabric become an house of sand. The Arminians, have, of late, made a huge cry about "Antinomians! Antinomians!" From the abundance of experience, the mouth is apt to speak. The modern Arminians see so much real Antinomianism among themselves, and in their own tents, that Antinomianism is become the predominant idea, and the favourite watch-word, of the party. Because they have got the plague, they think every body else has. Because the leprosy is in their walls, they imagine no house is without it. Thus: "All looks infected, that the infected spy: as all seems yellow, to the jaundiced eye."

It is cunning, I must confess, in these people, to raise a dust, for their own

defence; and like some pick-pockets when closely pursued, to aim at slipping the stolen watch or handkerchief into the pocket of an innocent bystander, that the real sharper may elude the rod of justice. But unhappily for themselves, the Arminians are not complete masters of this art. The dust, they raise, forms too thin a cloud to conceal them: and their bungling attempt to shift off the charge of Antinomianism upon others, rivets the charge but more firmly on themselves its true proprietors. The avowed effrontery, with which they openly trample on a certain commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*"; may stand as a sample of the little regard they pay to the other nine. Pretty people these, to look for justification from the "merit" of their own works, and to value themselves on their perfect love to God and man.

With regard to sanctification and obedience, truly so called; it can only flow, and cannot but flow, from a new heart: which new heart is of God's own making, and of God's own giving:

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh [a soft, repenting, believing heart] and I will cause ye to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" [Ezekiel 36:26-27]

Now, God accomplishes this promise, by the effectual working of His blessed Spirit: by the mystic fire of Whose agency having melted our hearts into penitential faith, He then applies to them the seal of His own holiness; from which time, we begin to bear the image and superscription of God upon our tempers, words, and actions.

This is our "licentious" doctrine: namely, a doctrine which (under the influence of the Holy Ghost) conforms the soul, more and more, to God: carefully referring, at the same time, all the praise of this active and passive conformity, to God Himself, Whose gift it is; singing, with the saints of old, "*Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our [good] works in us*" (Isaiah 26:12); and for all the works so wrought, for the will to please Thee, for the endeavour to please Thee, for the ability to please Thee, and for every act whereby we do please Thee- "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name, give glory.*"

And indeed, was not this the truth of the case, i.e. if conversion and sanctification and good works were not God's gifts and of His operation; men would have, not only somewhat, but much, even, very much, to boast of; they would be their own converters, sanctifiers, and saviours. Directly contrary to the plain letter of Scripture, which asks; "*Who maketh thee to differ from others, and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?*" (I Corinthians 4:7)- i.e. from above. Nor less contrary to the scriptural direction; "*He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 1:31).

6. Once more. Whom are we to thank for perseverance, in holiness and good works, to the end? "Oh," says an old Pharisee, perhaps, "the thanks are due to

my own watchfulness, my own faithfulness, my own industry, and my own improvements." Your supposed watchfulness answers a very bad purpose, if you make a merit of it. The enemy of souls cares not the turning of a straw, whether you perish by open licentiousness, or by a delusive confidence in your own imaginary righteousness. It is all one to him, whether you go to hell in a black coat or a white one. Nay the whitest you can weave, will be found black, and a mere *san benito* to equip you for the flames, if God does not array in the imputed righteousness of His blessed Son.

But, for the present, leaving Pharisees and legalists to the hands of Him Who alone is able, and has a right, to save or to destroy; let me address myself to the true believer in Christ. You were called, it may be, ten or twenty years ago, or longer, to the knowledge of God; and you still are found, dwelling under the droppings of the sanctuary, and walking in Him your Lord; sometimes faint, yet always wishing to pursue; tossed, but not lost, occasionally cast down, but not destroyed. How comes all this? How is it, that many flaming professors, who blazed out, for a while, like luminaries of the first lustre, are quenched, extinguished, vanished; while your smoking flax, and feeble spark of grace, continue to survive, and sometimes afford both light and heat? While more than a few, who, perhaps, once seemed to be rooted as rocks, and stable as pillars in the house of God, are become as water that runneth apace; Why are you standing, though in yourself, as weak, if not weaker than they? A child of God can soon answer this question. And he will answer it thus: "*Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day*" (Acts 26:22). Not by my own might and power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts (see Zechariah 4:6).

And He, that kept you until this day, will keep you all your days. His Spirit which He freely gives to His people, is a well of water, springing up, not for a year, not for a lifetime, only; but "*into everlasting life*" (John 4:14). God's faithfulness to you is the source of your faithfulness to Him. Christ prays for you: and therefore He keeps you watching unto prayer. He preserves you from falling; or, when fallen, He restores your soul, and leads you forth again in the path of righteousness, for His Name's sake. He had decreed, and covenanted, and promised, and sworn, to give you a crown of life; and, in order to that, He has no less solemnly engaged and irrevocably bound Himself, to make you faithful unto death.

