

A

7

DESCRIPTION

O F

Justifying Faith;

T H E

EFFECTS of FAITH;

A N D

CHRIST'S *visible* CHURCH.



Taken from the 2^d Vol. of the *WORKS* VOL.

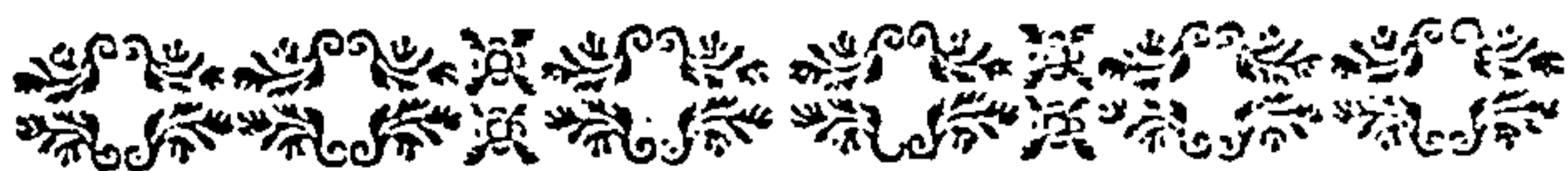
Mr. J O H N G L A S.

C A R M A R T H E N,

Printed by JOHN ROSS, in LAMMAS-STREET.

M, DCC, LXVIII.

[Price THREE-PENCE.]



A Description of justifying Faith.

ROM. iv. 12.

Who — walk in the steps of that faith of our Father Abraham.

GOD, who condemned all men to death for one transgression of his law, will never justify any man by what he can work in obedience to a law which he in any point transgresses. And we may find this in the action of our conscience upon any one sin.

THE apostle having shewed both *Jews* and *Gentiles* to be all under sin, and therefore incapable to be justified by what they can work, declares that God manifests his justice, as well as his grace, in justifying sinners by what they believe Him testifying concerning Jesus Christ: even as he justified *Abraham*, not by what he wrought, but by what he believed; as the Scripture saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*, verse 2, 3.

THERE are two senses of *justifying* in Scripture. 1. It signifies the making of one just or righteous who is unjust, as verse 5. — *that justifieth the ungodly*. See chap. v. 19. and 2 Cor. v. 21. 2. It signifies the declaring of one just who is already just; as when God is said to be justified, chap. iii. 4; and as when *Paul* says of himself, 1 Cor.

iv. 4. *I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

WE have an instance of both these justifications in *Abraham* the father of the faithful. He was declared to be just, and so justified, when he offered up *Isaac*; as the apostle *James* says, against those who would be declared just by their believing, without these works which are the necessary fruits and evidences of true belief. *James* ii. 20, —23. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* Thus we see, that a man who is justified or made just by faith, is justified or declared just by his works wherewith his faith works, and not by his believing without these works. For this justification of *Abraham*, by faith working with his works, was long after his justification by faith, or by what he believed, without works, long after the time of which the Scripture saith, he *believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.* So that his justification by his works with which his faith wrought, was the declaration of his being already just by his faith, or by what he believed. And by this he was called the friend of God, who had been long before made his friend. For *James* says, that, in this last justification, *the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend*

friend of God. So it was the declaration of the first.

THE apostle *Paul*, upon the question, Whether a sinner be made just by what he works, or by what he believes? opposing them who would be made just by their works, or become the friends of God by what they work, speaks in this passage of that first justification of *Abraham* by faith, before his circumcision, and before faith wrought with his work of offering his son to declare him just, when he became not just by what he wrought, but by what he believed. And so he says, verse 2,—6. *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath to glory, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness: even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*

THERE was a righteousness in *Abraham's* faith, which was imputed to him. And that same righteousness is imputed to sinners, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, not working, but believing the same thing that *Abraham* before believed. For the apostle says, verse 22,—25.—*It was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.* There is a righteousness revealed in the word of God which we believe. This righteousness was before set forth to *Abraham* in God's

word of promise to him ; and it is now set before us in the gospel, as already wrought by that seed of *Abraham* whom God had raised up from the dead, even Jesus Christ, delivered for the offences of sinners of all nations without difference, and raised again for their justification. That this same righteousness was promised to *Abraham*, is manifest from the apostle's explication of that promise, which he believed, *Gal. iii. 8,—14.* *And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through Jesus Christ.*

BUT though the righteousness contained in the promise that *Abraham* believed, be the very same that is now declared to have been wrought by Christ his seed, who is raised from the dead ; and though it be imputed to us believing, even as it was to him believing : yet there was something in the matter of his faith different from ours. For he was called to believe, when he had no hope of being a father, that He in whom all nations should be blessed would be of his seed ; so that he, who was going childless, should be the father of many nations. God said to him, *Gen. xv. 4, 5, 6.* *He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them ; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord ; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Now

Now the apostle makes this in *Abraham's* faith, which is different from ours, the example or pattern to our believing on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. And so he gives us a lively description of justifying faith, by pointing out the steps of *Abraham's* believing in Him who quickeneth the dead, to become the father of many nations ; and by shewing us, that we walk in the steps of that faith, when we believe in Him that raised up Christ from the dead, to become righteous, or to be justified.

AND these are the steps of *Abraham's* faith, that he points out to be walked in by us believing unto righteousness.

1. He believed to become a father, according to that which was spoken, verse 18. He had no ground for his persuasion, but the word of God ; and as God spake, so he believed. Even so we, in believing to be justified, are no more going upon our own experience and reasonings than did *Abraham* ; but we are hearkening to the gospel setting forth the resurrection of Christ, that great fact wherein God shews the truth of his testimony concerning his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased ; and we are giving credit to him who shews himself as God in that testimony ; and as God says, so we believe.

It is the business of faith to hear God's voice in revelation ; and justifying faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. God revealed himself in divers manners to the fathers, especially by a voice, which they that heard knew to be the voice of God ; as *Adam* hearing the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, and *Elijah* hearing the still small voice. Revelation is now perfected in the scriptures of the apostles and

prophets. We can no more now hear any new revelation, nor such a voice as they heard of old. The word of the Lord comes not to us in a vision, speaking to us as to *Abraham*; but we hear God speaking to us in the scriptures; and as many as believe, hear the voice that raises the dead, (*John* chap. 5.) and know it is the word of the Lord. We were made capable (in distinction from the brutes) of corresponding with God in this way. And we see this correspondence betwixt God and man both before and after the fall. Yea, notwithstanding our disobedience to God's word, we have still his voice in our conscience: for, however we reason against it, we know the judgment of God by the testimony of our conscience. And by this we are capable of revelation, and of divine teaching thereby. We may have received the scriptures by tradition; we may have reasoned ourselves into an opinion that God is the author of them; but have we heard God speaking in them? as the apostle says to Christians, *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*; and as Jesus said, *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to me*. When God proposes to make us live, not by our own labour, but by what he tells us, *Is. lv. 2, 3.* he says, *Hear, and your soul shall live*. The dead in trespasses and sins hear the voice of God, and live, even as the dead in their graves shall hear it, and come forth, *John v. 24, 25, 28, 29.* We do not reason ourselves into faith; but the gospel of the apostles comes to us, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and we hear God speaking in the scriptures, as *Abraham* heard him speaking to him by the voice, and as the dead shall hear his voice:

voice : and we give the same credit to God as *Abraham* did.

