

A N S W E R

TO

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PILATE'S QUESTION,

(WHAT IS TRUTH?)

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To the READER.

SINCE inquiries about what is TRUTH, in matters of religion, are become more common than in some past times; the author of the following discourse has been induced to attempt a delineation of truth itself, as that which alone contains a safe answer to all such inquiries. But as every person in the world has an interest of infinite importance in the answer to the question, what is truth? so it became necessary, in a discourse of this kind, to consult the circumstances of the lower rank, as much the most numerous part of mankind; and yet each, equally with others, interested in the contents. Accordingly, as the utmost plainness, and the utmost brevity, were necessary, to accommodate to the apprehensions of the unlearned, and to the outward abilities of many who are not able to buy a large book; so, on every branch of this extensive subject, the author, knowing of no treatise on it but the bible, has only endeavoured to exhibit the shortest, and most striking scriptural light. If his design of brevity, in favour of such as may incline to purchase a book, has prevented his illustrating some passages, so much as, perhaps, would be agreeable to some; he only desires such readers to give a little more careful attention to the genuine import of what is written; and that every one would suspend his censure, till he is sure of the sentiment; for though the sentiments, if they are contained in truth, need no favour, nor fear a censure; yet, if not, though they may find favour, no censure can be unjust. Truth, in the sense of the bible, has an almighty patron; if the following meditations are, as they are pretended to be, illustrations of that truth, and so may be used to serve its purpose; the view of their publication is abundantly answered.

PLAINFIELD, in CONNECTICUT,
September 1, 1765.

ANSWER

ANSWER to PILATE'S QUESTION,

WHAT IS TRUTH ?

JOHN xviii. 38.

THE *Jews* had two matters of capital indictment, against *JESUS* of *Nazareth*, viz. that he held himself equal with *GOD*; and that he stiled himself a king. The former they said was blasphemy, and so a breach of their law, to be punished with death. The latter, they were now fond to hold for treason against *Cæsar*. They knew *Cæsar* cared not for insults on their law, and they cared as little for insults on his, only when it served their caprice to take notice of them. So, their civil polity being yet entire, they arraign, try, and adjudge to death, its divine author, on the first indictment; but, perhaps, from consciousness of envy, as the sole reason of the process, they felt too weak for execution; so determined to drop that suit, and arraign him on the other indictment, before *Pilate*, the *Roman* governor; not doubting but he would be zealous to avenge the treason capitally in favour of his master. And, though they could not alledge overt acts in evidence, they presumed that his verbal pretensions, with the unanimity and weight of their clamours, if they did not fully support the charge, would oblige *Pilate* to judge, and proceed to execution; either to quiet the tumults of his government, or to prevent their accusing him to *Cæsar*, on a point so likely to embroil his character, and endanger his commission: For where there is design, which can't be served by truth, recourse must always be had to intrigue and stratagem. However, hoping to attain their desire, in the death of him, who was the occasional source of torture to their conscience, and save themselves the pain of being self-condemned executioners, they commence their suit before *Pilate*; who, on finding it manifest, that for envy only they had delivered him, declined imbruing his hands in innocent blood; declined also the dismissal of the prisoner, because of the heat and weight of the national tumult; so delivered him back again, to be judged by his accusers; who replied, (31st verse) that they had no statute concerning treason against an earthly sovereign, on which to ground the process. This began to open the accomplishment of what *Jesus* had said, signifying to his disciples before hand, that the death he should suffer, was very different from any originally in use among the *Jews*, 32 verse; that the *Jews* should condemn him to death; but that he should be delivered up to the *Gentiles*, to be executed in the heathen manner, on a cross, (*Mat.* xx. 17—19) that he might fully sustain the character, and endure the punishment proper to the basest of men; for there was no other death so notoriously cursed, as that, of hanging on a tree chiefly in use among the heathen. And as the bulk of those whose character and punishment he bore, were heathen, or
Gentiles;

Gentiles; so mercy designed the manner; and the place of his death being without Jerusalem, should be full of promise to those of all nations. Pilate then reassumed the affair; having first asked his divine prisoner, if he really was "the king of the Jews"? In answer to which our Saviour intimates, that if he asked it for the private satisfaction of his conscience, it should be answered accordingly; but, if with reference to the depending process, he should treat it differently, 34 *verse*. Pilate, affronted at the low-lived hint about his conscience, as a specimen of the hated religion professed among the Jews, answers in scorn, "am I a Jew," that I should have teazy trials with my conscience? 35 *verse*. Our Saviour then, plainly enough, lets him know, he was a king; but of such sort, and in such connection, as never need to alarm his fears in regard to Cæsar; for, as if he had said, "Cæsar's is a this-world's kingdom; mine is intirely of another nature; so no way infringes on Cæsar's claims; this is evident to observation; for these my disciples are the subjects of my kingdom, and you see they have no weapons of blood; they take no measures, privately or publickly, to avenge this usage of their prince, 36 *verse*. No, Pilate! my kingdom, is intirely a kingdom of truth; and so intirely of a different nature from that, for whose rights you may be jealous. The true state of the case is this; truth, which is characteristic of me, and of the kingdom I hold, has been banished in its power and dominion, from men; some disquieting hints about it only, remain in the conscience; but under all disadvantage, to reassume its influence and dominion: Now I was born, and came into the world on this only design, not to interrupt earthly powers in their proper spheres, but to exemplify the nature, and assert the rights of banished truth; and in spite of the opposition of worlds, to reinstall it, in its own native dominion and authority, in the hearts of my subjects: And this, instead of injuring, shall infinitely serve the true interests of men, and never interrupt them in their worldly rights.

"As this is the nature and design of my kingship, so all, who act on my principle, and are influenced by my views, *i. e.* are of the truth, regard my instructions, and obey my laws, without the least injury to earthly sovereignties, or any secular interests, 37 *verse*. Nay, to the advantage of them, *much every way*. So that, not the least reason of your jealousy, can be fixed on me, in fact, or design."

PILATE, teased with the perfect nonsense of the scheme, and with the mere enthusiasm of its author, can stand to hear no more; but turns off in a pett, with only, tauntingly, saying, "What is truth?" By all this, Pilate can't be supposed to suggest a denial of truth, in every sense; but to hear talk of truth, under the notion of a kingdom, or, principle of human dominion, is absurd to him. But why is his temper roiled at naming it? only because 'tis a natural office of conscience, to feel and testify of such uneasy connection with it; it naturally makes men who hear of it, more disturbed and unquiet, than they are at other things, which they view as equally foolish, or impossible. Which suggests to us,

I. THAT there is an uneasy consciousness about truth, natural to mankind. The very first instance of this kind, is hinted, Gen. iii. 7, in these words, "and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew——" *i. e.* that moment they became conscious, of what was true, viz. "that they were naked:" That their garment of righteousness, in which they were happy before, and by mean of which, to behold divine glories was blissful, is totally

gone. Now, therefore, as conscious of deep and universal contrariety to rectitude, which they view as the only object of their dread; the dreary shade of a lonely thicket, becomes consonant to their feeling, rather than the open grounds of the garden; only because of what their conscience knows is already true, and of what may further in a dreadful manner prove to be true, on their being discovered. The language of this uneasy consciousness about truth, then was, and exactly the same still is, conceal as much as possible, what is already true, and by every device, avoid what further may prove so. Our first parents acted out the dictates of this uneasy principle; and every individual of their natural descendants, ever have, and still do, on all like occasions of consciousness about what is true, or may further prove so, by means of divine light, which occasions are almost continually occurring, copy over, from the same principle, that original conduct of their first parents. Only this is at the bottom of all, lying, excusing, evading, done to conceal, or extenuate what is known to be true, or to avoid what is feared of the same kind. Only this, keeps multitudes from coming to the light, and produces the reasons daily alledged in excuse for it. The whole bible has this state of all men, full in its eye; and constant observation supports the charge. Especially when, to ease this inward uneasiness, we see persons trying with good will, to disprove or weaken the sense of their moral connection with those two persons who first acted it out.

2. THAT truth, about which there is such an uneasy consciousness among men, has no kindly entertainment with them; nor are they ever, from mere choice, in heart or life, subject to its genuine influence. Nay, that habit of contrariety to it, which moved the first persons of mankind, to hide from God, is such, that to avoid or oppose it, as condemning them, they naturally become worse for hearing of it. To this habit, JESUS CHRIST refers directly, *John xv. 22—25*, and says, “if I had not come, and spoken to them, they had not had sin.” For he spoke and exemplified truth to perfection, and indeed did nothing else;—and the very essence of sin, is aversion, or contrariety to truth. Such aversion they had, and maintained, while the son of God made truth so manifest, that they had no cloke at all for aversion to it; yet averse they will be; which the judge of all things affirms to be from mere hatred of what he said and did: For says he, “if I had not done among them, the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated, both me and my father.” And all this, he says, they did, in front of what their own bible had forewarned them was, and would be the nature of men against truth, *viz.* that they would hate it without a cause: So this is the habit still of every person born into the world; but is most remarkably verified in those, who by the gospel, have most advantage to gain some light to their conscience about truth. All men readily entertain, and yield to the influence of all that they get any notion of, as agreeable to them; yet it was an old complaint, and is of divine authority still, “no man receiveth his testimony.” See *John i. 11*; and *iii. 18, 32. Acts xxii. 18*.

3. 'Tis evident then, that the proper habit and bias of every person in the world, is the reverse of truth. Men are such as *Isaiab* stiles, “children of transgression, a seed of falsehood”. To this character the inspired psalmist bears witness, when he says, “the LORD looked down from heaven, upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God”; and the result of that divine inquisition, was, “no, not one”.

Upon

Upon which the apostle relies, *Rom. iii.*, for evidence, that all men in the world are concluded under sin, and so all guilty before God.

4. THAT the design of CHRIST's coming into the world, was, to break this empire of falshood, and to establish a kingdom of truth among men. The devil acquired the character of a liar, by not standing in the truth, but falling from it, and so became a proper instrument to inspire human nature with the *only principle of falshood*; disposing a creature to question, debate, invalidate, and set aside what God speaks, which must be true; and when 'tis evident that God speaks, what he speaks is equally evident truth. This is the only principle in the world, which obstructs the word of God; is the only seed of unbelief, and root of all disobedience. The first-born of this principle, is self-righteousness; for exactly as much as is taken from the authority of God, is always put to our own importance: And so sin is complete. The effect thence arising, always wears the motto of the father of lies, *Gen. iii.*, importing, "has God indeed said so?" "Can it be, that he means so?" And after consulting private views, the conclusion as certainly turns out to be equivalent to this, "ye shall not *surely* die", as the inquiry arose from self-love, or was stimulated by the uneasy consciousness about truth. This principle, which is notoriously in all man, and by which the relation of every person in the world to its inspirer, is determined, gave occasion to the christian advent, and is directly pointed at, *1 John iii. 8.* "For this purpose was the son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And, of course, they all who are governed by this principle, and especially they who are induced by it flatly to deny revelation, or against light to corrupt it, must perish.

'Tis evident then, that the views of CHRIST, centre in two general objects, *scil.*

1. To detect and lay open to view, this universal dominion of the principle of falshood, as giving spring to sentiment and conduct, and so giving character to the whole world; that so it may be *certainly known*, sooner or later, to individuals, without exception, that God only is true, and *every man a liar*; and so, "the glory of the Lord, shall be revealed."

2. To shew forth, and distinguish the nature of truth, as it is the direct reverse, in every point of view, to the principle of all men; and by making deep inroads on the empire of the universal principle, to establish a kingdom never to be moved, whose nature, spirit, character, and fruits, in perfect consistence with his own, shall be truth itself. So getting a people to his praise, a peculiar people, by delivering captives. Of this *Daniel* bare witness, when he said, "in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed;—it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

QUESTION. But why is *truth* represented by a kingdom?

ANSWER. 1. Falshood can't be an original principle; its notion is relative, and imports the reverse of pre-existing truth. But creatures, which are the proper, yea, the only subjects of government, were in being, and so actually subject to government before ever truth was perverted. The government, then, which all sorts of creatures, were originally made subjects of, and for which subjection they were all calculated, was a government, or kingdom of truth. Truth, therefore, is the original principle of all dominion; and all proper or consistent dominion, derives from it, as its fountain, equally inexhaustible as the Deity. Falshood, naturally, is the perversion of this principle of dominion; or, as to its influence, consists in dominion, deriving

Deriving from a principle which has *no truth* in it; consequently *no truth* can be in any subject, part, branch, or effect, of its extensive empire. In this state of subjection to perverted government, creatures were viewed, when the son of GOD was designed to become their governor. The government, then, to which he was designed, as far as ever it takes place in this world, must consist in reversing the state of things in the perverted government. And this could only be done by making truth known again, and by it reducing subjects to its allegiance; which, as it is the design and effect, of the proper operations of CHRIST, determines his whole system to be, in the strictest propriety, a *kingdom of truth*. And, as this, in its general nature, is the state of things, for subjection to which, men were originally made; so no one of them can be happy, 'till reduced to it, nor then, can fail to be so. For this reason, the relative characters, *redeemer*, and *restorer* of paths to dwell in, are proper to him, whose is the *kingdom of truth*.