"Well, then," says an Arminian, "if these things are so, I am safe at all events. I may fold up my arms, and even lay me down to sleep. Or, if I choose to rise and be active, I may live just as I list." Satan was the coiner of this reasoning: and he offered it, as current and sterling, to the Messiah, but Christ rejected it as false money. "*If Thou be the Son of God,*" said the enemy; "if Thou be indeed that Messiah Whom God upholds, and His elect, in Whom His soul delighteth; cast Thyself headlong; it is impossible Thou shouldst perish, do what Thou wilt: no fall can hurt Thee; and Thy Father has absolutely promised that His angels shall keep Thee in all Thy ways; jump, therefore, boldly, from the battlements, and fear no evil."

The devil's argumentation was equally insolent, and absurd, in every point of view. He reasoned, not like a serpent in his wits, but like a serpent whose head was bruised (see Genesis 3:15), and who had no more of understanding than of modesty. Christ silenced this battery of straw, with a single sentence: *"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"* (Matthew 4:7). So said the Messiah. And so say we. And this is answer enough, to a cavil, whose palpable irrationality would cut its own throat, without the help of any answer at all.

God's children would be very glad, if they could "live as they list." How so; Because it is the will, the desire, the wish, of a renewed soul (i.e. of the new man, or the believer's regenerate part; for old Adam never was a saint yet, nor ever will be); it is, I say, the will and the wish of a renewed soul, to please God in all things, and never to sin, on any occasion, or in any degree. This is the state to which our pantings aspire; and in which (would the imperfection of human nature admit of such happiness below) we "list" to walk. For every truly regenerated person can sincerely join the Apostle Paul, in saying, *'With my mind, I myself serve the Law of God'* (Romans 7:25), and wish I could keep it better.

God's preservation is the good man's perseverance. *"He will keep the feet of His saints"* (1 Samuel 2:9). Arminianism represents God's Spirit as if He acted like the guard of a stage coach, who sees the passengers safe out of town for a few miles; and then, making his bow, turns back, and leaves them to pursue the rest of their journey themselves. But divine grace does not thus deal by God's travellers. It accompanies them to their journey's end, and without end. So that the meanest pilgrim to Zion may shout, with David, in full certainty of faith, *"Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all my days, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"* (Psalm 23:6). Therefore, for preserving grace, *"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give the glory, for Thy loving mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."*

7. After God has led His people through the wilderness of life, and brought them to the edge of that river which lies between them and the heavenly Canaan, will He intermit His care of them, in that article of deepest need? No, blessed be His Name. On the contrary, He (always, safely; and generally, comfortably) escorts them over to the other side; to that good land which is very far off, to that goodly mountain and Lebanon.

I know, there are some flaming Arminians, who tell us, that "a man may persevere until he comes to die, and yet perish in almost the very article of death": and they illustrate this wretched, God-dishonouring, and soulshocking doctrine, by the simile of "a ship's floundering in the harbour's mouth."

It is very true, that some wooden vessels have so perished. But it is no less true, that God's chosen vessels are infallibly safe from so perishing. For, through His goodness, every one of them is insured by Him Whom the winds and seas, both literal and metaphorical, obey. And their insurance runs this:

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and when

through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” [Isaiah 43:2]

“The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads” (Isaiah 35:10); so far from floundering within sight of land.

Even an earthly parent is particularly careful and tender of a dying child: and, surely, when God’s children are in that situation, He will (speaking after the manner of men) be doubly gracious to His helpless offspring, who are His by election, by adoption, by covenant, by redemption, by regeneration, and by a thousand other indissoluble ties.

There are no marks of shipwrecks, no remnants of lost vessels, floating upon that sea, which flows between God’s Jerusalem below and the Jerusalem which is above. The excellent Dr. William Gouge has an observation full to the present point:

“If a man were cast into a river, we should look upon him as safe, while he is able to keep his head above water. The Church, Christ’s mystic body, is cast into the sea of the world [and, afterwards, into the sea of death]; and Christ, their Head, keeps Himself aloft, even in heaven. Is there, then, any fear, or possibility, of drowning a member of this body? If any should be drowned, then either Christ Himself must be drowned first, or else that member must be pulled from Christ: both which are impossible. By virtue, therefore, of this union, we see that on Christ’s safety, our’s depends. If he is safe, so are we. If we perish, so must He.”