2. ABRAHAM, in believing to become a father, according to that which was spoken, respected God, not as concurring with nature, but as working beyond the course of nature altogether. *He believed God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were,* verse 17. If he had become a father in the natural way, his body not having been yet dead, even that could not have been without God, in whom he lived, and moved, and had his being ; and he was to be respected in it as the author of nature, and as directing and influencing its whole course. But when God said to him, who, according to nature, behoved to go childless, *So shall thy seed be,* he could not believe this without respecting God as reversing the course of nature, like as in raising the dead. He looked on the saying of God which he believed, as on his calling the world out of nothing ; or as his saying to the darkness, *Let it be light, and it was light.*

AND he that works righteousness, and is not guilty, may look to God for justification in the natural way, as one that knows himself fit for being accounted righteous. But a sinner, not working, but believing on God as justifying the ungodly, must respect him, in believing, as acting quite beyond the course of nature, even as raising the dead, and calling those things that be not as though they were. Philosophy, that follows the course of nature, and traces the connection of things in that course, must utterly fail a man here. He goes out of its sphere the moment he believes on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, for our justification. As nature is reversed in
that

that resurrection, to believe to be justified through that, is to look to God for justification out of the way of nature altogether. And as the life we are intitled to in that justification is a supernatural life with Jesus Christ from the dead, no wonder if our believing to be thus justified be declared the effect of the operation of God who raised him. Nor need we wonder, if the works wherewith this faith works, and whereby it shews itself, be beyond the sphere of what we call moral virtue.

3. ABRAHAM believed *in hope against hope* to become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, verse 18. He could find nothing about himself whercupon to found his hope of becoming a father: but, on the contrary, he saw every thing opposite to such a hope, and serving to make him desperate about it; as *his body now dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb*. Yet, in believing that which was spoken, he had the most sufficient ground for his hope. The word that God spake gave him confidence, in hoping to become the father of many nations, against all that he saw otherwise opposite to that hope.

In like manner, the sinner that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, even him that raised Christ from the dead, finds nothing about himself that can encourage him to expect justification, but every thing serving to lead him to despair. If justifying grace were dispensed according to any fitness whereby one man may be differenced from another as better qualified for it; he could find no such fitness, no such qualification in him to encourage him to look for that grace, but rather the contrary; as *Paul* says of him-

himself, *Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* If his acceptance with God should go upon any terms which he must fulfil, he finds himself as much without strength to fulfil them, (and especially that of *sincerity*, *Jer. xvii. 9.*) as *Abraham* found himself for becoming a father when his body was now dead. In a word, he views himself in that same point of light wherein the divine mercy held men in sending the Son of God to die for them, and wherein his death respected them, *i. e.* as *sinners*, and *enemies to God*; as *ungodly*, and *without strength*, chap. v. 6, 8, 10. and so he works not to make himself righteous, but, seeing all his works against the hope of his justification, prays, as the publican, *Be propitious to me, a sinner.* For, in believing or giving credit to the testimony of the gospel concerning the resurrection of the Son of God, who, when we were yet without strength, in due time died for the ungodly, and rose again for their justification, he finds good ground for the hope of being justified by that revealed righteousness which is unto all and upon all that believe, without difference. He sees good ground to hope for the *blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works.* So his hope of being justified is against his feeling and experience; but it is according to his faith. For there is a glorious ground of hope in that which he believes. And so he walks in this step of *Abraham's* faith, *believing in hope against hope.*

4. THERE was such a certainty in *Abraham's* faith, such a firm persuasion of that which was spoken, that no objection could stand in his mind against the truth of it, and no room was left there for a thought of the possibility of its being false. He behoved to be very certain, that what was
spoken

spoken was the word of God, and so assent to it as His testimony, for whom it is impossible to lie: for he believed God; he gave credit to Him, who calleth those things which be not as though they were. And such was his confidence in the word of God, that the consideration of *his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, and of the deadness of Sarah's womb,* was not able to shake it. His faith did not admit this to consideration as an objection against the word of God. So he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief — being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform, verse 19, 20, 21.

AND such a certainty there is in the faith of Abraham's children believing on Him that justifieth the ungodly; as we may see from such texts as these. *Luke i. 1. — Which are most surely believed among us. John vi. 69. We believe, and are sure. John xvii. 8. I have given to them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. Heb. xi. 1. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. iii. 14. We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. 1 Thess. i. 5. Our gospel — came unto you — in much assurance. 1 Thess. ii. 13. Ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 John v. 9. 10. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. — He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. Heb. x. 22. Let us draw near — in full assurance of faith. James i. 6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*

THE faith of miracles was a type or sign of the faith that is to the saving of the soul, even as the miracles were signs of that eternal salvation which is by faith. And we see that faith always opposed to doubting.

HE that believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, cannot be doubting of that which he hears God saying. And the consideration of his own unfitness to be justified, even the impossibility of his being justified in the natural way, cannot make him stagger at the word of God; cannot shake his persuasion, that God who raised Christ from the dead, for the justification of sinners, is able to make him, a sinner, blessed by the imputation of righteousness without works. For he looks on the word of God which he believes, as of the same power with that by which the worlds were framed, calling the things that be not as though they were, even as did *Abraham*. And so the faith of God's word has a certainty in it, that philosophy cannot boast of.

BUT we must not think, that he who is thus certain of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to make him just, is yet assured, that this righteousness is imputed to him, and that he is made just by it. For the word of God concerning the resurrection of Christ for the justification of sinners, testifies indeed abundantly the sufficiency of his righteousness to justify the ungodly, and assures him that believeth of justification: but it does not testify that this righteousness is imputed to us not believing, or if we believe not; nor does it assure him that believeth not of justification, but the contrary. And so it cannot appear any other way, nor can we be any other way sure, according to the word of God,
that

that he imputes this righteousness to us, but by our faith working with our works, as *Abraham's* faith did with his works when he was declared to be just. When we believe on Him that raised up Christ for the justification of the ungodly, we believe *that we may be justified* by this. And the hope that arises from this faith or belief, is the hope of being made just, or of becoming just, by the imputation of this righteousness. And so the certainty or assurance that is in this faith, is the assurance of this, that the righteousness of the Son of God, raised for the justification of the ungodly for whom he died, is enough to justify us ungodly sinners ; is sufficient, without more, to make us just.

THIS certain firm persuasion of the power of Christ's resurrection to justify us, is much like the faith that Jesus called for in the case of miraculous healing, *Matth. ix. 28, 29. Believe ye that I am able to do this?—According to your faith be it unto you.* The leper professed this faith, who came to him, saying, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* He was at his mercy, who was no way obliged to apply his healing power to him ; but he made no question of his power to heal him. He was fully persuaded of his ability to do it : and by this faith he was healed ; for *Jesus said upon it, I will, be thou clean.* But to him that said, *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us ;* his answer was, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* This man knew, that Jesus, and his disciples likewise, had cast out devils, and cured many. But as he had brought his son to the disciples, and they could not cure him, he did not know if Christ's power extended to this grievous case.

case. So he doubted of his ability, and did not believe it with a *particular application* to this case wherein he needed it. And the Lord's answer to him plainly signifies, that the defect lay there, and that he ought to believe him able to do this that he wanted. And such is the *particular application* that is in justifying faith. For, seeing these miraculous cures were signs of his power to forgive sins, faith in his blood for the remission of sins answers to the faith of those who were healed. And so the doubting that is opposed to faith in the blood of the Son of God for justification by the remission of sins, must be our hesitating about the sufficiency of that blood alone to justify us, and our not being fully persuaded, by the testimony of God, that it is able to make us just, when we can find nothing about ourselves to contribute to our justification, but every thing making against it

5. ABRAHAM gave glory to God, when he believed in hope against hope, according to what was spoken, and was strong in that faith, verse 20.