ANSWER. 2. Only truth, which is ever consistent with itself, can beget, or govern moral subjects into consistency with the author, nature, and design of moral government. But these, being the unfailing virtues of *truth*, determine its influence, to be, with perfect propriety, described by a *kingdom of truth*. Therefore, as absolutely discriminating its nature and virtues, CHRIST himself says, "the *truth* shall make you free."

WHAT then, shall we understand, is *truth*?

ANSWER. Truth, is natural self-consistency:---Or, it is that, which, from its own nature, in all cases, times, and views, is consistent with itself.

Now if that which is true, in the moral sense, is always consistent; and that which is consistent, in the same sense, is always true, which is obvious; 'tis easy to see, that their respective abstracts, *viz.* truth and consistency, are of equal import. If it be said, that two villains, acting in concert, are consistent one with the other, in their views and courses; it may also be said, in the same sense, they are true to each other. But I ask, are they, or is either of them consistent? or are they not each, most inconsistent, even with himself, with what he knows to be right, or, with the natural dictates of his conscience? is he not inconsistent in his way, with his own happiness, and with every view of his duty and real interest, publick and private, temporal and eternal? But then, surely, neither they both, in their way, or either of them, in this connection, can be said to be either true or consistent, in a moral sense. But it may be said, 'tis *true*, that the old prophet lied to the man of GOD, 1 *Kings* xiii. Was it therefore consistent? In answer, I ask, was the lye true? No! Is the bible, then, only true, in saying that he lied---? doubtless; but then the bible is also, in the same thing, very consistent. That which is *true*, is right and good; why? The answer is, because it agrees every way, with that by which any thing can be determined to be right and good. But this is exactly the idea of *consistent*. The truthness of all things, not directly, & *sine mediis*, produced by divine agency, is owing to the intervention of means, or second causes; but so is not the abstract, truth itself. Therefore, if truth itself is consistency, it must be natural consistency, or such consistency as is necessary in case of an original. 'Tis as easy to see, that if truth is natural consistency, or consistency in original, it must also be natural self-consistency; for this plain reason, *viz.* because there can be nothing to alter that which is absolutely an original. Now truth, or falsehood, must claim title to the character of such original. Falshood cannot, as is obvious from its evident nature, as has been observed; it be-

coming what it is, by its contrariety to something else, *viz.* truth; which determines the pre-existence of truth. Truth, therefore, must be the only absolute original; and so, not only consistency itself, but the only natural self-consistency. All which may be thus briefly represented:

1. If it is impossible that any thing should be inconsistent in its first original: Then every thing in its first original, must be consistent, or true, in respect to itself and its connection; which can only be with futurity. But 'tis manifestly impossible, that any thing should be inconsistent in its first original: Therefore, every thing in its first original, must be consistent, or true, in the sense above described.

2. If any thing, true in the above sense, can be considered as a first original; that original must also be seen to be self-consistent. But such a true thing, may be considered as a first original; for indeed nothing else can be so considered: Therefore, that same thing, must be seen at the same time, to be self-consistent. For there can be nothing to marr, or mend, a first original.

3. SUCH original, or natural self-consistency, must be *truth itself*. For,

1. If not, there could be *no truth*, in the origination of any thing. And of consequence,

2. THERE can be *no truth* at all now, in any thing or being whatsoever. *Nam contrarium à contrario ex surgere non potest*. Truth, then, is natural self-consistency.

LET us now enquire what instruction the point thus proved affords us.

1. DOES it not evidently follow, that *truth* can be found only in GOD. For GOD only is absolute original to all things. "Thou hast created all things." *Rev. iv. 11*. Again, *he only* is perfectly consistent in every point of view. "Thou art good, and doest good," and tho' "there is none good but one, that is GOD;" 'tis as true, that "there is no unrighteousness" in him. Of consequence, He only is naturally self-consistent; or self-consistency, and so truth in the abstract. Therefore Moses says, "He is a rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgment;" and as describing his essence, says, "A GOD of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." The Psalmist confesses him, in the same point of light, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit—O Lord GOD of Truth." Therefore his word, which is the expression of himself, is truth in the abstract, "Thy word is truth." *1 John xvii. 17*. And the son of GOD could say, "I am the Truth," and yet he was the express image of his father. But if GOD only, is the being of truth, then truth is not in man, but every man is a liar; and as a subject of government, is nothing else. Which shews the pride, self-ignorance, and atheism, of all men, as heartily disowning this, their true character, and habitually arrogating that of GOD; It shews also, that only they are of the truth, who own their proper *spot*, which is that of liars; for only by knowledge of GOD can we know ourselves. "In thy light we see light." Whereas they who walk in darkness, —lye, and do not the truth at all. *1 John i. 6*.

2. AND as a consequence from what is above inferred; where self-consistency, or truth, as in its own original, is found, there must of necessity be every divine perfection. For if it is *true*, that wisdom, power, justice, love, &c. actually *are* at all; then these true things must be contained in truth itself. Here it may be said, 'tis also true, that there are many falsehoods, and by the same way of reasoning, these also must be contained in truth. To this any one may answer and say, tho' 'tis blasphemous to suppose falsehoods in GOD; yet 'tis easily reducible to the same high crime, to suppose any falsehood

falshood does not, equally to its evident degree of falseness, as evidently pre-suppose, and so in strictest sense necessarily imply the præ-existence of truth, as characteristick of God. For there can be no idea of falshood, but in reference to truth; its self, consisting totally in the want of, or contrariety to truth in that case. So that falshood, in the sense of morality, in every case and degree, yields, by implication, equal evidence of the præ-existence of those particular truths denied by it, and to which, such denial gives both nature and name. But the reality or trueness of things, good in themselves, must belong to natural truth, as evidently as their actual existence. For, from what should the natural virtues of truth derive, such as wisdom, power, righteousness, &c. but from truth itself? Nay, if 'tis true, that all such ascriptions, as the works of nature, or the words of the bible, give to God, are really and truly existing; then 'tis as evident, they are so many real truths; and as evident, they are derivatives from, and so certain evidence of natural or original truth. Indeed, if God is self-consistent, and the only natural subject of that character, and the only notion of natural self-consistency, and so of truth, necessarily implies all sorts and degrees of natural and moral excellency; then all these belong to the nature of truth itself, and must be where that is.

3. By what has been said, we see clearly what is the appropriate character of God, viz. Truth itself in its own perfect original; and that he, exclusively claims every natural virtue and property of truth, with the execution of *all its rights*. And accordingly conducts, without exception of the least instance, holding *himself*, for his only rule, in creating, governing, and disposing of *every thing*; from the highest seraph to the lowest emmit; from the shining sun to the minutest dust. Of consequence, necessarily holding it for an instance, for the greatest possible injury, wrong and moral evil, to pay the least regard in thought, word, or deed, to the inclination, convenience, or desire, of any, or of all the creatures, as such; or as a motive, out of himself; as to do so, would be a denial, of pure, perfect, and everlasting truth, in that case, and so an instance of the very highest kind of lying. So we see he has made all the creatures, without paying the least regard to their desire, or notion of convenience. Just so he rules them in the kingdom of providence; and it can't but be so, for the reason of his nature, above alledged. For this reason, we see sovereignty, and uncontrollableness, exemplified, in exactly every thing which occurs. The same God, acting on the same principle, and for the same reason, has plann'd redemption, and constantly executes all its designs. So we see the bible, every where speaking with the same air of self-resolvedness, as we see was exemplified in nature, and takes place in providence every day. In the light of these remarks, we see plain enough what falshood is, viz. The want of complacent correspondence, in heart and life, with such a God, and such a government. We see also, by the evident want of such complacence, what every person in the world is, viz. liar. We see also what pride is, viz. that spring of thought, feeling, or life, which, in the heart, takes the place of such complacence; and proves to be the source of self-esteem and self-seeking, and equally of God-despising; and so of all wickedness and disobedience, atheism and damnation. Lastly, we see exactly what Religion is, as it is that very complacent correspondence above-mentioned; together with a natural reason for all its happiness, and its duration. And that to beget this complacence, is the grand immediate object, of redemption, and the bible; and that, from the nature of the case, it can't
take

take place, but by means of such faith, as, to the mind, can't but be the substance of its object, and so *the evidence* of things concerning him. And so, that he who has it shall be saved without failure, and he who has it not, as necessarily damned.

4. The nature of this subject, seems to furnish some easy light about three persons in the Godhead. For,

1. *TRUTH* may be considered absolutely, as it is in itself; or, as being just what it is; and so it presents to our view, the first person of the sacred three, as possessing himself, in all his perfections. And as being what he is; according to his revealed character, Jehovah.

2. *TRUTH* must also be considered relatively, as naturally disposed to express itself; to come out, so as to be seen, and known, and understood, and enjoyed. Something like this is very common; a piece of news, viewed to be true, as it were, presses the mind to communicate it. So when we see a point labouring in a dispute, for want of a plain hint, which we know we can give of our own knowledge, and which would directly determine the point in debate, tho', in the case, we are among strangers, and have no sort of interest in the controversy.—Yet, what we know to be true in the case, presses impetuously, to be spoken out. So with a christian, not naturally loquacious, in some views of divine truth, how his mouth is opened, and it comes out, as from a fountain. The case is, *truth, è natura ipsa*, from its very nature, or because it is what it is, loves the light, wants to come out; the disposition arising out of its very nature, is to express itself. But then, this disposition is in original truth; is in God, equal to his nature. But if God, answerable to this, his natural disposition, expresses, or speaks himself out, what must be the manifestation itself,—or the thing expressed? In answer, I ask, what was "*GOD manifest in the flesh?*" Or who was, "*the express image of the father?*" Or, to the same purpose, What was that *word*, which was with God, and which was *GOD?* As plain, as the answer to these enquiries, is, so plain is this proposition, viz. That *TRUTH*, which is the first character of the divine nature, considered, as *fully expressed* and *showed* out to men, just exactly as it is in its own self, presents to us the second person in the sacred three.

A blundering thinker, might say, "this confounds, instead of establishing the distinction: For it makes the supposed first person, so express himself, to make a second, as to leave nothing in the place of the first." I answer; no more, than your expressing a truth to me, so as equally to possess me of it, leaves you destitute of it, which is never the case.

3. *TRUTH*, has a peculiar influence rising out of its nature, and which is as con-natural to it, as the aforementioned manifestative disposition. 'Tis *always* torturing to the guilty, always strengthens such, as in relation to it, may be considered as innocent, with almightiness. *Col. i. 11.* It always, like the wind, makes something stir, as soon as it appears. And this presents to us the third person in the sacred three; for it is that spirit, which is *in truth*. 'Tis the holy ghost, which proceeds from truth; *i. e.* from the father and the son. *John xv. 26.* And so our way is paved on this head, to draw several conclusions. As,

1. *WHAT* has been said of the two first sacred personalities, sets in an easy light several passages of scripture, perhaps not otherwise strictly intelligible, viz. "*I am the truth,*" emphatically spoken by the second person, and applied to himself; while 'tis evident, this character is equally true of the first. And

if the second person is the express manifestation, proceeding from the nature of truth, as characteristic of GOD, there is the amplest ground for the above application. Again, JESUS CHRIST says, "I and my father are one." And if they are, alike *truth* itself, as above apprehended, it *must* be so. He says also, "I am in the father, and the father in me." Which in the view of the above meditations, can't but be so: This also gives easy light to his word, wherein he says, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the father." In the same view, no wonder remains, that JESUS CHRIST claimed every character, proper to original truth, or pure divinity.

2. As such *manifestation*, which has been supposed to present to us the second sacred person, derives from the very nature of *truth*, and so must therefore be coeval with it, we see plain enough, that *fatherhood* in that case, can't imply any *præ-existence* at all.

3. As Truth itself, together with this, its own natural manifestative disposition, are equally and necessarily eternal; so, in this disposition, we see plainly enough the eternal procedure of the son, from the father, commonly called his eternal generation.

ALSO, 4. From what has been said, of the influence of truth, as presenting to us that holy ghost, who is the spirit of all divine truth, and so of course, the third person in the sacred three; we conclude, that the word of GOD, as a literal description of all divine truth, and that holy spirit, are in the most absolute sense, inseparable; that the word is never productive of *any* divine effect, but by that spirit; nor that spirit, but by that word.