Well, therefore, may dying believers sing, “Not unto us, O Lord, but to Thy Name, give glory! Thy loving mercy carries us, when we cannot go: and, for Thy truth’s sake, Thou wilt save us to the utmost without the loss of one.”

8. When the emancipated soul is actually arrived in glory, what song will he sing then? The purport of the text will still be the language of the skies: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name give the praise.”

Whilst we are upon earth, we have need of that remarkable caution, which Moses gave the children of Israel:

“Speak not thou in thine heart.. after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, “For my righteousness, the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land.” Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess this land.... Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land, to possess it, for thy righteousness; for thou are a stiff-necked people” [Deuteronomy 9:4-6].

Now, if the earthly Canaan, which was only a transitory inheritance, was

unattainable by human merit; if even worldly possessions are not given us for our own righteousness sake; who shall dare to say, that heaven itself is the purchase of our own righteousness! If our works cannot merit even the vanishing conveniences and supplies of time: how is it possible, that we should be able to merit the endless riches of eternity? We shall need no cautions against self-righteousness, when we get safe to that better country. The language of our hearts, and of our voices, will be; and angels will join the concert; and all the elect, both angels and men, will, for ever and ever, strike their harps to this key; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name, give the glory, for Thy loving mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

O, may a sense of that loving mercy and truth be, warmly and transformingly, experienced in our hearts! For indeed, my dear brethren, it is experience, of the felt power of God, upon the soul, which makes the Gospel a savour of life unto life. Notwithstanding God's purpose is steadfast as His throne; notwithstanding the whole of Christ's righteousness and redemption is finished and complete, as a divine and almighty agent could make it; notwithstanding I am convinced, that God will always be faithful, to every soul to whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light; and notwithstanding none can pluck the people of Christ from His hands; still, I am no less satisfied, that it must be the feeling sense of all this, i.e. a perception wrought in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, that will give you and me the comfort of the Father's gracious decrees, and of the Messiah's finished work.

I know it is growing very fashionable to talk against spiritual feelings. But I dare not join this cry. On the contrary, I adopt the Apostle's prayer, that our love to God, and the manifestations of His love to us, may abound yet more and more, "*in knowledge and all feeling*" (Philippians 1:9). And it is no enthusiastic wish, in behalf of you and of myself, that we may be of the number of those "godly persons," who, as our Church justly expresses it, "feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things." Indeed, the great business of God's Spirit is, to draw up and to bring down. To draw up our affections to Christ, and to bring down the unsearchable riches of grace into our hearts. The knowledge of which, and earnest desire for it, are all the feelings I plead for. And, for these feelings, I wish ever to plead. Satisfied as I am, that, without some experience and enjoyments of them, we cannot be happy, living or dying.

Let me ask you, as it were, one by one; has the Holy Spirit begun to reveal these deep things of God in your soul? If so, give Him the glory of it. And, as you prize communion with Him; as you value the comforts of the Holy Ghost; endeavour to be found in God's way, even the high way of humble faith and obedient love: sitting at the feet of Christ, and desirous to imbibe those sweet, ravishing, sanctifying, communications of grace, which are at once an earnest of, and a preparation for, complete heaven when you come to die. God forbid, that we should ever think lightly of religious feelings! For, if we do not in some degree feel ourselves sinners, and feel that Christ is precious; I doubt

the Spirit of God has ever been savingly at work upon our souls.

Nay, so far from being at a stand in this, our desires after the feeling of God's presence within, ought to enlarge continually, the nearer we draw to the end of our earthly pilgrimage: and resemble the progressive expansion of a river, which, however narrow and straitened when it first begins to flow, never fails to widen and increase, in proportion as it approaches the ocean into which it falls.

God give us a gracious spring-tide of His Spirit, to replenish our thirsty channels, to swell our scanty stream, and to quicken our languid course! If this is not our cry, it is a sign, either that the work of grace is not yet begun in us; or that it is indeed at low water, and discoloured with those dregs, which tend to dishonour God, to eclipse the glory of the Gospel, and to spread clouds and darkness upon our souls.

Some Christians are like decayed mile stones; which stand, it is true, in the right road, and bear some traces of the proper impression: but so wretchedly mutilated and defaced, that they, who go by, can hardly read or know what to make of them. May the blessed Spirit of God cause all our hearts, this morning, to undergo a fresh impression; and indulge us with a new edition of our evidences for heaven! O, may showers of blessing descend upon you, from above! May you see, that Christ, and the grace of God in Him, are all in all! Whilst you are upon earth, may you ever ascribe the whole glory to Him! And sure I am, that, when you come to heaven, you will never ascribe it to any other.