If he could have contributed any thing toward the making good of that which was spoken; he had then something to glory in before another not so fit as he. But when it was quite otherwise, he gave God the whole glory of that which he believed God alone was able to perform. His faith glorified him as God who raises the dead, and calls those things that be not as though they were.

EVEN so, when we work not to make ourselves just, but believe on him that raised Jesus for the justification of the ungodly, we give him the whole glory of our justification, as not pretending to contribute any thing toward it ourselves,

but acknowledging him who distinguishes himself as God, and manifests his glory in this justification.

A SINNER that studies to be made fitter than another for being justified, cannot be believing the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to justify him, nor glorifying God who justifies the ungodly by that righteousness. He that would work to make himself righteous, must suppose to himself a God that will not punish every transgression, nor curse every one that continues not in all things commanded. He must suppose to himself a God that will justify by an imperfect righteousness; and so loves not righteousness nor hates iniquity as God, but as he would pretend to do himself. But he that believes on Him who raised Jesus from the dead for the justification of sinners, respects him as God, shewing the infinite opposition of his goodness unto all iniquity, in the death of Christ delivered for the offences of sinners, and shewing his love to righteousness, as justifying by a perfect righteousness, in raising him from the dead; even that righteousness which the Son of God finished on the cross: and so, not being ignorant of the justice of God, he goes not about to establish his own righteousness, but glorifies the name of the righteous Father, whom the world knew not, as that name is manifested by Jesus Christ.

AGAIN, The sinner that works to make himself just, must suppose to himself a God that has no mercy to shew to the worthless and miserable, [the only proper objects of mercy], nor any grace to manifest but unto those who differ from others by some excelling qualification. He must suppose

pose to himself a God who cannot shew mercy to whom he will, but according to those differences whereby sinners may glory over one another, saying, as the Pharisee, *God, I thank thee I am not as other men, — or as this publican.* But he that believes on him who raised Christ for the justification of sinners, acknowledges the glory of the divine mercy and grace sending the Son of God, substituting him in the room of the ungodly to whom God would shew mercy, delivering him for their offences, and raising him for their justification, without respect to any difference wherein one man can find himself excelled by another. This is to shew mercy like God. Justification is by faith, that it might be by this grace. And he that works not, but believes to be justified by grace freely through the redemption that is in Christ's blood, gives God the glory of his mercy, saying, as the publican, *God be propitious to me, a sinner.* And the stronger he is in this faith, the more he glorifies God as did *Abraham.*

THUS we have seen the steps of *Abraham's* faith wherein they walk who believe in Christ for righteousness. And we may be encouraged to walk in them by these words of the prophet, *Is. li. 1, 2, 3. Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord will comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*



The EFFECTS of FAITH.

2 COR. iv. 13.

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak.

THE apostle here refers to what the Psalmist said in the name of Christ, Psal. cxvi. 10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.* And he shews us, that as Jesus believed, and therefore spake, when he was persecuted to death, for the truth; even so his apostles, suffering for that same truth which they also preached, were preserved from despair, and encouraged to hope like him by the same spirit of faith that was in him. For he says, verse 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*

BUT this spirit of faith is none of those things that were peculiar to the apostles: for *Peter* speaks thus to all true Christians, 2 *Pet.* i. 1. *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.* Even as *Paul* says to the *Philippians*, *Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel.*—Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For
unto

unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now bear to be in me, Phil. i. 27,—30. And Jesus prayed the Father, not for his apostles only, (*John* xvii. 20, 21.) but for all that shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, i. e. in the truth, having the same spirit of faith. They have it not all in the same measure; and none of them has it in that perfection wherein Jesus had it; for in all his followers the flesh lusts against the spirit of faith: But they all have it, and are all fitted by it to follow him the author and finisher of their faith, though none of them come fully up to the perfection of the pattern.

THE Holy Ghost, by whose power Jesus was conceived holy in the Virgin's womb, dwelt in him as the spirit of faith forming him into a temper and disposition suitable to the faith wherein he grew up from his infancy. And this is the Spirit of Christ, which if any man have not, he is none of his. Yea, no man can make a right profession of the faith, but by the Holy Ghost.

THE truth that Jesus believed is the same that all his followers believe unto righteousness, and confess unto salvation, even this truth that he heard from the Father at his baptism, *viz.* **THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.** This is the truth imported and demonstrated in his resurrection from the dead; this is the great scope of all scripture-revelation: and this is the word that he gave his disciples, to distinguish them from the world, that hated them for it; praying his Father, that they might be sanctified through this truth. He be-

lieved it, and therefore spake it : so do they, having the same spirit of faith.

THE Son of God was from eternity perfectly conscious of his being the same God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and of his being a distinct person from them in the same Godhead, the person to be sent forth, made of a woman, made under the law, to fulfil it for sinners, and reconcile them to God by his death, as a sacrifice well pleasing to the Father. And so he had no need to be told that he is the beloved Son of God in whom he is well pleased ; he could not have any occasion for this revelation, nor any use for the faith of it. But when he became man, he then knew this truth in his human soul, the same way that we also know it, by the same spirit of faith, opening his ear to hear the word of God, and making him give credit to the divine testimony in revelation. As he grew in wisdom, he grew up from a child in the knowledge of this truth, by means of the Old-testament scriptures, and the revelation to his mother concerning him before his conception. See *Luke* ii. 46, 47, 48, 49. When he came to the baptism of *John*, undertaking to fulfil all righteousness for his people, he therein professed the faith of his being that person by whom God should be reconciled to men, even the Son of God, made under the law, to fulfil it for sinners. And he was confirmed in this faith, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and by the Father's voice from heaven testifying the same thing that he believed from his infancy.

John the Baptist, who saw and heard this, testified of Jesus as the Son of God, who, coming from heaven, is above all that ever were sent of God to speak to men, and as the only proper object of the
Father's

Father's love. And he also testified of the Father's being well pleased in him, whom he heard undertaking to fulfil all righteousness for his people ; for he said, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* And he foretold, that this his testimony of him would be fully proved by his baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire ; as we see he did on the day of Pentecost.

JESUS, after this confirmation of his faith at *John's* baptism, and after the trial of it by the temptation of Satan, which he overcame by the word of God, confessed and preached this truth which he believed. He shewed himself to *Israel*, as the beloved Son of God, by the scriptures of the Old Testament, by the testimony of *John*, by the divine works that he wrought among them, and by the Father's voice from heaven : and, condemning their righteousness wherein they gloried, he declared to them, that he was come to fulfil the law ; that he did always those things that pleased the Father ; and that he came down from heaven to give his flesh and blood for the life of the world. When he was persecuted by the *Jews* for this truth that he believed and spake, he persevered in the belief and confession of it to the death, laying down his life upon it. And, even under the hiding of his Father's face from his soul, he confessed it to the Father, saying, *O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done ; and, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* The Holy Ghost dwelling in him as the spirit of faith, sustained him in his agony, when through that eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot a sacrifice to please the Father. The obedience he then learned from the things that he suffered, even

even the perfect submission and subjection to the will of the Father in drinking that cup, was the effect of his believing himself to be the Father's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. And by this Faith, and not by any sense or feeling of the Father's love, was his soul kept from despair in his agony, and encouraged, when exceeding sorrowful unto death, to hope for the resurrection of eternal life to himself, and to all his people.