5. FROM such a view of this subject, as we have taken, it seems to appear, that truth, as characteristic of the deity, could not be truth, or natural self-consistency, without such several personalities. For, as it is impossible to conceive of original self-consistency, or truth, without all possible, natural, and moral powers, and virtues; and all these in absolute perfection; so 'tis equally impossible, to conceive how such truth could be ever known, and so acknowledged, as what it is, the only ultimate object of supream love, worship, service and adoration for ever and ever, without equal manifestation; or that any manifestation could be equal, but just such as this subject supposes, and the bible affirms, the second person made; and, at least, equally impossible, that such manifestation, could effect its eternal designs, but by the third. We see also the certainty of their oneness, in the most simple sense, as entirely expressed in *truth*; we see also, they can't but be absolutely coeval, and their equality and sameness are just as evident. And does not the same notion of consistency, indicate a like necessity of such divine personalities, for the discharge of such several parts in creation, and providence, as the scriptures ascribe to them? So that, by all the works of him, who is truth itself, may be clearly seen, his eternal power and Godhead, in such a point of plain and striking light, as to leave every unbelieving, and so un sanctified observer of them, totally without excuse. On the whole, several things may now be remarked. As,

1. THEN 'tis impossible there should be any such being, as GOD out of CHRIST. Such a being could not be *truth*, or natural self-consistency, for reasons already given. And indeed, the bible gives not the remotest hint about such a being. It speaks of GOD as a consuming fire, but lets us know in every instance, of using the character, that GOD in CHRIST, or a covenant GOD, as such is meant, and that it points to visible saints. *Deut. iv. 24—ix. 3. Heb. xii. 29.*

3. THEN

2. THEN the bible, is a literal description of the sacred personalities, implied in natural self-consistency, — as also, of their works and designs; together with that of the state of men, as imported in falsehood, as occasional of their works, and of the manifestation of their designs. And,

3. THAT it was written, to make its contents the objects of our senses, while our spirits are under tuition, and GOD is taking trial of them, by means of those senses.

6. BUT nothing can be a more natural, or evident inference, from what has been said of truth, and its natural attributes, than of the following, viz. That *every thing*, of which it ever could, now can, or hereafter ever may be said, that it *truly is*; was in truth, and natural self-consistency; or, which is the same, was in the divine mind from eternity. And so, that there never was a spot, or period of mere duration, in which they had not an actual existence in perfect knowledge, just such as they have had, or shall have in fact. For whatever is true, did certainly always, some how or other, belong to truth. 'Tis impossible to conceive of truth in *perfection*, not containing all of its kind. On which observe,

1. ALL things being planned in the mind of GOD, without beginning, *must* be simply natural; resulting from what the deity can't but be, *i. e.* from natural truth, or consistency to every intent and purpose. And so,

2. THE *whole* of the plan, must be as infinitely far from fallible, and in every point as sure to be fact, as a first principle can be from circumvention; or *perfection* from disappointment. *Dan. iv. 35.* "He doeth according to his will, in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?"

3. THE truth of the being of sin, is no objection to all this. For,

1. THERE is evidently no evil at all, in the truth of sin's existence; or, in knowing it to exist.

2. THO' sin is exactly the reverse of all that is right and good; yet if *every* instance of it, that ever was, is, or shall be, has already issued, or is infallibly secured to issue, in *good* of the best sort, of which there can be no debate; then self-consistency *may* necessarily imply the certainty of its existence.

3. IF *truth*, or the divine nature, never could appear glorious, equally to itself, without sin's actual existence; which will doubtless be allowed; because nothing can illustrate *goodness*, like its contrary, — or power, like conquest; then *self-consistency cannot be*, without the *certainty* of such existence of sin.

4. THE certainty of sin's existence, being in truth; no way implies the agency of GOD, in producing it. For any created intelligence, considered only in that character, can devise and practice the reverse of what is *right*, which only is sin, as spontaneously as the earth produces mushrooms. GOD indeed foresaw, and knew it would be so. Nay,

5. HIS making creatures, which could not long exist, at best, without sinning, unless positively prevented, which is evidently the case of all such as are intelligent; they having none of the original principle, none of the self-maintaining faculty, in them; and being — all subject — so all exposed, always acting — and no sufficient guide within — *can no more keep right*, than a ship in the mid of a storm, without a helm. I say, creatures being made such; and other than such, intelligent creatures could not be made by self-consistency; determines beyond controversy, the maker *designed* the consequence should take place, entirely by the creature's choice, which is always the determining means, right or wrong, in all intelligent actions. *Designed*
also

also, and very well knew how, to serve himself, and even all the creatures by it.

Therefore,
6. IF GOD, and all the creatures are served by the existence of sin, as is obvious enough, by only saying, what brought CHRIST and the BIBLE, into this world? Then it is downright necessary in a plan of truth, and every demur to the supposition of such necessity, as along with other sins, contained in the plan of truth, shall in its place, equally with them, serve its purposes.

BUT 7. GOD never designed sinning creatures, as sinning creatures design their sins. Therefore GOD is true, tho' every man a liar.

7. IN the next place then may be deduced, some light about what is called, the doctrine of divine decrees. As,

1. THAT every thing, which GOD has done, or as self-consistency ever will do, must derive from one only original decree; which was, and equally still is, to shew forth, and exalt himself as truth itself, of the only excellency in original; by manifesting himself in and through him, who, equally as ever, still is in person and government, his express image; which necessarily implies, what that central statute of divine revelation speaks; and which therefore is the butt of all sorts of opposition to truth; viz. 'The lord alone shall be exalted'.

2. THAT exactly every thing, serves the purpose of this only decree, and can ultimately serve nothing else; which is the plain sense of Rev. iv. 11. 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure,' as characteristic of what he did, and still does, in whom GOD is well pleased, they are and were created.

3. AND therefore, as was said before, that this decree, and all its miriads of consequences in time and eternity, derive, and by evidence of numberless facts already following it, can't but derive from truth or natural self-consistency, as such; and so not from mere will, as the vulgar prejudice suggests.

4. AND so, of consequence, every creature, thing, and occurrence, as flowing from, and a fulfilment of the only decree, must be just as excellent and amiable, in its place, measure and connection, as the pure excellency of everlasting consistency itself. So inviting our love, and all its fruits, as constantly and universally, as GOD and his operations, by CHRIST, filleth all things, places and times. Ephes. i. 19—23.

5. AND as flowing from the whole; that the grand design of original self-consistency in all this, is, that consistency shall so be maintained every moment, through the whole of its dominion, as, in the issue of things, to shine forth in the most perfect beauties of the godhead, for ever and ever. And so equally furnish matter for the pleasure of heaven, and the pain of hell, without any end.

8. BUT then, we may certainly conclude, that the decree, and the plan of all procedures upon it, were conceived in view of the fall of man, as a fact certainly to take place. Otherwise, what consistency can be in a saviour, 'fore-ordained, before the foundation of the world.' 1 Peter i. 20. But a further reason is, truth can reject nothing in its natural state. The work of the original as such must be good.

9. BUT then, with equal certainty we may infer, that if any are saved; as it seems a plan, deriving from self-consistency or truth itself, makes it necessary for us to suppose, because in the nature of such truth, there is every kind of perfection; then there must be an election, and it must be personal; because all are viewed as grossed in the character of falsehood.

8. ANOTHER

10. **ANOTHER** consequence from what has been observed, is, that such election does not proceed from mere will, in the sense of prophane prejudice; but from the nature of the deity, i. e. from the *nature of eternal truth*; and is therefore equally excellent and amiable in its nature, as the deity. And accordingly our pleasure, or displeasure in it, is always just as our knowledge or ignorance of God is.

11. Such election, which, as has been shewn, proceeds from the self-consistency of natural truth, must be known, where God is known. God foresaw, that in the days of Esau and Jacob, the knowledge of himself would be restrained chiefly to their houses. On them therefore, must this display of natural truth be made; and that could not be, but by chusing one; and refusing the other.

QUESTION. But why was not Esau chosen; since he was oldest, and—pride says, ought to be considered first.

ANSWER. 1. 'Tis agreeable to the method dictated by truth itself, to answer, by saying, "Who art thou, O man, who repliest against God." Who darest to *word* it with thy maker; and in a case, wherein 'tis confessed; that perfection of truth has made manifest, by *word* and *deed*, what is perfection of right?

2. **YET** other answers may be given, directly to the point, but as displeasing. As that 'tis impossible, for the God of truth, to see distinctions of worthiness among sinners. But if the question was to be considered, its solution is in its bowels; for the oldest in sin; may be considered as the worst: But the case is, 3. God is truth, and cannot lie; we are children of falsehood; and cannot but lie; so when he speaks, or acts out himself, as he always does, and especially in electing some condemned sinners to salvation; and he never did elect any other: He and we, being contrary, must differ; and this gives the sole reason of all the chagrin in the world, at the bible account of this *most merciful* display of a God of perfect self-consistency. But wisdom, in *this*, is justified by her children; and that is as much as can be said of any display of pure divinity, among men.

12. **BUT**, if, as has been shewn, God only speaks and acts out, perfect self-consisting truth; as the distinguishing character of himself, we see in what light to view every expression of his holy word; we see also in what light to view such as can't comport with it. We see also, what esteem is to be had, of every operation of his hand, and what just wrath is out against the world; for the want of it. *Psal. xxviii. 4. 5.* Lastly, we see the distinguishing character of as many as are of the truth; for to such, his word is precious, and in their esteem, all his works are done in truth. But with all others, neither his words nor his works, even of nature or providence, are pleasing, unless they are conceived to favour the lying, i. e. the self-loving and self-preferring principle. For they are, every one just such as truth has pointed out, to be lovers of themselves, more than lovers of God.

13. **WE** learn then, a very determinate sense, to a passage of scripture; which has been treated in a very confused manner: viz. *Ephef. iv. 21*—"The truth, as it is in Jesus;" as descriptive of all he said, and all he did in the flesh; and so as alike descriptive, of all he does executively, in his providence; by which the divine system, contained in the holy book, is constantly illustrated, fulfilled, and confirmed. The work of JESUS CHRIST, in the flesh, was to make God *fully manifest*; what therefore he shewed the divine nature and will to be, is, "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*" Consequently, what JESUS
did

and in the flesh, as it was a full manifestation of God, who is truth itself, and which constitutes the matter of the bible, must be the only perfect system, and test of truth. And all his providential conduct ever since, to all who have the bible, is precisely, constantly, and only executive of that manifestation. So 'tis impossible that the work of providence; and the word of the book, should not always perfectly agree; the word summarily containing, and the work by facts, explaining what is *truth*, in its own natural self-consistency.

14. BUT if the bible, which is the history of CHRIST, as making GOD manifest, is continually exemplified by providence, as the correspondent work of GOD; then GOD with all such glories on, as the bible ascribes to him, and those corresponding works bespeak to be in him, must be infallibly, and universally there, where such works are done. If then there is no man or beast, farr, bird or storn, or fish, insect, or sand, either made, or maintained, or any use served by them, or natural function discharged in them, but is a work of that providence; 'tis just equally certain that *GOD is there*. And as such works are exactly every where, so they make equal evidence that GOD is so; and as all perfections are in his nature; so wherever GOD is, all these also are. But then, there is no place where these can be said to be, more than elsewhere. Directly counter to the religious rubbish, which abounds in the empire of falsehood. But exactly agreeable to the testimony of the history of GOD; which leads us to view the divine being as alike, near, and afar off. *Jer. xxiii. 23, &c.* So that there is no place so secret, as to hide any from him; for he alike fills the Heaven and the earth. Therefore no thought can be hidden from him. *Job xlii. 2. Yea, all things are naked and bare before im. Heb. iv. 13.* Which opens the way to several remarks.

1. THEN no wonder, the promises, by which all the perfections of self-consisting truth, are holden; to most punctual fulfilment, are so peremptory. They say without hesitancy, "*All things shall work together for good.*" "*Ask what ye will, and it shall be done.*" The reason is, "*He is a very present help.*"

2. No wonder then, that subjects of his favour, be they who they will, and in whatever case, have equal relief at hand, as near as that GOD, in whom they live and move. For as flying fowls in the air, and fish in the watery deep, so *all men* have their being in GOD. And when they see truth, let their situation be what it will, they know there can be no want to them who fear him; and accordingly, such, when they pass through the fire, or through the water, find, in fact that God is there; and so are joyful in tribulation.