WE may therefore look on this faith as the principle of his obedience to the death, by which we believe to be justified, and to which this belief must conform us. And we cannot rightly think of him as our pattern, without thinking of this spring of his conduct; nor can we walk as he walked, if we have not the same spirit of faith that formed his character, and conducted him in his life and death. If then we would know what must be the effects of the faith in us, we may look to the effects of it in our pattern, the author and finisher of our faith. And to this purpose let us observe the following instances.

I. THE spirit of faith influenced him to profess the truth that he believed, though the profession of it exposed him to the hatred and contempt of the world, and of the best esteemed in the world; though it made him a scorn to his enemies, and a fear to his friends, even when left alone to confess it in the certain prospect of death for it: *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.* The same appeared in the apostles and first Christians having the same spirit of faith. And we see how the profession of the faith is insisted on every where in the New Testament, and connected with salvation: *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

THE truth that Jesus and his apostles believed and spake, is signified to us in all the ordinances of the New Testament. And we confess it in the observation of these according to the institution ; as we may see from *Heb.* x. 22,—25. It is true, men observe these ordinances wherein the faith is professed without the spirit of faith, when they go about, by them, to establish their own righteousness against Christ, whose righteousness is signified in them, as that which pleases God ; even as the *Jews* did by the ordinances of worship in the Old Testament. But if any would seem to be spiritual, in shewing neglect to any of those institutions wherein the truth is signified to us, and professed by us, we may say the spirit that conducts them in this is not the spirit of faith.

2. THE spirit of faith made Jesus a despiser of tradition, with all the doctrines and commandments of men in religion, and at the same time a reverencer of divine revelation, to which he shewed the greatest respect and subjection, in the scriptures of the prophets, and in the ministry of *John* the Baptist. For divine faith depends wholly on divine revelation. Faith hears nothing but God's word ; and it hearkens to all that he says, with a respect due to the authority of the speaker : therefore it is the character of *Jesus*, and of all his followers in the faith, that they *tremble at God's word*, *Ij.* lxvi. 2, 5.

THE spirit of faith led Jesus, who shewed neglect to usages that had no foundation but in tradition, into the diligent observation of every divine precept. He observed the precepts of *Moses*, carefully keeping the passover before he suffered. And he came all the way from *Galilee* to *Jordan* to be baptized of *John*. The same spirit of faith appeared

appeared in all his first followers, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, keeping the ordinances of the gospel as the apostles delivered them, who received them from the Lord. We see how readily they submitted to baptism as soon as they believed, and how they assembled on the first day of the week to break bread. The churches, after the first church in *Jerusalem*, continued stedfastly in the doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, praising God. For when the *Gentiles* received the word of the apostles as the word of God, and it wrought effectually in them, it made them followers of the churches of God which in *Judea* were in Christ Jesus. And the forsaking of the assembling together for the observation of the ordinances, is placed as an evidence of apostasy from the faith. The believing *Jews* still observed the precepts of *Moses*, till their consciences were loosed from the obligation of them by revelation; while the believing *Gentiles* did not observe these precepts, because they had divine revelation for their not observing them. So both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as well in the things wherein they yet differed, as in the things to which they had already attained, and were agreed in, shewed subjection to the divine authority in revelation, trembling at God's word, as Jesus did before them. And upon this footing they were called to forbear one another in love, as to the things wherein they differed, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But an unity among Christians, that stands by dispensing with the neglect of any truth or precept of revelation, and by indulging a regard to the doctrines and commandments of men, cannot be called the unity of the faith. A friendship that is cultivated

vated by forbearing one another, in disregarding any commandment of God, and in the keeping of human tradition, cannot be friendship with Jesus Christ, who says, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you* ; and, *If a man love me, he will keep my words* ; and, *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings*. For *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*.

3. THE spirit of faith made Jesus a lover of the truth which he believed, and a hater of every thing opposite to that truth. *Faith worketh by charity or love* ; and it wrought in Jesus by that *charity which rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth*. He loved the Father's name, manifested in that truth as infinitely *just and merciful*. And he loved them that were of that truth, *for the truth's sake*, which he gave them, and they received. Therefore he said to his Father, *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared to them thy name, and will declare, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them*. While he delighted in them that were of the truth, he considered them as opposite to the world, that hated them for the sake of the truth that they received from him ; and he loved them because they were not of the world : for he took no pleasure in worldly men. He considered the best esteemed among them (who were the most self-righteous) as the greatest haters of the divine name, enemies both to the mercy and justice of God manifested in the truth that he heard from the Father ; and he looked on them with anger and grief. Yea, he was also displeased with his disciples when at
any

any time they shewed a temper opposite to the truth that they believed. He considered the best of the unbelieving *Jews* who opposed that truth as the children of the devil; and he ascribed any opposition to it that he found in his disciples, to the influence of Satan upon them. SUCH WAS HIS CHARITY.

His commandment to his followers in the faith is, That they love one another, even as he loved them; and they were distinguished from the beginning by their obedience to this command. The scriptures of the apostles are full of exhortations to it, as the native fruit and proper evidence of unfeigned faith. And they every where direct Christians in the outward expressions and practice of that love, which is their obedience to the gospel. For the followers of Jesus love one another, not in word and in tongue, but in work and in truth, as he did.

BUT as Jesus believed, that he was to reconcile enemies to God, and so gave his life for them a sacrifice well pleasing to the Father; his charity, the fruit of this faith, wrought also in the way of benevolence or good-will to those whom he looked on as his enemies for the sake of the truth, and who persecuted him to death for it in their ignorance and unbelief. So he prayed, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And he requires the same good-will to enemies in his followers; commanding them to love their enemies, to bless them, to pray for them, and to do them good.

JESUS is a pattern to his followers in the faith, not only in doing good especially to the household of faith, as to whom charity rejoices with the truth, but also in doing good to all men, to-ward

ward whom it works in the way of grace and good-will. His whole obedience to the death was a work of grace and mercy to miserable sinners, to the worthless and wretched; for the end of it was to reconcile them to God. He went about always doing good, relieving the distressed. And though he himself was supported by the liberality of those that ministered to him of their substance; yet we see his little bag, that was sometimes empty, was open to the poor. His doctrine of almsgiving, against covetousness, was ridiculed by the Pharisees, who gave much alms. And the good works that are required throughout the New Testament, as the fruits and evidences of faith, are works of mercy and almsdeeds; to be done to all men, but especially to the household of faith.