3. THIS shews, why no person naturally, can violate a known dictate of this universal truth, in any degree of secrecy, and avoid the uneasy consequence in that case. For guilt is only the witness of conscience concerning truth, the character of GOD, as violated in that case. We see then, how universal and inevitable the sentence, and on what deep foundations laid, "*There is no peace to the wicked.*"

4. WE see the infallible fitness of one of the three books, out of which John saw the world to be judged; even *present knowledge* of truth itself, as to every thing done by men, whether good or evil, while corresponding consciousness, and the holy law, are the other two. *Rev. xx. 12.*

5. FROM the above meditations, concerning GOD, as alike every where, as well as from every view of self-consisting truth, we may gain some easy light, about the ubiety or whereness, of heaven and hell. For if the free,
C open,

open, immediate, and unalterable enjoyment of *smiling perfection*, must make heaven; to all intents; and such enjoyment of a God, who can't but be alike present every where, may be had, yea can't but be had, the instant that succeeds the mortal dissolution; then there is heaven; the glorious heaven; the beatifick vision. And if consciousness of the presence of the same divine excellencies, always set at nought by the wicked, and of the unalterableness of it, can't but, to such, make a perfect hell, from sense of contrariety, never to be altered, and of punishment justly inflicted; then the same succeeding moment to natural death, must make it quite compleat. And so there is no need for those who have their comfort and joy, from *truth*, which is the distinguishing character of such as are united to God, to expect the vast career of a sudden flight, for many a thousand leagues from a dying bed to some region beyond the stars, in which to enjoy the blessed vision: For whatever is true of the son of man, and others, corporally glorified as to place, whose bodies, are nevertheless such as the scripture stiles, spiritual bodies; 'tis evident enough, that others find, as the apostle intimates, that to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord.

6. THIS enables us to understand divers passages of scripture, not otherwise intelligible. As,

1. *Eph. iii. 10.* Importing that principalities and powers in heavenly places, learn the manifold wisdom of God, *i. e.* redemption, and its effects, of those who are the subjects of it, *i. e.* the church of God. The words are, *Tais archais, kai tais exousiais en tois epouraniois. i. e.* To principalities, and powers in *supercelestibus*, in the upper heavenlies. Now *archai*, and *exousiai*, evidently mean spirits of the angelic kind; but the scripture gives those titles, equally to holy angels and to devils. For *Col. ii. 10.* says, that CHRIST is "head of all principality and power." The words are *arches rai exousias*. In which, it will be allowed, that holy angels are at least included; of whom it is said, "let all the angels of God worship him." It will be allowed also, that holy angels are included in the text in question. *Eph. iii. 10.* And yet *Col. ii. 15.* says, that when CHRIST nailed the handwriting, which was against us, to his cross, he "spoiled principalities and powers;" and we know then and there he destroyed the works of the devil; the words are, *Tas archas, rai tas exousias*. And *Eph. vi. 12.* says, "We wrestle against principalities, against powers;" the words are, *Pros tas archas, pros tas exousias*; and then proceeds explaining these principalities, and powers, and calls them "the rulers of the darkness of this world,—spiritual wickedness in high places." And here the word is, *en tois epouraniois. i. e.* We wrestle against those principalities and powers, which are, the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places; or in the upper heavenlies. All which, and other passages of like import, shew, that holy angels and devils are *alike* in heavenly places. And if, as we have shewn, God is alike every where; where then should either angels or devils be, that they might be away from the divine presence. 'Tis as well then, for them to be in heavenly places, as any where. Indeed 'tis certain, if *divine presence* makes a heavenly place, they can't be out of it. And if, by upper-heavenlies; high and holy places; the third heavens; and such like scriptural expressions, be understood the dignity of the divine presence, as to sit at God's right hand certainly does; we shall then have no other difficulty, than to conceive of evil spirits, in that holy presence. And he who can devise any other situation for devils, or wicked men, in this world, or any other, may advance his objection to this view of the case, to all the bible says in support of it.

2. THIS

2. THIS also admits us to an easy view, of *Job*. i. 6. Implying, that when the holy angels assembled on a certain occasion in the presence of God, satan was also among them. In which, and the consequent discourse, there is no difficulty at all, on supposition of what has been observed. Indeed 'tis represented as common for satan to be thus present in heavenly assemblies. See the like *Job* ii. 1. and which can't be accounted for any other way. And if it is evidently impossible for evil spirits, or any other, to be out of divine presence; yea the immediate divine presence; then we may receive the literal construction of the passages last mentioned.

3. IN the same point of view, stands that remarkable account of the host of heaven, given by the prophet *Micah*. 1 *Kings* xxii. 19. and forward. He saw all the host of heaven standing by the throne of God, when the proposition was made to them in common, by him who sat on the throne, who of them would undertake to seduce *Ahab*, to go to *Ramoth Gilead* to battle, that he might die there: On which various differing sentiments were given, for the host did not agree; till one of them stood forth, and offered to be a lying spirit, in the prophets of *Baal*; on which he received orders, with assurance of success. 'Tis easy to determine of which sort this lying spirit was; but then, 'tis just so evident, that both sorts together compose the host of heaven, So that, as there can be no distance of place between God and all wicked men, in this world; so neither can there be any between the same divine being, and all sorts of spirits in the other world.

4. THIS makes the story of *Abraham* and *Dives*, in *Luke* xvi. natural enough. And if it be alleged, that according to the text, there was a great gulph between them; it may be answered, by authority of the same sacred text, that the gulph was no greater than to admit the parties to free conversation. So *Leigh's* sacred Critica, cites *Jansenius*, saying, the gulph is *firmistimum, DEI statutum, &c.* That is, it is the decree of God, fixing each unalterably in his respective state. Or as *Cajetan*, is, in the same place represented, saying, *immutabilitas utriusque statu, stabilita & firmata.* 'Tis the unchangeableness of the state, not the place, of each, internally fixed by God himself. So that the happy and the miserable, beholding, without cessation, the divine glories, and each others unalterable relation to them, are affected with pleasure and pain, answerable to their conscioufness of love and hate. And as to certain knowledge, they can't avoid the cause, so the respective effects can't but take place; and illustrated by their contrariety must encrease for ever and ever.

5. AND so we see an easy propriety in *Eph.* ii. 2. in which satan is stiled the prince of the power of the air; the word for power, is *exousias*. And this power is said to rule in the children of disobedience. For having no pleasure in the miriads of spirits which inhabit that state, and having torture from sight of the happiness which holy ones enjoy, he seeks to allay his pain, by indulging his nature, and diverting his misery among men, as natural subjects of his temper, and all of them, while in this world, infested with his misery, in exact proportion to their relish for what is wrong, or their measure of contrariety to self-consisting right.

6. THESE views of the ubiquity, or every-wherefulness, which must be essential to natural self-consistency, leads us to a most obvious reason for divine peace to all such as are of the truth; and for equal support to the hearts of such, in whatever situation; and for as necessary guilt and misery to all others. Hence we also see in a most familiar point of light, how persons in heathenish darkness, and habitations of cruelty; or in countries subjected to popish super-

stition:

fiction; may be saved; viz. because the same *truth*, which is the source of salvation, to such as believe the revelation, is in *every view of itself*, equally there, as here. For as our case would be now the same with theirs, but for the advantages which distinguish it, which advantages have in every point, totally derived from the self-moved good will, that is essential to natural truth; so there can be nothing wanting to distinguish their case, from what it now is, but for the fountain of truth alike to exemplify its own natural good will there also. And so we are led to an easy understanding of the bible, on all these heads.

15. IN the next place, we may conclude, that, as the history of truth is quite perfect, and all the operations of GOD have hitherto corresponded with it to a point, we may determine the certainty of the remaining unfulfilled parts of the history, equally as the past; because they are equally parts of self-consisting truth, and so can't be subject to any casualty: Self-consisting truth, never did consult, or ever can pay the least regard to any thing, but itself. And so we see reason, why all who are of the truth, should be equally certain of future things contained in the promises, as of any past fact; also, why all who are not of the truth, should, as such, consider the remaining part of the wages of their sins, alike certain. And so we see the only reason of the peremptory form of *all* the promises, and *all* the threatnings of the book of truth, viz. because they are in their respective cases, *certainties*; and the only reason why they don't appear so, is, we do not believe *truth*.

16. WHAT has been said of JESUS CHRIST, as wholly employed, while in the flesh, in making GOD *manifest*, shews clearly, that he was indeed just what he pretended to be; that he was confined in every word and action, by the most perfect moral necessity, to do as he did; this must be evident, if he was *GOD manifested*; or if in every thing he had to shew forth the Godhead, or natural self-consistency, as equally characteristic of his father, and himself. And so we see what supported him so perfectly, under pain, reproach, and mocking, equally consummate; or as being each in its highest and last possible degree. It was only this, viz. he knew *himself*, and all he said and did, to be *perfection of original, universal, and everlasting truth*; he knew this to be the occasion of his reproach; and that the extremity of malice against him, supported his character in its perfection, by practising the utmost degree of its own, against him. This reconciles the seeming contradiction, that he should die of grief, according to *Matt. xxvi. 38*. And yet, that to all he endured, he should be animated by pure joy, according to *Heb. xii. 2*. which equally shews, that he died of pure love; and so completed the *manifestation of GOD*, "for GOD is love."

QUESTION. But how could it be consistent with truth, to put perfect innocence to the greatest pain and reproach?

ANSWER. The suffering nature of the son of GOD, tho' it was the necessary instrument of delineating violated truth to men, was yet, itself, the very image and likeness of those, whose true character is, "a seed of falsehood." *Rom. viii. 3*. And when he, who in this nature, adopted its hated character, "that he might bring to GOD," his elect, who were subjects of it, put himself in their place, as touching truth, "the just for the unjust;" *1 Peter iii. 18*. Then he became not only obnoxious to the treatment of the unjust; but either to drink the dregs of their cup, or not effectuate truth, and bring them to GOD. For as natural truth is exactly inflexible, so no salvation for such as have sinned, and salvation can be for no other, but in perfect consistency

gency with its utmost rights, Therefore no salvation for those who deny, or curtail rights of truth, or the equal extent of the atonement.

17. AS IN CHRIST we see the whole divine character acted out; so in the opposition made to him, we see the whole character of falshood, as including *all men and devils*, equally to its utmost extent acted out therein. Which leads us to draw several conclusions.

1. THEN no lover of righteous truth, *can ever*, in following its dictates, or serving GOD, which is the same, suffer *any thing*, but what has been borne already, by him, whose office was to shew GOD to men. For if he practiced the whole of truth, and waked the whole empire of falshood thereby, and yet carried his point, and has "spoiled principalities and powers, &c." then the road is clear, and nothing can ever meet his followers but vanquished mischiefs. So that, tho' "we wrestle against the same principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual wickedness in high places," and, of course, against whatever else, we shall be more than conquerors.

2. THERE can be no sort of thing, in any manner of sense, comfortable or profitable to a follower of CHRIST, a child of truth, but what is already stored in the magazine of the kingdom, on purpose for all such as may be viewed in that character. Accordingly the word of the kingdom can say without hesitation, "they that seek the LORD shall not want *any good thing*." *Psal. xxxiv. 10.* And as perfect truth has the dictating of the time and manner of bestowment, as well as of the thing to be bestowed, so, as fast as he prepares their heart, he will cause his ear to hear. For, *passa doctis*, every good manner of giving, as well as *pan doctreema*, every good gift itself, is from above. *Jam. i. 17.*

3. So also can no temptation befall a christian, but what was contained in one of the three with which truth's grand champion was exercised; but he made his way through the strongest seducements, deepest disguises, and most alluring charms of falshood's power and policy; just so certain is a way of escape for every after combatant. *1 Cor. x. 13.*

18. THEN JESUS CHRIST was indeed all he pretended to be, and, as being charged with no less a trust, than intelligibly to represent *perfection*; 'tis evident, he would have been infinitely absurd, and inconsistent with truth, and so with himself, in any lower pretensions. For 'tis self evident, that nothing less than pure divinity can represent the Godhead; nor any equal representation be made in that case, but by claiming and maintaining every character of GOD. And *every exception*, taken to him who did so, doth equally imply and prove, both the title on which his claims were founded, and that the grand design of his known pretensions was answered in his making GOD manifest to the consciences of men: For 'tis obvious, that an uneasy consciousness of the truth of all he pretended to, has given birth to *all* the clamours, and most sincere quarrels against any and every divine claim of him who professed to be the son of GOD. Little, very little disturbance has been conceived at such as falsely made like pretensions. Very little are men in general provoked at heart, at evidently prophane arrogations of divine characters and ascriptions. But *no one* fails to be disuited with those which were made in strictest propriety. In some it is manifest by the natural and common tokens; in others by more explicit, barefaced, and publick evidence. And so what JESUS said is fulfilled, and his character maintained. *John v. 43.* "I am come in my father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

19. CONSIDERING

19. **CONSIDERING** what men really are, and what is the manner in which divine glories can be effectually made *manifest* among men, viz. In such salvation to his elect, as shall infallibly secure the honours of the deity among them; it very plainly appears, what special offices must be executed by a saviour of man, and that to execute them, must be the constant work of power. For nothing can root up the adverse principles, which the scriptures, and common life prove, to occupy and animate the hearts of men, in order to plant there the grand principle of the kingdom of truth, but the display of conquering or kingly power; nor any thing, reduce and afresh subdue deserters to allegiance; or restrain, and prevent inimical designs against the children of the kingdom, which are always forming against them, within and without; but the same power. So every experiment of such operations, is still in fulfilment of *I/ai.* xxxii. 1. "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness." This must therefore be the leading office, in setting up the kingdom of truth in the hearts of men; and the supposition of it, is full of the terrors of the wrath of God, to every person in the world, not experienced in its conquering virtues. For as this kingly office is discharged only by the natural power of truth, so such as still retain their natural principle of inconsistency with it, are all included in the sentence of *P/sal.* i. 5. "shall not stand in the judgment;" and are open to the execution described, *P/sal.* ii. 9. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces, like a potters vessel." Again; as every conscience is defiled, or guilty, exactly according to its relish of what is evil, or contrary to truth; and as there is no relish of any thing else, natural to men; so, in order to instate the kingdom of truth in the heart, its purifying virtue must be displayed there; this is done, when the knowledge of truth is given, and so the conscience sensible of its nature, on which delight in it naturally rises, at the willing expence of all former relishes and delights, such as is the genuine spring of living according to truth; and to such as constitutes the principle of sanctification; here the priesthood of CHRIST begins to be displayed, by which he purifies the heart, and sprinkles from dead works, the consciences of all his subjects, to walk before him in love, and of course, in all holy conversation and godliness. Lastly, as all who know not the truth, must necessarily walk in darkness; so truth made known, naturally begets all divine affections to it, and these, as naturally, are the spring of all obedience, which can't take place, but in consequence of such knowledge of the truth, as is the third and last office of the redeemer to execute. And so as contrariety, guilt, and ignorance, are the three principles of the dominion of falshood; accordingly, to spoil that dominion, 'tis evidently requisite, that truth, as characteristic of the spoiler, should do it, by conquering, purifying, and teaching virtue; in which alone, his subjects are happy; and by which alone, distinguished from all others.