THE charity of Jesus, or his love to the truth that he believed and spake when he was greatly afflicted, shewed itself also in enduring all that affliction for the sake of that truth. And so he is the pattern of the charity that *endureth all things*. The Christian zeal is the fervency of the Christian charity; and as that zeal is the zeal of good works, so it likewise appears in resisting unto blood, striving against sin, after his example, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and endured the cross. The Jews had a *zeal of God* that moved them to persecute him for the truth; but, in opposition to these children of the devil, his zeal shewed itself in suffering for the truth. In like manner, his first followers counted all things loss for the excellency of the truth, and suffered the loss of all things for it. And we see from this same passage, that the apostles looked on the truth, which they also believed and spake, as a precious *treasure* in their possession,

D

possession, for the sake of which they loved not their lives to the death.

Now, this is that charity, or love of the truth, that is opposite to the love of the world, and to all its lusts, and can dwell only in a heart purified by faith. This is that great effect of the faith, in Jesus, and in all those that have the same spirit of faith. Others may talk of this Christian virtue; but they can know nothing about it.

4. THE spirit of faith in Jesus, was the spring of that *sincerity and truth* in Him, in whose mouth guile was not to be found. There was a perfect agreement betwixt the belief of his heart and the confession of his mouth. He believed, and therefore he spake; not as the Pharisees, drawing near to God with the mouth, instantly worshipping day and night by sacrifice in the profession of the hope of the promise of Christ made to the fathers, while their hearts were far removed from him in the way of self-righteousness. And these are followed by men professing with the mouth in the Christian worship, that God is well pleased in his beloved Son; and, under this same profession, going about to establish a righteousness of their own, and to reconcile themselves to God another way. Thus their profession of the faith is a lie: And for this anti-christ is called a liar. In opposition to his followers, it is said of the followers of the Lamb, whose blood makes them without fault before the throne, *That in their mouth was found no guile.* Agreeably to this says the Psalmist, *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit no guile.* And he gives this character of an inhabitant of God's house, *That he speaketh the truth in his heart.* The truth that Jesus believed and spake, is the spring of all the
real

real sincerity that is to be found in the hearts of men. The apostles preached it in *simplicity and godly sincerity*; and, as the apostle says in this passage, *renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.* And *singleness of heart* was from the beginning the remarkable effect of it in them that believed it; therefore it is said, *Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23, 25. If so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. — Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

THEY who would please God by sincerity, and make that which they suppose or seek to find in themselves the term of their acceptance with Him, would do well to examine their sincerity in this profession, That God is well pleased in his beloved Son. For if this faith be not unfeigned, if they do not unfeignedly love this truth, and them that are of it, there is no sincerity in them. No man can be sincere in this profession without the spirit of faith. And every one that is sincere in this profession, puts off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.

5. THE *humility and self-denial* of Jesus was the effect of the spirit of faith in him. For believing himself to be the Son of God come down from heaven, to give his flesh and blood for the life of the world; therefore, having taken upon him the form of a servant, and being found in

fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. When he condescended to wash the feet of his disciples, and Peter refused it, he signified to him, that if he did not humble himself, and condescend farther to wash him from his sins in his own blood, he could have no part with him: And when he called his disciples to humility and self-denial, in serving one another, he set his own example before them in this manner, *For even the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.* When Peter, who had confessed the faith of the Son of God, shewed aversion to his humbling himself to the death, he rebuked him severely; and assured all his followers, that they must deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him. The same mind must be in them that was also in Him, if they have the same spirit of faith, and believe the same truth that He believed. It was in the faith of this truth, that He shewed the greatest self-denial, and most humble submission to the will of the Father, when he said, *Not my will, but thine be done*: for he looked on himself in the view that is expressed in these words, *Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and sin-offering thou didst not will, neither wast well pleased, (which are offered by the law:) then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. — For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 8, 9, 10, 14.* So, believing himself to be the Son of God, in whose sacrifice of Himself the Father is well pleased, He yielded Himself to the death for His pleasure
in

in the eternal reconciliation of His people unto Him : and they who believe this same truth for their justification, must be thereby self-denied and humble ; as they see the Son of God humbled to death for the pride that separated them from God, and behold how agreeable humility and self-denial is to God ; and as they know that he is not to be well pleased in them, through any excelling qualification whereby they may glory over other men, but only in his beloved Son, by whose one offering all sorts of sinners, without distinction, are eternally consecrated to God. The faith of this in a sinner drawing near to God, strikes at the root of all his pride ; while they that would presume to please God, in the way of thanking him that they are not as other men, (let it be even for their humility,) are cherishing within their hearts the very spring of all that pride that is hateful to God, and from which they must be converted, and become as little children, or never enter his kingdom.

THE love of the truth that Jesus believed and spake, is described in opposition to all the work of pride, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. *Charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.* And therefore the apostle John, exhorting Christians to love one another for the truth's sake, always speaks to them as *little children*, made so by the knowledge of the truth. Jesus, who believed and spake this truth, is pointed out to us in these words, *Psal. cxxxi. My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty : neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned*

And all they who have this for the ground of their hope of acceptance with God, must be the same way disposed, must be learning of Him this same meekness and lowliness of heart. As Jesus sought not his own glory, but the honour of Him that sent him, when he spake this truth that he believed, and was greatly afflicted; even so we see from this passage how his apostles behaved, believing and speaking the same truth, verse 5. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.* Their pretended successors have behaved manifestly in the very contrary way, to the reproach of Christianity. But this came to pass through their *departing from the faith*, as the apostles foretold.

6. THE spirit of faith in Jesus caused him to hope for the joy that was set before him in the word, that comforted him under his great affliction. For faith in him, as well as in all his people, answers to this description that the apostle gives of it, *Heb. xi. 1. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* And so he says in this passage, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*

THE hope of Jesus is thus described by the Psalmist, *Psal. xvi. 9, 10, 11.—My flesh shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in the separate state; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: fulness of joys with thy countenance, pleasures at thy right hand for evermore.* In this hope he commended his departing spirit into the Father's hands, and promised to the thief on the cross the happiness

ness of the heavenly paradise, that very day, with him in the separate state. And we see, from the beginning of the following chapter, that the apostles, having the same spirit of faith, expected, upon the dissolution of the body, to be present with the Lord Jesus in heaven, to be *at home* there with him from whom they were now *absent* in the body, and to *see* him there in whom they now *believed*. Jesus hoped to be made full of joy with the Father's countenance, that was hid from his soul for the sins of his people, and promised himself fulness of joy in the nearest view and most lively sense of that which he saw not, but only believed, when he was greatly afflicted; even the sense of the Father's being well pleased in him. He hoped that his soul, beholding the Father's reconciled face, would have communion with the Father in that same divine glory that he, the Son of God, had with him before the world was. And he will give this same glory to the souls of them that believe, who *being justified by faith, rejoice in hope of the glory of God*.

JESUS expected that the Father, well pleased in his obedience to the death, would reward it by a glorious life from the dead at his right hand. He hoped for this reward as the full manifestation of the Father's infinite satisfaction and delight in the *doing of his will* by his beloved Son. He looked for a reward, in that life from the dead, suitable to the dignity of his divine person condescending to do this service, and in the enjoyment of which he would appear like himself, and as it becomes the Son of God to appear. So that if he was humbled to death in the body prepared to him when he came to do the Father's will, he hoped to be exalted in that body by a glorious life from the dead on the Father's right hand, reigning in
midst

midst of his enemies till they be made his foot-stool, judging the world, and inheriting all things made new, as heir of all things ; and by this he expected that the divine glory of his person, which he had with the Father before the world, and which was veiled in his humiliation, should shine forth in its brightness to angels and men. Therefore he prayed the Father in these words, *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was.*

As Jesus hoped for this glorious life from the dead to himself, and to all his people, as his reward ; so all that have the same spirit of faith hope to share with him, as joint heirs, in that reward of his doing that will of the Father whereby they are justified. And so the apostle says in this context, *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.* They that have the spirit of faith hope for his coming, having his reward with him, to give to every one of them according to his works of love to the truth manifesting their belief of it. And they are encouraged in the work of faith and labour of love, and in suffering for the truth, by that Holy Spirit of promise giving them fellowship with Jesus Christ in light of the Father's countenance, as an earnest of the glory that shall be revealed in them ; so that *hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost.* And this is the Christian hope that every man must be a stranger to who has not the spirit of faith.

7. THE *patience* of Jesus was the effect of the spirit of faith in him when he was greatly afflicted. And this patience appeared in his apostles
having

having the same spirit of faith, as we see from this text and context. Patience includes faith, and all the other effects of it, as being our abiding and continuing in them under the trial of faith. Therefore James says, *Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* The trial of faith gives room to the whole work of faith. And patience includes all that work. But hope is an especial ingredient of it. Therefore it is called the *patience of hope.* And we see it was so in Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.* Patience in suffering with Christ, and consolation by the following glory, is the great scope of the scriptures of the prophets, in whom *the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* And the gospel, preached by the apostles with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, declaring the sufferings of Jesus, with his following glory, and calling us to suffer with him, that we may be glorified together, is wholly a doctrine of patience and consolation. So that God, manifested in the gospel, is by this distinguished, and from this styled, *The God of patience and consolation.* And they who believe to be justified by Christ's patience, and look for the glory following his sufferings, must *arm themselves with the same mind,* to suffer with him who *hath suffered for them in the flesh.* Therefore we find Paul, professing his faith in Christ's righteousness, and love to that, in opposition to his own; at the same time shewing a strong desire toward the *fellowship of his sufferings,* and *conformity to his death,* that so he might *attain to that resurrection of the dead.* And he tells us, that all true Christians must be *thus minded.*

W H E N

WHEN men professing Christianity departed from the apostolic faith, they studied to shun suffering persecution for the cross of Christ. And having got hold of worldly power to defend themselves from persecution, they departed from Christ's command of *subjection to the powers that be*; and they at last employed that power to persecute in the name of the *patient Jesus!* But this is one of the characters of Antichrist; in opposition to whom we find the character of Christ's followers in the faith thus stated in the book of Revelation: *He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword,* (compare *Matth. xxvi. 52.*) *Here is the PATIENCE and the FAITH of the saints.*

HAVING thus mentioned the most remarkable effects of faith in Jesus, and having at the same time observed how they appeared in those who had the same spirit of faith; we may now, by these, reflect upon our belief, and see if it can appear unfeigned by its proper fruits. For if we have that same spirit of faith, it must have the same effects in us: and if we have it not, we are none of Christ's, we are not Christians.

LET us shew our faith by its fruits. And if we cannot pretend to come up to the perfection of the sinless pattern, we may go forth by their footsteps who stand in the New Testament as patterns of the imitation of Christ, having the flesh in them lusting against the spirit of faith, as well as we. The Hebrews are put in mind of the apostles, who first preached the gospel to them, and were their first presbyters or bishops in Jerusalem, when it is said to them, *Heb. xiii. 7. Remember your rulers who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the*
end

end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Paul appears in the New Testament as the pattern of the long-suffering and grace of our Lord exceeding abundant to sinners, with faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. And if we be partakers of that grace, to them that believe in Christ to eternal life, whereof we have a pattern shewed us in Paul; then we must take him likewise for our pattern in following Christ; as he says, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ; and as he also says, Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you. Those things which they had heard and seen in Him, are the same that he calls, true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. And these were the effects of faith. In these lay the virtue of the first followers of Jesus, and these had the praise among them.

CHRIST'S



CHRIST'S visible CHURCH.

ACTS xiv. 23.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fastings, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

EVERY Church: *i. e.* every one of the congregations in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. The church of Israel, though a nation, was yet but one congregation, assembling in one place, and all partaking of one altar; even as all the Israel of God, the true church, prefigured by that, draws near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, all partaking of the one, true, heavenly altar, as one congregation. And so is every visible church, representing that true church, which is invisible, as the instituted sign of it, a congregation coming together in one place to eat the Lord's supper. There is the highest ordinance of Christian worship; and there are set all the ordinary Christian church-officers, the *bishops* or *presbyters*, and the *deacons*: and so we behold Christ's visible church only there. It cannot be pretended, by any of the vain disputers upon the foolish questions about the ecclesiastical government of the nations of this world, that there were more Christians in any of those cities, than might assemble in one place to eat the Lord's Supper. And there are not two sorts of visible churches in the New Testament.

T H E S E churches were congregations of
Christ's

Christ's disciples, or believers in Him through the word of his apostles; as it is expressly said here, *When they had preached the gospel in that city, and had made many disciples, they returned again to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch; confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fastings, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.* The apostles, according to the Lord's commission to them, first made disciples by teaching, immediately baptizing the disciples and their houses, them and all theirs: and after that, they confirmed them in the faith of the truth that they taught them, joining them together in churches for the observation of all things whatsoever the Lord commanded them to teach the disciples to observe; and especially for the observation of his new commandment of love one to another for the sake of the truth dwelling in them; and that they might be companions in suffering the hatred of the world for that truth's sake. The apostles therefore looked on all those whom they gathered into churches, or congregations, to eat the Lord's supper, as having the truth dwelling in them; and so they behoved every one of them to look upon another; seeing they could not love one another as brethren in the truth, without acknowledging that truth as dwelling in them. And so we see the apostles, in their writings to the churches, supposing all their members objects of this brotherly love, and commanding them to put away from among them any one that appeared otherwise. They find fault with them for the neglect of any of the offices of this love one to another. They

require them all to love one another with this love; and above all things to have fervent charity amongst themselves. And they commend them highly, when the love of every one of them all toward each other aboundeth. Christ's visible church, then, is the congregation of those whom the apostles could call *the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus*.

THEIR joining the disciples together in the church or congregation assembling as one body to eat the Lord's supper, served to confirm their souls in the faith of the truth that they taught them, and to make them steadfast in suffering for that truth. Thus the disciples in Jerusalem appeared steadfast in the faith, continuing steadfastly in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. And the apostle connects the *order* of the church in *Colosse*, with the *steadfastness* of their *faith in Christ*: and exhorting the Hebrews to hold fast the profession of their faith, he directs them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.

ELDERS in every Church. *Elders* is the English word for the Greek *presbyters*. These are called *pastors* in relation to the church, as a *flock* which they are called to feed. And they cannot be but in a church, as being from the beginning ordained to the disciples only there. Nor is a church complete in its order, or fully fitted for assembling to eat the Lord's supper, without these elders among them. The apostles exercised this office in the church at Jerusalem from its beginning; and therefore Peter and John expressly call themselves elders. Barnabas joined the disciples at Antioch together, exhorting them all, in whom he saw the grace of God, to cleave
to the

to the Lord with purpose of heart ; but they are not called the church till Saul and he assembled themselves with them. Nor are the companies of the disciples in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, called churches, till the time when Paul and Barnabas ordained them elders. These indeed cannot be without a church ; but without them a church wants of its order, and is not completely fitted to answer its end.