20. **NOTHING** can be more evident, from what we have found of truth, as fully expressed by JESUS CHRIST, than that attainment made by him, must be, in its own nature compleat, to the last degree, in every point of view. That divine person, by whom it was made, being in the highest sense of the phrase, "*the truth*," could do no less, in all he did do, than what was of itself, *perfect righteousness*; so relating to God, must be just as equal to his nature, as equality in any case can be. And as touching the law, in which God is literally described to *perfection*, and which is all trampled by the nature of falshood, or sin, such doing of the ATTORNER, must in every article, act out its nature, and be to its last degree of satisfaction, for the subjects of such attainment. And, in reference to the proper state of such subjects,

attainment

atonement made by him, whose character is *natural self-consistency*, must be furnished with every degree of kindness, freeness, power, and every virtue requisite to their actual redemption, perseverance, and glory. So, in right of his atonement, JESUS could say, *Matt. xi. 27.* "All things are delivered to me of my father." And *John xvii. 4.* "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and so acquired the character of "able to save, unto the uttermost." Which leads us to affirm, with peremptoriness, several things: as,

1. THEN it is just so certain, that even the elect themselves, are perfectly destitute of every degree of power, truth, righteousness, and every thing, whereby they might please GOD, or do any the least thing, whereby to deliver themselves, or pave their way to divine acceptance, as that GOD does nothing in vain; or, as that natural truth is self-consistent; neither of which could be true, if there was not a most indispensable necessity for every part of what the attoner did, in manifesting GOD to man, in order to save those for whom he died.

2. AND of consequence, all books, preaching, conversation, and private sentiment, which import the least consideration for good life, reformation, duties, good dispositions of the heart, as they are called, religious concern, or any thing in the affair of a sinner's acceptance with GOD, beside the mere virtue of what the attoner did; do, by evident implication charge GOD with foolishness, and original truth with inconsistency. For, if JESUS CHRIST did not enough to make up a perfect righteousness, for the justification of sinners, he did not accomplish the work he came for; he did not finish the work which was given him to finish, and so is become like one of us, chargeable with falshood; but if he did enough, perfectly enough, for the acceptance of sinners, into the love of GOD, on that sole consideration, as has been shewn, and as the nature of the case, and the bible, determine he did, then let GOD be true, and all who debate, curtail, (or by their additions, propose to forward, promote and facilitate, a sinner's acceptance more certainly, or commodiously, than they think can be, by) the bare work of atonement, done by CHRIST in the flesh; let those be viewed, as hereby charging GOD with falshood, denying the lord in the perfection of his saving work, and so supporting their character, as lyars.

3. ANOTHER thing, we may boldly affirm on this head, is, that we then see, an explanatory and confirming reason of that remarkable passage of scripture, doubtless as rarely understood, as it is believed, *Matt. xvii. 5.* "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Importing, that GOD was perfectly suited with the righteousness he was then completing, and the atonement he was then making, as being full equal to the nature of GOD, his law, and the case for which it was designed; and as sufficient of itself for the purpose of saving sinners, as GOD desired any thing should be. Importing also, that there is *not one thing* among men who have ever sinned, with which GOD is well pleased, only what is there pointed at. That GOD is well pleased with the medium of acceptance perfected by his own son, is an infallible consequence of his being *GOD manifested*; for in that view he could not but be perfectly pleasing to GOD, in every part of his work of righteousness for the guilty; but that GOD cannot be pleased with any thing, as a work of righteousness, more or less, not included in that finished by his son, is just as evident, as that there can be no work of righteousness equal to GOD but that.

4. WHILE

4. WHILE then, we see a certainty of open acceptance for *any*, in the virtue of *that work*: We also see the height of falshood, and damning iniquity, in what is often palmed on readers and hearers for well pleasing things, in the sight of God. He that hath an ear to hear let him hear.

21. WE see then on the whole, what the bible means by a sinner's being converted. Falshood, as a character including every person who has ever sinned, always keeps the conscience under bondage by guilt, and in danger of punishment; and this describes the state of every unconverted person: But as soon as truth, which is the character of God, and which was fully expressed by what CHRIST did in behalf of sinners, is understood by a sinner, and so seen in its own GOD-pleasing sufficiency, for a sinner's acquittance and open admission into favour, the conscience perceives, as clearly as such truth is seen, that it need not despair under its own bondage; for GOD the judge is satisfied from another quarter; and that there is a *wide door of hope*, and sure salvation for it, in the seen truth of what JESUS CHRIST did for sinners; by this therefore the conscience is relieved; in this it rests, sensibly delivered from its old bondage, and danger. And of this import is every account of conversion in the bible. On which we may make several remarks.

1. THEN conversion, essentially consists in the conscience being delivered from the bondage of guilt, which made despair exactly answerable to the sense of bondage; and in its finding a broad out-let from its former misery, in the sight of what the SAVIOUR did to justice, for helpless offenders. Beholding in the representation which the bible gives, the glorious sufficiency of what the LORD did; we are changed. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

2. THEN, as every one in respect of self-enjoyment; is as his conscience is, conversion is a sinner's state being changed from bondage to freedom; from darkness, or being without hope, to light and hope; which are marvelous, and sure in every degree of them. 'Tis also called a being turned from sin to GOD; for as before, the heart relished no one thing that was right, or which belonged to truth; and was accordingly all guilty; so the person's state, was totally a *state of sin*; but now, as he disgusts all sin, and so is prepared to struggle against it, which none unconverted ever do; as being what it is; and is pleased with the reverse, as he beholds it shining through the divine testimony, and so his heart takes part for God against all his former loves, and present self; so he may be fairly said to be converted from sin to GOD. Conversion is also a receiving CHRIST, and what else is the import of all that has been said? For CHRIST is received, when that which is characteristic of him is received. And this reconciles the 32 and 36 verses of the 8th of *John*: In one of which the son is said to make free; in the other it is ascribed to *the truth*.

3. WE find an easy sense to the scripture phrase, "*being of the truth*." For it evidently distinguishes such as know the nature and divine value of what JESUS CHRIST did, in behalf of sinners, while he was manifesting God in the world; now this is the substance of what is recorded in the bible, and is *the truth* in literal description. He therefore who cometh to the knowledge of this, has the record or testimony itself in himself, even in that truth which he has knowledge of; but they who receive not, and so have not knowledge of this testimony, make God a liar, by treating the representation or testimony, or truth of God, which are all one, just as if it was not true. 1 *John* v. 10.

Now they who have such knowledge of the truth, and so therein have the testimony within them, from knowledge of its import, are inviolably attached to

to it, and governed by it; so may in every view be justly said to be of the truth.

4. As then, conversion is solely ascribed to the power of truth, as seen and known; 'tis evident enough, that such change can't begin, till such truth is known. This explains the text; *John xi. 25.* "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And this equally exposes to view, the detestable stuff, which multitudes are taught, and many are willing to believe; that persons can make advances in the affair of salvation—do grow better, by certain considerations, before conversion. Directly in front of the whole bible, a summary of which, in 2d of *Ephesians*, teaches us, that before conversion, *we all* have our conversation in the lusts of the flesh; and do *nothing* but fulfil the desires of the flesh; till GOD, of the riches of his mercy, even when we are *dead in sin*, quickens us; as he raised CHRIST from the dead.

QUESTION 1. Is there no such thing as conviction then to antecede conversion? In answer; I ask again, do convictions alter any person's moral state? Or does the querist suppose that a change of manners, which convictions will quickly effect, is itself a change of moral state? Is there atonement, equal to GOD, to injured justice and the law; in convictions? In short, is any person possessed of saving truth, by seeing that he is heartily at enmity with it, and totally destitute of it? If not, he is yet dead in sin, wholly governed by falsehood, and all his endeavours are to maintain it, and to which his convictions stimulate him, according to their degree. For they wake self-love to exert itself for self-security; and so iniquity is added to sin.

QUESTION 2. Is it wicked then to be under conviction? Let the bible answer; "without faith it is impossible to please GOD." "They that are in the flesh, cannot please GOD." "He is angry with the wicked every day." "The wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Now what makes convictions, but a consciousness of contrariety to truth; and of the import of such contrariety? Or convictions are a sense of the heart's holding truth in unrighteousness, and of the wrath that is pointed directly at it therefor. No wonder then, if vast multitudes of every character in what is called the visible church, should be under the greatest convictions; but the wonder is, that those multitudes should be so far from convictions, and so ignorant of their nature, as to suppose, teach, and believe, that they are *a sense of the heart's holding truth in RIGHTEOUSNESS, and that the LOVE of GOD is revealed from Heaven therefor.* As soon as persons experience genuine convictions, they will know, be they learned or unlearned, teachers or their people, that every part of their inward and outward life, to which they are impelled by their convictions, is sin; and that they can no more refrain from such measures as nature is stimulated to by sense of danger, than they can controul nature; nor any more make what they do to be right, or alter their own state thereby, or thereby contract a degree of good hope, or begin to design that which is good, than they can possess themselves of salvation.

QUESTION 3. What then should persons do under convictions? In reply to such a question, it may with great propriety be asked, and what should persons do in any other case? To which no man or angel can say any thing more properly, than what was said in a like case, by him who always spoke consistently to perfection; see *Matt. xix. 16, 17.*—"One came and said unto him, good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him,—if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

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For the Lord well knew, that it is a never-failing rule, "keep the commandments and thou shalt live." He also knew, that *nothing* less is of any avail to that end. For the soul that sins, *shall die.*" If it be asked, "who then can be saved," since we all sin, and come short of the glory of God? The answer is absolute, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned. *Mark* xvi. If it be asked, "is a person right to believe, and yet do nothing in religion?" It may be answered, there can be no such case; for who so believeth, is also obedient; faith always works. Therefore he that believeth shall infallibly have that salvation, which none can have without holiness. On the whole; no one who sees himself, will cease to *do*, according to his sense of danger. 'Tis also as true, that all such *doing*, is both the effect and proof of unhumbléd pride, and self-righteousness. The same malignant root, is always discovered and proved, by all the bickering and clamour, in support of the goodness and value of such *doing*; and is made equally evident by the surly chagrin, or shameless banter excited by evidences against it.

22. We next infer what must be the scripture notion of faith; and so we shall be led to a distinct view of *Heb.* xi. 1. in which we have a definition of it from infallibility. Two things, about believing in any sort of case, are obvious to such as well think, and are not wholly engrossed by the tyranny of custom, viz.

1. THAT believing a common report, and believing the divine report, no otherwise differ, than as one is common, and the other divine. That is, faith in those cases, differs just as the things *believed* differ; and no otherwise. This is self-evident.

2. THAT as when a common report is believed, the matter of that report, or *the thing believed*, is, by the report, conveyed into the mind, and there remains; so, when the divine report is believed, the very thing reported, is conveyed into the mind in the report, and there remains as a seen and known certainty. This is the very thing which *Heb.* xi. 1. speaks; "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*" And as in divine reports believed, there is not one thing grievous, but joyous: So the thing believed in that case, is *always* a matter of agreeable possession, and comfortable enjoyment. Hence, they who believe, always thereby enter into the same sort of joy, as their Lord has. This leads us into *John* xv. 11. "These things have I spoken unto you, that," being believed, "my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Which determines several things very evidently, viz.