THESE elders or presbyters are all ministers of the word. For, 1. This distinguishes them from the deacons, that they must be *apt to teach, or able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers.* And when the ministry of the church is distinguished into these two, *viz.* the *ministry of the word*, and the *ministry of tables*, and the service of tables is the deacon's work ; the elder, in distinction from the deacon, must be a minister of the word. 2. They are the rulers, governors, and leaders of the church : and the church of Christ is not to be governed but by his word teaching his disciples to observe what he commanded. They are not to feed the flock of God as lords over them, but as examples of obedience to his commands which they teach them to observe : for they rule among Christ's willing people. The presbyter ruling or presiding well, must therefore be a minister of the word, as well as he that labours in the word of exhortation, and as he that labours in teaching. And as to an elder that is not a minister of the word, we may say his character is not in the New Testament, and he is incapable to rule the church of God.

THE elders or presbyters are the same in scripture with bishops. Their character is the same, Tit. i. 5,—9. *For this Cause left I thee in Crete,*
E 2
that

that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless ———. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, &c. compared with 1 Timothy, chap. iii. And their work is the same. The elders are charged with the work of bishops: for as Paul bids the Ephesian elders feed the flock, the church of God over which they were made bishops; so Peter exhorts the elders to do the bishop's work. They feed the flock, they teach, they rule or preside in the church, and they lay on hands, as one of these presbyteries did on Timothy, whom some have called a bishop. One bishop in the church, set above the presbytery or company of presbyters, is an innovation that crept into the church in the end of the second century, when the presbyter ruling or presiding well in the church, began to be distinguished from the presbytery by the name of *bishop*, which the apostles had made common to all elders. (See *view of Arian heresy*, chap. 1. sect. 5.) But, even then, that bishop and presbytery was over a single congregation assembling to, and all partaking of one altar, as it was called: for there was no such thing, till long after that, as a bishop or a presbytery over many congregations, or a church made up by the union of the overseers of many churches.

THE apostles did not commit the care of any church to a single presbyter or bishop: for though these churches here may be supposed of the smallest size, Paul and Baranbas ordained a plurality of presbyters in every one of them. So we see a plurality of bishops as well as deacons in Philippi, and of presbyters, whom the apostle calls *bishops*, in the church of the Ephesians. Neither is there any thing like an instance in the New Testament,

Testament, of a church constitute by the apostles with a single presbyter or a single bishop. And thus, as there was in the *synagogue* a plurality of chief rulers, Acts xiii. 15; so likewise in the church, which the apostles called *the synagogue of Christians*, Heb. 10. 25. James ii. 2. applying the name of one of the rulers of the synagogue to the presiding presbyter in the Christian church, Rev. i. 20. *The angel of the congregation.* We have good ground then to suppose, that the apostles ordained to the Christians in Rome a plurality of bishops, as they did in every other city and church; and that Linus, Cletus, and Clements, whom tradition places in succession as single bishops there, were bishops in that church at the same time. And therefore we find tradition very dark about the succession of the first bishops of Rome.

PAUL and Barnabas *ordained them elders.* We have no such instance of the manner of ordaining presbyters or bishops, as we have of the ordination of deacons, Acts vi. And this may let us see the folly and madness of those men, who have been inflamed with so great zeal about the manner of that ordination, and have placed so much religion in it, as to make the whole of Christianity to depend on it, and to turn upon it as its hinge. And there are also men, giving but small attention to the great thing that the scripture points out as chiefly to be attended to about the ordination of presbyters, *viz.* their character, who shew great religious zeal about the call of the people, taking it for granted, that their peoples, multitudes, and nations of Christendom, have the same power in this matter that Christ's disciples had in the apostolic churches. There has been much disputing
 E 3 among

among contending parties in the Christian world, about the election of the Christian people, whether it took place originally in the ordination of presbyters or bishops, as it did in the ordination of the first deacons? And some would make this out of the Greek word that is here rendered *ordained*; contending, that it does not so properly signify the laying on of hands, as election by the stretching out of the hands; which was a manner of voting in Grecian assemblies of the people. It were well, if they were as attentive to plain things clearly said in the New Testament about the order of the first churches, as they have been to the hint that they find given them in this Greek word. But the stress of this matter needs not be laid on this, seeing there was no less importance and concern to the Christian people in the ordination of men to care for their souls, than in the ordination of men to the care of their bodily necessities, and the disposal of their alms; besides that the people behoved to contribute to the sustenance of their presbyters. And as we have no instance in the New Testament of any such deed done by the apostles, in any church, without the consent of the *whole church*; this is enough for every church going forth by the footsteps of Christ's flock. But as for any other sort of societies going under the Christian name; they have nothing to do with this matter. They may walk by their own canons.

As it is not doubted that Paul and Barnabas laid hands on these elders when they were ordained, even as the apostles in Jerusalem laid hands on the first deacons at their ordination; we may observe, that there is no such thing to be seen in the New Testament, as the ordination of any church officer with the laying on of the hands of any single person. Paul indeed

says, he put his hands on Timothy; but as this was to convey an extraordinary gift, so it appears to have been done in one of these same presbyteries that laid hands on him also. And when some confidently inquire, Who was with Titus ordaining elders in every city of Crete, if hands were laid on these? It may be told them, that this strong question goes upon a supposition very weak, because it may prove to be false, *viz.* that there were no more ministers of the word, at that time, in Crete to lay on hands: for the apostle speaks of Apollos, and of Zenas the lawyer, as with Titus in Crete, when he wrote to him, Tit. iii. 13.

PRAYED with fastings. They prayed at the ordination of these elders in each church, as the apostles did when they laid hands on the deacons of the church in Jerusalem, Acts vi. 3, 6. And they fasted in every church when they prayed on this occasion, even as the presbytery in the church at Antioch joined fasting with prayer when they separated Paul and Barnabas, by the laying on of hands, to that work to which the Holy Ghost called them, Acts xiii. 2, 3.

THE Lord, in the days of his flesh, signified that his disciples, when he should be taken from them, would fast, not as the Pharisees, but in a way more agreeable to their faith, and suitable to the state of his church and kingdom of heaven; and that they had not yet the occasions for this fasting, and were not fit for it, while they were not yet delivered from their prejudice of a secular Messiah, and a temporal Christian kingdom, Matth. ix. 14. — 17. After he was taken from them, they used fasting, not only secretly, and in their houses, according to Matth. vi. 16, 17, 18. 1 Cor. vii. 5; but in the church;

church; as we see the prophets and teachers ministering to the Lord, and fasting in the church that was at Antioch, Acts xiii. 1, 2. It was not their custom indeed to fast on the Lord's day, the only day of thanksgiving that they observed religiously. But they fasted on other days, as occasion served: for we hear not of any fixed annual or weekly fasts observed by them; but, as they had opportunity, they ministered to the Lord, and fasted. And the design of their fasting had no connection with the different interests of the kingdoms of this world: it referred to the kingdom of heaven, and the interest of that kingdom which is not of this world. The furtherance of the gospel of that kingdom was the great thing sought after in these solemn prayers that were joined with fasting; and that respects all nations without difference, which shall all hate it to the end. As the ministry of the word has the nearest connection with this great design of fasting, it was very proper to join the prayers with fasting on occasion of separating the ministers of the word to their work. Evils arising in the churches, and signs of the Lord's displeasure among them, gave them also opportunities and calls to mourn. But as to nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and the evils that make the hearts of worldly men fail for fear of those things that are coming on the world, the Lord commands his disciples not to be troubled with these things. When a king of this world calls his subjects to fast, as the king of Nineveh did his subjects, and to pray for him; Christians can fast in their assemblies at any time, except on the Lord's day: and as they are commanded to pray for kings, and all in authority, that they may lead quiet and peaceable lives,

lives, in all godliness and honesty; they may, on that occasion, join fasting with these prayers. But still, in this fasting, they must have chiefly in view the concerns of the kingdom that is not of this world, and the great salvation that is common to men of all ranks, and of all nations, without difference: because this is the reason why the apostle would have prayers to be made for all men, for kings, and all in authority, *That God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