1. As the divine report brings news of obedience, perfect enough, made to the law, for such as are *all* condemned breakers of it; so, such report being believed, and accordingly its matter, which is *such obedience* itself, being possessed and enjoyed by the believer; and that obedience, or perfect righteousness, of which he is now possessed, being *equal to the law*, should not this person be justified? And can he fail to be justified according to the law that condemns him? And must not such justification be *by faith*? And must not salvation in such a way be *grace*? How evidently then, does it bespeak ignorance of every thing essential to christianity, to suppose that a sinner *can* be justified by any thing, but *mere faith of mere truth*?

2. As every thing that is believed, always affects the heart, just according to the nature of the thing believed, and the degree of belief; so 'tis easy to see how belief of salvation suited to such as are perishing, should answerably affect the heart; and so produce correspondent life; as belief also produces correspondent conduct in all other cases. And so we see reason for the scrip-

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ture's ascribing all holy affections, and all holy living to faith; and for its denying the whole of both, to such as have not saving faith.

3. WE learn the distinguishing character of believers. They are such as have their hearts affected, and their lives conducted, just as if the bible was *truth*. For "faith works by love;" and "he that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

4. WE see then that sanctification, is the influence which truth has on heart and life. For truth, when 'tis understood, and so possessed, becomes the center of delight, according to its seen excellency, and so gives spring to all holy conversation and Godliness.

23. THEN we have found a precise sense to 1 Cor. xi. 29. *i. e.* what is meant by the LORD's body; to discern which is a distinguishing qualification for communion in the LORD's supper. This will appear, if we consider,

1. THAT, from what has been said, *Church*, is a character inclusive only of all such, who, by believing truth, are possessed of it; and so led and governed by the spirit of GOD, as that which makes truth efficacious to all divine purposes, in heart and life. This is the plain sense of several scriptures, as *Matt. xvi. 16—18*. "On this rock," *i. e.* on this principle of truth; *viz.* "thou art CHRIST, the son of the living GOD;" "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But this implies, that as many as know this summary of truth, as *Peter* did; so view it in the same light, and are accordingly governed by it; are of the church, or body of CHRIST, and that no others are so. Therefore those are said to be of the church of GOD, who are purchased by the blood of CHRIST. *Acts xx. 28*. Hence also, *Eph. i. 23*. those who are first filled by him with truth, and its proper influence, become thereby the *fullness* of his body, which is the church. Full to this purpose is *1 Tim. iii. 15*. the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The church is made by the truth believed; and the same truth is held up, and shewed forth by her in its efficacies; and in her only amongst men does it find a sure and fixed dwelling place.

2. AND of consequence, those who are of the church, being made and kept so only by truth, must be, in that point of view, one with the father and the son, as the father and the son are with each other, just as the text speaks, *John xvii. 21*. So this union which takes place by truth, includes the sacred personalities, the whole church, and the holy book as characteristic of both, and the express medium of all mutual communications. *John xvii. 22, 23*. The truth, therefore, is the *glory* which flows from GOD to men, and which CHRIST has given to his church, as in last mentioned 22 v. And by which, as made evident to the conscience of others, the world can't but know, that he who gives this *glory*, is of GOD. 21 v. *sup.*

3. BUT the natural consequence of the whole is, that what was characteristic of him who was crucified, is so also of all these who are crucified with him; which is the peculiar case of all the members of his body the church. How then should the import of that meritorious crucifixion be seen, without seeing also, the peculiar state, character, and divine connection, of those, who in their place and measure, stand in the self same sort of light, as being of the truth? But then we have full licence to say, that the discerning the LORD's body, in the text in question, can't be understood according to the bible, to have any meaning which excludes a distinct knowledge of the character and connection of those who in truth have right to eat and drink the sacred symbols.

QUESTION. But how will this detect the unworthy eating and drinking named in the text?

ANSWER.

ANSWER. We have seen how truth gives character to him who was crucified for sinners; and to those, who in consequence of it, are crucified to themselves and the world, for his sake. On which, 'tis easy to see, that for persons to eat and drink the appointed memorials of that crucifixion and its import, who are not of the truth, have not the spirit of the truth; are not in the views of the institution, or of the institutor; so are not of the church, as the body of CHRIST, must be unqualified, *i. e.* unworthy communicants. 'Tis also just as easy to see, that what constitutes this unworthiness, is, being destitute of the character and spirit of the communing family; the father and children; the head and members of *the church*, or body of CHRIST. 'Tis equally easy, then to see, that this unworthiness consists wholly in a person's being such, in state and frame, as that he don't see the family, the father and the children, as making the body; and so eats and drinks unworthily, because he is one, who not being of the truth, don't know, nor can't see, what is the character, state, and connection of that body, which is composed of CHRIST and his people. But there is another common perplexity in this text.

QUESTION. Does the damnation then, which seems to be threatened to the unworthy receiver turn on this hinge, *viz.* that he don't know who are christians?

ANSWER 1. Discerning the body of CHRIST, no more implies what often stimulates the proud, self-righteous quarrels about knowing who are christians, than it implies the seeing of that body which was tortured at *Golgotha*, at every sacrament. The saviour did not say it was a discrimination of his sheep, that they knew every voice made by each other; but that they all knew *his voice*, and are disposed to follow it. And just so often, and so far, as one who is following that voice, can observe another acting on a like principle, and pursuing the same end; he will as naturally conceive delight; as apprehended likeness tends to excite delight in many other cases. And when apprehensions of the presence, and influence of truth in another, begets delight, 'tis evidential of the love of GOD in him who conceives the delight, just as the text says, "we know we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." But the discerning of the body of CHRIST, here contended for, is having such knowledge of truth, as, while it gives understanding of the import of the death of CHRIST, it also at the time gives distinct knowledge what the subjects of the kingdom of truth must be, and how they stand distinguish'd from all the world; let who will be the persons. And this always implies complacent delight in all who appear to be such, without restraint by any other circumstance by which they may differ. And as this complacency among communicants, or any who appear to be of the truth, yields mutual refreshment to their minds, and they herein are a sweet savour to him, by whom they became such; so in this love of the brethren, lies their fellowship with each other; and by this they become one bread. 1 Cor. x. 17.

2. As to the damnation mention'd in this text, which has given occasion to numberless inventions, to sober down the bugbear to a consistency with the kingdom of falsehood, and the comfortable gratification of the religious lusts of its subjects, there needs only to be said,

1. THAT every person in the world, not already possessing salvation in the truth, is intitled to damnation; and by so much the more, as his religious character and professions distinguish him.

2. IT is in general well known, among such, under the gospel, that there is no way for their deliverance, but that represented in the signs of the holy sacrament.

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3. WHEN persons with this witness in their consciences, that there is no way for their salvation, but through the atonement there figured out; do yet hold fast iniquity, and only use the sacred signs, as a help and furtherance to the hopes they have already conceived; what is the implication of such conduct? When their consciences witness a disagreement with revealed truth; and that condemnation lies against all that are not of the truth; and yet they proceed to use the signs of that only saving truth in ungodliness; and even as a quieting support against a *sense of their ungodliness*? Why the language of this conduct, in every such communicant is, "I know damnation awaits me, if I am not delivered by the atonement here represented; but I can't give up all; I can't be all at mere mercy at present; the good LORD forgive me, while I honour my profession before the people, and put as favourable a construction as ever thou can't on the short comings of a poor creature;" and so eats and drinks. The word, and his conscience tell him, that all beside the salvation here represented is damnation; the same word, and conscience witness plain enough, that he is beside it; yet he eats and drinks. Though he has means enough of knowledge, that the judgment of GOD is against all who are not of the truth; yet though he is not of the truth, he eats and drinks. And such must his case continue to be, until his contempt of the only salvation shall cease to witness and seal his damnation.

4. SINCE the bible sufficiently explains its own words, such as please, may consult *Rom. ii. 2.* with that context, where the word rendered damnation in *Corinthians*, is rendered *judgment*, such as GOD executes against transgressors. Also in *Rom. v. 16.* it is rendered *judgment*, even that which is to condemnation.

5. IT will doubtless be allowed, that the same thing is meant by damnation in the text before us, as is meant by being "guilty of the body and blood of the LORD," in *v. 27.* Now the Greek word there, is *enochos*; and the use of it in other places of scripture may be seen, in *Mark iii. 29.* "He that shall blaspheme against the holy ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." So *James ii. 10.* "Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." Let any one judge what is the import and consequence, of being found *guilty* of all. From these remarks, it is evident enough, what every subject of the dominion of falsehood must eat and drink, when he eats the bread, and drinks the cup, which are the memorials of the kingdom of truth, and appropriated to the members of the body of CHRIST.

24. AND so we see what is the distinguishing character of such, all such, and only such, as are of the church, or body of CHRIST; viz. they are such persons, in whatever other character, or circumstances, as, by knowledge, and influence of self-consisting truth, are delivered from their natural inconsistent, and absurd dominion of falsehood, and are brought into a *state* of habitual and practical consistency with GOD and all his perfections,—with the spirit, and example of the son of GOD,—and so with the bible;—and such characters and relations, as GOD in his providence has placed them in. So the operations of truth discover its nature, by begetting and maintaining *consistency*, just as far, and as fast, as they are felt. Therefore, "in this the children of GOD are manifest, and the children of the Devil; whoever doth not righteousness, is not of GOD; neither he that loveth not his brother." *1 John iii. 10.*

25. IT may then be determined peremptorily, that such special ordinances as derive their authority through the new testament, are *proper summaries of truth*;

truth; and are appointed to memorialize all its contents. And so are expressive of all the favour was of, and all he did; and of consequence, imply what is the state of men without him; and the salvation that is in him. And so are significantly distinguished by the frequent scriptural phrase, "*the new testament.*" 1 Cor. xi. 25. Because they are witnessing monuments of the scheme, which, though quite natural to *truth*, and so eternal; yet has been by truth itself, in these last days, made manifest for saving men, who can otherwise have no degree of hope. 9th and 10th chap. of *Heb.*

QUESTION. Can any then, consistently, be supposed to be subjects of these ordinances, who are not of the truth; are not possessed of the truth figured in those ordinances, by the only way of possessing truth, in any case, viz. by believing it? Can it be consistent, for such as do not understand, have *no knowledge* of truth; but are of course heartily averse to it, in every view; are cordial subjects of the dominion of falsehood; to be supposed the subjects, for whom ordinances, whose *only* design is to memorialize truth, should be intended by the institutor?

ANSWER 1. If the state of men, to be memorialized by appointment of natural self-consistency, is, as has been shewn, and as truth has every where affirmed, *all* destitute of goodness, strength, and worthiness of acceptance; as unable to every divine purpose, as an infant to natural ones; then 'tis evident, that consistency itself can't be more consistent than in appointing one of those memorials for infants, as a constant publick speaking example, of the moral state of all men. In this view, when *little children* were brought to him, whose only business was to manifest the mind of God, and express the *whole of truth*; Matt. xix. 13, &c. and when some, who conceived there could be none of those qualifications in infants which they supposed needful, in order to benefit by CHRIST, forbid them; truth itself, with all the authority of the universe, issues an edict, as unrepealable, as his will, "*suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me.*" The reason, he adds, "*for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" Intimating thereby, that as all those, for whose sake the kingdom of heaven is revealed, are as helpless to their own salvation, as these infants; so infants are as necessary a symbol, or speaking sign and representation, as any such thing can be needful, plainly to shew to men what they are, relative to acceptance with God; or to the work of perfect righteousness. And so the same ordinance is equally proper for all, of whatever age, who by truth are brought to see all *that*, in their own helpless state, which infants are designed to teach. And if it is objected, that infants can be no otherwise of the truth, than adults; and so can no more than these, without holiness, be consistent subjects of an ordinance, whose whole design is to memorialize truth; it would be proper to answer; let the dispute be commenced with him who made the ordinance, appointed its import and its use in the church.

YET it may be said, that as truth had ever but *one* thing in view immediately, viz. to make known its own original to sinners, as the only possible means of their salvation; so its various dictates agree and meet, in this one design. And so the dedication of infants being long ago expressly commanded to *Abraham*, the great example of faith and obedience, is of equal force to this day; having never been revoked: The form has been altered, not the thing itself. For truth is the same, and of the self-same mind now, as four thousand years ago. So this leading act of publick religion, is illustrated by many things. Children are our first, and best fruits, and are still to be publickly offered to God, on the reason of the most ancient precept
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of truth, of that tenor. They are the first and best sheaf, of all the field of our common enjoyments; which by original law was to be waved, for a wave-offering to the lord; and then, and not till then, was the rest of the field to be enjoyed. For, by waving the first sheaf, the divine property in the whole field was acknowledged; there was no holiness in the first fruits, or best sheaf, any more than in the vessels of the sanctuary; except as they were openly avowed to be the lord's. But every person who would be viewed as on the lord's side, and so of the truth, must observe and do his will, in all these things. Truth never had but one kingdom, and of that kingdom, the same truth has declared little children to be. And as to know our moral state, is necessary, in order to salvation, for "the whole need not a physician." So one of the two symbolical summaries of truth, in order to perfect self-consistency, ought, in the subject, as well as its purifying quality, to represent us, just as redemption views and finds us. 'Tis doubtless essentially necessary that the party in whose name and right, and by whose means these subjects are exhibited, should be viewed as of the truth. For the

SECOND answer, is on all considerations absolute; *christian ordinances were made for christians*. Institutions which have nothing in them, but truth to be believed; were made for such as believe the truth of them. Consequently, all such as really do so believe, have right to them; and 'tis as evident no others can have such right. *Heb. x. 19.—22.* Herein, the natural consistency of the whole kingdom of truth appears. So the first of these ordinances, are for such adults as see their state of pollution and helplessness, properly represented by fallen infants; and for the children of such adults; for the language of truth is, *Acts ii. 38. 39.* That the promise imported in this ordinance, is to such; and to their children. And all those who understand the state of men, in respect of ability to make some progress towards God, to be completely represented by fallen infants; and that in such view of them, the promise, or good news of salvation, is proclaimed among them; and as it finds them in it, proposes their deliverance from it; will be prepared to acknowledge the matter, meaning, and subject of this ordinance, just as consistent truth has planned them. For such, being taught *the truth* as it is in JESUS, do *all of them know*, that as the salvation represented in this ordinance, is as suitable and sufficient for their children, as it was for themselves; so the sign of it must be as properly applied to them, when they are offered by believers, as it could be applied to such believers themselves. The other ordinance is for nourishing life when it is begotten; for no one can remember what he never knew. Yet the lord's supper is the memorial of, and incentive to that divine principle, which, in man, was supplanted by hatred to every holy object; and which therefore can't be commemorated, but by those in whom this enmity has again been superceeded by the native principle of truth; which is love. 1 *John iv. 7, &c.*

26. It must then appear, that the only qualification for communion with God, in any, and every case, is truth; which only can make likeness to God, in conscience, sentiment, and love; and so qualify for divine fellowship. 1 *John i. 3.—8.*

Where the truth is known, and so of course becomes the object of choice and delight, it must naturally form the soul and life into consistency with God, just as he is made manifest by JESUS CHRIST; and so as likeness takes place, fellowship must follow. 2 *Cor. vi. 14.—18.* And by consequence, no one can have any communion with God, in any case whatever, who has not believed the kingdom of truth. For "what concord hath CHRIST with Belial?"

27. JUST so evidently does it appear, what is the only qualification for visible communion; viz. *appearance of truth*. So that, just so far as any person appears to be taught, and governed by *truth*, as equally the character of GOD, of JESUS CHRIST, and the bible; just so far is he qualified for visible communion. For "whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of CHRIST, *but not GOD*." Therefore, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not. 2 *John* 9. 10." The same therefore is the *only* ground of scriptural charity. 2 *John* 1. 2. And as this makes visible likeness in the church, so it equally begets union in the body. So *John* xvii. 17. 21. speaks thus; "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth—that they all may be one." &c. So we see there is the self-same reason of union in the part of the church; which is yet militant; as in that which is triumphant. For as the appearance of truth, is the glory which CHRIST puts on his people, so he says, "the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one." *John* xvii. 22. And so as was observed before, truth is a character inclusive of the divine nature of both parts of the church, viz. militant and triumphant, and of the holy book, as containing in a perfect manner, the story of both GOD and the church; and which therefore is the medium of all mutual transactions between the two.

28. IT now appears, what constitutes moral obligations; viz. a sensibility of conscience about what is *truth*, in any case; or, which is the same thing; it is conscience being sensible what is the mind of GOD in that case. For conscience *never can* pay *any* regard at all, in *any case*, to *any thing*, but its own notion of truth; or which is always the same thing, its own sense of the mind of GOD. Brutes have evidently some reasoning faculty, but they have no conscience; therefore no moral obligations. The work of conscience, is to testify about truth, or right, or the mind of GOD; and how its contrary stands related to it, in nature and demerit. Consequently, moral obligations must be equally extensive, in every view, with consciousness. So we find the bible, is an address to conscience. 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. "By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of GOD."

29. But there can be nothing inferred from the subject thus illustrated, more evidently than the reason of guilt and peace to men. For the former must be consciousness of inconsistency with inflexible truth; and the latter of cordial acquiescence with it. Therefore in the former case, no creature can pacify; in the latter none can destroy peace. In this view, the psalmist says, "great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." This opens the reason of hell and heaven. For in hell, there is not only nothing to assuage a consciousness of inconsistency with the divine nature and dominion; but every thing to increase, fix, and perpetuate it; therefore truth has said, "their worm dieth not." But in heaven, there is nothing to give disquiet; but every satisfying and pacifick circumstance which can exist there. Therefore tears are wiped away, the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Of consequence, the present vision of GOD, as *perfection of truth*, with agreeable or disagreeable consciousness, must make and maintain the nature and difference of heaven and hell.

30. This opens the truth of the infinite privilege, of what is called *a day of grace*. It shews also the incomprehensible mercy of atonement made; bible given, and of all the works, and all the institutions of GOD. Since all these measures have been concerted, only to make the truth, or the nature and will of GOD, manifest to the consciences of men; and according to the treat-

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ment, which each person's heart yields to these evident signs and tokens of GOD, which constantly attend him, the great judge is as constantly taking trial of him for eternity. And such only, who in this time of trial, are found to be brought into an hearty agreement, and acquiescence with GOD, or truth, as made manifest in the atonement, or work of CHRIST; and so with all his other measures, for effectuating the design of that work, shall have their love and joy perfected and fixed, with unfailing and growing enjoyments forever and ever. While the crowds of those who always found means to maintain their aversion and opposition, to all these tokens of that loving kindness which flows from the nature of eternal truth, shall still possess their own aversions, in unavoidable vision of the same GOD, whom they always opposed, which the bible calls "unquenchable fire."

31. BUT then, the moral state, in which christianity finds every person in the world, is the direct reverse of truth. It is a state of hearty inconsistency with GOD, with the whole work of CHRIST, with the bible, and natural dictates of conscience. In this view of all men, the tender mercies of the truth provided redemption; and determined all his measures of conduct towards them: So we see they are all expressly calculated to creatures thoroughly averse to GOD, and their own interest; "I have called, and ye refused." *Prov. i. 20-27.* And so find also, that the way of salvation for men, always was, and always must be heartily opposed by every person in the world, till the truth of it takes possession of his heart, and makes it free. Which while it yields reason of pity, patience, and much prayer to all, either publickly or privately engaged in the labours of the truth, with assurance that its purpose shall stand. It also exposes to open view, the ignorance and deep enmity of all, in both publick and private life, who heartily try to fit a better character to men, and make some natural coalition between darkness and light; between CHRIST and *Belial*.

32. THEN the first degree of alteration, in any person's moral state, is by his being possessed of truth; or by his receiving the knowlege of GOD; by means of which alone, conversion is wrought. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *John viii. 32.* Which detects numberless delusions on which men risque their eternal state, and shews that no acts of the soul, no frames of the mind, no motions of affections, no terrors, fears, or reaching of desires, no purposes, or performances of duty; be they ever so many, or ever so good, can begin to effect the moral change. For 'tis more impossible that a subject of the kingdom of falshood, should contribute to his own salvation, who has not a sufficiency for one good thought; *2 Cor. iii. 5.* than that one convict of treason, should procure his discharge, while his estate and life are equally forfeited. On which several enquiries arise; as,

QUESTION I. Does not this doctrine render useles, if not sinful, all religious exhortations, duties, and use of means? How then can these be according to truth; though enjoined in the bible?

ANSWER I. The phrase, *means of grace*, as meaning things of any sort, as done, or attended on by us, by which to obtain favour and acceptance with GOD; to prevail with GOD for such acceptance; or to furnish reason and motive for it; is not to be found, in either the expression, or meaning of any text in the bible; and so may be considered as a favourite expression, only in the empire of falshood. The bible indeed teaches, that beholding his glory, we are changed; also that such glory can be seen, only in bible truth; which is the glass in which we behold it. *2 Cor. iii. 18.* Therefore, "the truth shall make you free." And 'tis certain, from the nature of

the case, and from the word of GOD, that nothing else can produce that effect.

2. **THOUGH** obligations to all sorts of duty, are, in their several cases, indispensably of force on the conscience; yet, as men naturally don't view themselves inconsistent with *all* these obligations, which 'tis necessary they should, in order to salvation; because the whole don't need a physician; and because, 'tis in fact true, that *in us* dwells no good thing; so it is of great necessity for every one to know the relation he stands in to the original of all these obligations; or to the precepts of the holy book. For, till we know this, as we find all duties of use in society; so we shall judge them to be of some answerable availance towards our acceptance with GOD, till we find the contrary by experiment. But when we know, that what we so much naturally depend on as means of hope, are of no consideration with GOD; except as evidences of pride, and reasons for damnation; then, and never till then, will the account of atonement, contained in the bible, appear to be sufficient of itself; by our being enabled to believe it, and so of course to find rest, and salvation in it. *Saul* was always alive in hope, by his duties, till in performing them, according to his views, he found he had never done one according to the commandment, then his hope died; but his soul found life from another quarter. Therefore he allowed the commandment good; but he was wrong. *Rom. vii. 7—14*

QUESTION 2. But how can it be according to truth, for persons to be saved in such a promiscuous manner, without regard to characters, or worldly circumstances?

ANSWER 1. Such distinctions among men, as arise from the authority or customs of men, are exactly of no account with GOD; nor can he, in consistency with himself, pay any regard to them, in dispensing the mercies of salvation. *Acts x. 34. 35.* For he views men of all distinctions in the same point of light; they are all alike included in the scriptural characters of proud, ignorant of GOD, enemies to the cross of CHRIST, without hope, &c. Nothing begins to make any agreeable difference among them, but receiving that truth, in which is salvation.

2. **ONLY** such persons, among men, as know, and heartily admit their own characters, as drawn in the word of truth, will ever believe the divine account of compleat and certain salvation, by mere grace of GOD; and so with all their strength, do honour to its original fountain; which is the thing the whole scheme aims at, and wherewith GOD is well pleased. *Heb. xiii. 15, 16.* And as the point which original truth is at, and can't but be at, is to procure such honours to itself; so no matter, who or what is the subject, in other respects. No matter of what distinction; no matter of what nation he is, who thus fears GOD, and answerably works righteousness, as evidential of the truth of his divine principle, he "is accepted of him." *Acts x. 35.*

QUESTION 3. BUT is it not evidently inconsistent with the natural freedom of the will, for it to be changed by mere power?

ANSWER 1. But if it is evidently an impossibility in the nature of things, for any will of a sinner to change itself; then there remains only this choice to be made, *viz.* to agree that it shall be changed by the power of GOD; or go unchanged to eternity. Now the will of one, who is altogether in a state of sin, must be altogether a sinful will. But what modification can a will all sinful, put itself into, which shall be holy? Or how shall that which has no holiness, begin to possess itself of holiness? Many who are not used to thinking, would be quite willing to say of the will, in such case, that it must choose

choose to be holy, and then it will be holy; for it *must* be as it chooses to be. But it may as easily be said, how can the will, which is already engrossed by a sinful choice make a holy one? Or how can it exercise what it has not got? So from its nature it *must* remain as it *does* choose to be. Therefore they who are without CHRIST, are without hope. *Eph. ii. 12.*

2. BUT the will's freedom really lies in acting according to choice; so it exercises all its freedom in the way of sinning, and has none to exercise in any other way. So if it is not delivered, by a power without itself, there can be no possibility of escaping damnation. But if the power which changes it, and gives it a new choice to act from, is instantaneous, and so can't interrupt its free action, then there can be no pretence of inconsistency. And that it is so, the nature of the case and the word of GOD determine. For *first apprehensions*, in all cases, are instantaneous. Every thing which moves a *will*, moves it instantaneously, be it more or less moved. So our wills are changed by the will of GOD, making use of truth; the influence in all cases is instantaneous; for it always moves choice or aversion in all cases, the instant of its apprehension. *Jam. i. 18. John xv. 24,* last clause.

33. FROM all that has been said, there arises to view, a very natural reason for several observable occurrences, among professors of christianity. As,

1. WE may say with freedom, that the reason why the churches in general consist of so many members, who are ignorant of GOD, of the christian atonement, of conversion, and sanctification, and do accordingly shew their disgust at such plain truths as CHRIST and his apostles preached, and stigmatize the preachers of such truths with marks of reproach; I say the reason of this remark, so generally to be made, must be ignorance of truth, as the character of GOD, of the work of CHRIST, of the bible, and so of the church or body of CHRIST, as born of that truth, believed, built upon it, and living by it; and the ignorance which produces the things above remarked, must be charged on those persons who were employed in conducting such members into communion. For if they knew such truth, and were themselves accordingly governed by it, they could not find approbation, satisfying agreement, and fellowship with such as do not discover any scriptural evidence of like acquaintance with it; and so for sake of truth, would be jealous of incorporating traitors in the body of CHRIST; for, *2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.* says, "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; or what communion hath light with darkness?—or what part hath he that believeth, *meta apistou*, with an unbeliever?" Therefore in the same passage, the apostle forbids believers to be yoked with unbelievers; and evidently enough therein points at church-fellowship. But by reason of amazing corruption in these affairs of the house of GOD, they who find their comfort in divine truth, are led to join the mourning prophet, *Jeremiah 23* chap. And to say with the evangelical one, *Isa. iii. 12.* "O my people, they which lead thee," viz. in matters of religion, "cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths."