THEY commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. This they did, when they had ordained them elders in every church, and prayed with fastings. This was the utmost that they could do to them. And having thus completed their order as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, they left them, in that order, to his care, and depending on him in whom they believed, to preserve them in the faith, and lead them thro' much tribulation into his heavenly kingdom. And this is agreeable to what the Lord said to the church of his brethren, with their two or three elders among them, to which the offended brother tells his brother's trespass, Matth xviii. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* For this makes every such church immediately dependent on heaven, and altogether independent, in binding and loosing, of any power under heaven. Therefore Paul, leaving the Ephesian presbytery, no more to see them, and charging them to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, in the foresight of false teachers arising among them, or entering among the flock as wolves, does not refer them, in this case, to the care of any bishop or superior judicature; but commends

commends them to God, and to the word of his grace. And the Lord, writing to the churches of Asia, speaks to each of them as having full power to correct evils amongst themselves, and refers them to no superior power but his own; and sets forth himself in relation to them, as *he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*; taking it wholly upon himself to set an open door, that no man can shut, before them keeping his word, and not denying his name. Every church having the scriptures, has now the apostles and prophets, as the Jews had *Moses and the prophets* in the time of our Lord, and needs not seek (as the church in Antioch to Jerusalem, Acts xv.) to any other church, or to any society of men on earth, for any part of the New-Testament revelation; which began indeed at Jerusalem, and came out from the church there; but is now perfected, and so complete in the scriptures, that no apostle nor angel from heaven can add any thing to it. Every church of the saints is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, building together in Christ for an habitation of God thro' the Spirit; and having his word and Spirit remaining amongst them, they need not go to any other church, or any assembly of church-rulers, to seek the Spirit. When the question is, Who shall keep all the churches in order, and correct any whole church walking disorderly, and doing evil? the bishop of Rome pretends to do it; a general council also pretends to do it; a diocesan bishop and a classical presbytery both pretend to hold many churches in union, and rule them as one church in the ecclesiastic government of the nations of this world. But Jesus Christ, who hath not instituted any such government

vernment for the kingdoms of this world, because his kingdom is not of this world, answers the question, as to his own churches, in this manner, *I walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks, I hold the stars in my right hand.* He rebukes and chastens the churches; and, if they repent not, removes the candlestick, or spues them out of his mouth. And he hath not given this, which he claims as his prerogative, into the hands of any man or society of men, to stand up in his place, and rule his churches; but hath made every one of them, with its own presbytery, or its own college of bishops, immediately dependent on himself; and so independent of all others.

THE apostle Peter writes to Christians, and describes them, in distinction from other men, in this manner, — *To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, in the righteousness of our God, and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

I A I T H — *in the righteousness of — Jesus Christ.* He distinguishes the faith of Christians by its especial object, *viz.* the righteousness wrought by Jesus Christ, finished in his death, and rewarded in his resurrection; which Christians believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation. Rom. x. 8, 9, 10.

THE righteousness of our God and Saviour. They who believe in his righteousness, as did the apostles, look upon him as God: for he is as expressly called the God of Christians here, where he is pointed out as the especial object of their faith, as he is called their Lord, verse 11. where his kingdom is spoke of: *The kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*
Peter,

Peter, and the other apostles, believed and confessed him to be the Son of God in the days of his flesh, in opposition to those Jews who were ready to acknowledge him as that great prophet, like Moses, and to take him by force, and make him their king; but were offended at his saying, he came down from heaven to give his flesh and blood for the life of the world, and so to give them eternal life. The Jews condemned him to death as a blasphemer, for calling himself the Son of God, so as to make himself God; and then triumphed in his death, as the decision of that great question on their side. And the disciples whose faith had been shaken by his death, again triumphed in his resurrection, as the full decision of the question on the side of their faith, declaring him to be the Son of God with power. Therefore Thomas, when he was satisfied of the truth of his resurrection, said to him upon it, *My Lord, and my God*. It is without controversy in the church of the living God, that *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. For that church is *built upon this rock*, Matth. xvi. 16, 18. And as it is built on this rock, it is *the pillar and stay of the truth*, which is confirmed as well as most firmly believed in it. In that church, Jesus is called by this name, *Jehovah our righteousness*, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, xxiii. 6. And this name whereby she calls him, is her motto, by which she stands distinguished from all other societies, chap. xxxiii. 16. For this society consists of all them, and none other but them, who have obtained the like faith, in the righteousness of their God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that the apostles had.

Who have obtained like precious faith with us.

Here

HERE the apostle Peter places himself, as well as the other apostles, on a level with all Christians, as to this faith. Every Christian is not a chosen witness of Christ's resurrection, is not inspired to make the New-Testament revelation; nor are all Christians endued with the gifts and powers that the apostles had for that purpose. Neither have they the keys of the kingdom of heaven given them, as Peter had, that by him God should open the door of faith, first to the circumcised, as Acts, chap. ii. and then to the uncircumcised, as chap. x. But as to this faith, every Christian is one with him, and with all the apostles. Every one of them obtains it the same way as Peter did, Matt. xvi. 17. *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* For they are *all taught of God*, John vi. 44, 45; and they *all know him, from the least to the greatest*, Heb. viii. 11. Whether we value this faith by what is believed, *the righteousness of our God, and Saviour*; or by the ground of belief, *the testimony of God*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. or by its cause, and the way of obtaining it, as it is *the gift of God in the behalf of Christ*, and comes by divine teaching, Eph. ii. 8. Philip. i. 29; or by its peculiar efficacy in us, conforming us to Jesus Christ, especially in *the work and labour of charity*, verse 5, 6, 7. it is as valuable, as precious, and demands as much respect and honour from us in every Christian, as in the apostle Peter.

THE design of his writing to them is, that they may, after his decease, have the things that were taught by the apostles always in remembrance, verse 15. *Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able, after my decease, to*
have

have those things always in remembrance. This he says in the foresight of false teachers to arise, chap. ii. 1. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies. He declares this to be the design of both epistles, to keep in remembrance what the first Christians heard from the apostles; and so bids them be mindful of the words of the prophets, and of the commandment of the apostles, chap. iii. 1, 2. This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you: in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of our Lord and Saviour. And he commends the whole epistles of Paul, with the other scriptures, as the guard against seduction, notwithstanding some things in them hard to be understood, and wrested by those who are not taught of God, nor stablished in the faith, chap. iii. 15, 16, 17.—Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.