2. THOUGH it can never be expected, that men in this present state, however experienced in the truth, should in every point agree in sentiment, which will always call forth the exercise of benevolence, and love for the truth sake that is in them, along with their other various peculiar notions of less importance. Yet infallible truth has secured concurrence, exact concurrence of sentiment in the *main point*, especially among teachers, viz. in viewing and preaching CHRIST, as the *sole* and sufficient relief for sinners; and that in his merit alone, is everlasting salvation; which is called their seeing eye to eye.

eye. *Isa. lli. 8.* So the single point wherein they shall be united, is, that **JESUS CHRIST is the truth**, respecting **GOD**, whom he compleatly revealed, and made manifest; and *the truth*, respecting men, whose character and state, as helpless and hopeless, he ascertained incontestibly; *the truth* also, as exhibiting the only and most perfect medium, by which those of them who believe, and so become possessed of truth, as characteristic of him, shall infallibly live forever. And so this stands for the sole article of union and uniformity in the church, at her best estate. The grand article of christian agreement, in which the people of **GOD** shall see eye to eye, is "the **LORD** our righteousness," as the only medium of acceptance, and so of salvation; to the express exclusion of every other consideration.

3. WE see a common reason of religious dissentions, and querulous debates among those who hold the bible for their religious system, viz. ignorance of self-consisting truth. For as knowledge of it, *always necessarily* fixes every one's notion of what is essential in religion, and so makes agreement and love; so the want of such knowledge, leaves persons ignorant of the only mean of acceptance; the only evidence of likeness and partnership in one common cause; and so of the only incentive to mutual love, inviolable by every other power. Want of knowledge in the same case, necessarily induces every person to substitute something else, as a mean of acceptance, evidence of divine rights, and reason of love, and so of obedience; and every one must from the nature of the case, as matter of eternal importance, hold what he so substitutes instead of the truth, to be essential in his system. Now as men's sentiments, or religious complexions, are naturally as various as their features; so the substituted essentials, must be about as numerous as the person's substituting; and about as different as the lines of their faces. Every one also obliged to support his own substituted essential as the pillar, and reason of his eternal hopes. So every one's religion, must make him quarrel for it, with zeal exactly proportioned to the strength of his hope. And as every one's substituted essential, fills his eye, and engages all his zeal; so every one must in exact proportion to his religion be filled with self-love, and hatred of his brother. Exactly from this point, arise all those religious aversions, oppositions, persecutions, envies, and evil speakings, which self-sufficient truth alone can prevent, and which it expressly forbids, and naturally sets aside. 1 *Peter* ii. 1, 2, &c.

34. WE next see a reason why the word of **GOD**, as the only compleat description of truth, that ever can reach any of our senses, has so little influence on mankind; and why it has no place in any person at all, till the strong man armed is dispossessed by it; and why it must till that, be opposed in one way or other without exception, by every one of mankind; viz. because no one knows it; no one understands it; and so no one can believe it; for none can believe what he does not know, or know what he does not understand. So when he who was truth itself, would describe and distinguish those who are of the truth, he says, *Matt. xiii. 23.* He that received seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word, and *understandeth it*, and so beareth fruit. This opens to our view, 1 *Cor. ii. 14. 15.* *Psuchicos*, the souly man, or the man who is governed by his own heart, and the imaginations of it; instead of truth, he receiveth not the things of the spirit of **GOD**, for they are foolishness to him, he don't understand them; he apprehends good reason in what he substitutes instead of *the truth*, in matters of religion; so he holds to that, and rejects the truth, as seeing no consistency, reasonableness, or beauty in it, that it should be desired. Whereas *Pneumatics*,
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the spiritual man, is furnished to judge of both, having himself been in the former state, and by light of truth learned the nature and danger of it; and being delivered from the dark and blind delusions of it, has found life and liberty to his soul in the truth, so is judge of both, To this purpose the Lord himself speaks, *John xviii. 37.* "every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice," *i. e.* understandeth the word of the kingdom, is prepared to attend to it, and receive it; whereas every other person in hearing of the gospel, being on another plan for acceptance with God; and having already substituted the supposed necessary means for it, receives not the plan the gospel exhibits; and in proportion as it is urged on him, must have his foreign attachments and views irritated, rising in the same proportion towards the height of opposition and moral malice, until the native power of truth break down the strength of pride within him, by knowledge of itself, as it is in *JESUS.*

35. In the light of what was remarked concerning truth, in the two last inferences, we may clearly understand, *Matt. x. 39.* "He that findeth his life, shall lose it;" *i. e.* He who deviseth any manner of way to hope for salvation, and so to get a little present comfort to his uneasy conscience, shall as surely lose his hope, and all the comfort arising from it, as he devised it; or as he took comfort in it; or as it was devised and used in opposition to, and contempt of, the plan which truth exhibits for hope and comfort to sinners. The same passage of scripture, also assures us, that "He who loseth his life, shall find it." That is, he who from a knowledge of the alone sufficiency of truth, to give hope and comfort to a guilty conscience, loseth, most gladly loseth, all that, which before gave him hope and comfort, and so was his life; shall assuredly find both hope and consolation, such as riseth from experience of infallible truth, and which therefore shall be eternal. And so we find that truth is the hinge of all real hope, soul rest, and salvation, to such as have knowledge of it; and is the reason of present guilt, and eternal hell, to all who find their habitual pleasure beside it.

36. And so we see the only medium of communion between God, and some among transgressors; it is divine truth. For only by truth, is God expressed to men; and only as it is understood can we know God, only by its own proper influence can we be like him; so only truth is the medium of all divine communion. Hence it appears, that there can be no divine fellowship for such, as not understanding and so not believing divine truth, or the story of God, as contained in the bible, are not possessed of it, or governed by it; are not of the truth. In the same view it also appears, that no person has more communion, or fellowship with God, than he has of the truth, in his understanding and actual knowledge. This shews the reason of the importance of faith, which is our possession of the truth. *Eph. iii. 17. 18. 19.* This also shews the reason of the peculiar freedoms, which evidently take place between God and those who are of the truth; for they are just so far partakers of the divine nature. From this arises every divine qualification and character ascribed to men in the bible; and on this depends every divine enjoyment in this life, and that which is to come. Indeed truth, as characteristic of God, and of all that was done by CHRIST in the flesh, and so as furnishing the revealed history of God, is the only medium of free communion, or comfortable fellowship among men. *Eph. ii. 14. 17. 18.* For the same which makes peace, union, and fellowship with God, produces the same effects among those who are subjects of it. Here we may remark,

1. ALL charity both to God and man, arises from possession, and so from genuine influence of truth; second epistle of *John.* And there can be none to either, from any other cause.

2. THERE

2. THERE appears a natural reason, why faith should always work by love, and never by any thing else; viz. because as soon as truth is believed, or a person is possessed of its reality, he not only perceives the amiable excellencies of divine objects believed, but by the possession and influence of them, he is made like them; and so love and delight arise as freely, yea, as necessarily, as any effect in nature. 2 *John* i. 2,

3. THEN such as do not so delight in the truth, are as much fallen to the love of man, as they be to the love of GOD; and are as deeply, and from the same original possessed of *envy* to men, as of *enmity* to GOD. These are the principles of all human life, till belief of truth gives birth to love in its two branches, viz. to GOD and man; and then the two natural principles are just so far supplanted. So the charity which arises in knowledge of truth, is equally the cure of enmity and envy; and alike takes place of them as to its own two objects. On these two hang all the law, and all the prophets. *Matt.* xxii. 40.

4. WE may next see easy light on some passages, in *Heb.* vi. 4—6. and *Heb.* x. 26, 27. commonly understood of the unpardonable sin. To which purpose observe;

1. THAT AS JESUS CHRIST was indeed GOD *manifested*, in human nature; and as his design was to make such manifestation complete; so the summary and test of faith, in him is expressed in these words,—"If ye believe not that *I am he*, ye shall die in your sins." *John* viii. 24.

2. THAT accordingly all his discourses, and miraculous works were, with infinite wisdom, and perfect pertinency and propriety, calculated to give evidence to the consciences of all men; that he was what he claimed to be, *the Christ*, the son of GOD, and so to communicate infallibly to natural conscience, the evidence of faith in that case; that all who are made acquainted with these credentials may be self-condemned, for rejecting a known way of salvation, if after such light about CHRIST, as the divine Saviour, they still are found not to believe to sanctification, and the saving of their souls.

3. THAT these evidences do always support to natural conscience, that he is *the only Saviour* of sinners. So that the natural conscience of all who hear the gospel story, shall always know there is salvation by him, and consequently that there can be none in any other way or name. Therefore, *John* x. 37, &c. gives us this view of his discourse with the Jews, who sought to kill him, viz. if I do such works as in their own nature prove all my highest pretensions, though ye will not believe me, in my verbal assertions, yet believe what my works evidence to you, for they alone are sufficient to make even you who hate me, know and believe that the father is in me, and I in him. That is, they alone, if you will suffer yourselves to attend to them, are sufficient to make you know and believe, that I am indeed *he* who was to come; the true CHRIST.

4. THAT all persons have a natural ability to attend, or not, to the evidence they are conscious of in moral affairs, just as in those of a natural kind. Or men can naturally attend to the dictates of their own conscience, about divine matters, as well as those which concern their conduct among men. This is obvious to common sense. 'Tis evident, the natural effect of such attention to the evidence of conscience about divine matters, would be a proportionably greater sense of guilt and danger; and apprehensions of it, are a common reason why such attention is no more given; but men may attend to any dictate of their own conscience, as they please; and when by such attention, they, like the prodigal, are come to themselves; they will then,

then, as he, be glad to understand by the special light, and powerful teaching of truth; that the truth, which their conscience witnessed of, is the bread of heaven. That there is salvation in the same truth, concerning which their conscience bore witness. As conscience distinguishes men from brutes; so it is the immediate object of address in the name of GOD. By manifestation of the truth, says the apostle, commending our selves to every man's conscience. *2 Cor. iv. 2.*

5. SUCH as do reject the evidence by which CHRIST is proved to be the only Saviour; and so sin wilfully after they have received such evidence; which, with respect to such evidence, can only be in rejecting it,—as to do right in respect of it, is to receive or believe it; such I say, just as far as they reject, or resist and oppose such evidence, do manifestly put themselves out of possible reach of salvation; and this must be just as plain, as that there is no other way of salvation, than that the evidence of which they refuse.

6. SUCH refusers therefore are the *adversaries, upenantiours*, who inwardly and resolutely resist the knowledge of truth, which they have received. *Heb. x. 27.* For whom therefore nothing remains but fiery indignation; because there can be no other salvation than that of which, in a determined manner, they refuse the plain intimations. Of course, 'tis easy to see, that there is not so great difference, as is often supposed, between the case of those who perish by what is called the unpardonable sin, and those under the gospel who are supposed to perish by other means. On which, one might only ask, do any perish under the gospel, who believe to sanctification, the evidence of the only possible salvation, exhibited to their consciences in the new testament? Surely not. Again; is there any one who perisheth from under clear gospel advantages, but only in consequence of constant fixed opposition to the evidence of his own conscience about the only saving designs of the gospel? What can the perishing of such be ascribed to, if not to a constant opposition to the way of salvation, as revealed in the bible; to the knowledge of natural conscience? Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of GOD, but that against light and knowledge, in his own conscience, he of choice consents to be drawn away and enticed. In this light the apostle proceeds to illustrate what is called the unpardonable sin, in the foregoing verses, by shewing 29th verse of this xth. of *Heb.* what is the case of all who perish from under the light of the gospel; and says, “of how much sorer punishment,” than what sinners received, who perished from under the first covenant, “suppose ye” that such as perish, must receive now, “who have trodden under foot the son of GOD; and counted the blood of the covenant” by shedding which, that son of GOD “was sanctified, an unholy thing,” and so have done despite to the spirit of grace?”

7. ANY one who considers what bible truth is; and what doctrine it contains, about sin, death, and deliverance by the blood of a saviour; and how conscience must be affected, with evidence of such things; and that such impressions on the conscience, can only be made by the spirit, which is in that truth; may find an easy sense to all the passages about being enlightened, and tasting, or feeling, and perceiving the heavenly gift, *i. e.* having light in the conscience, about deliverance come down from heaven, for such as are guilty. *Heb. vi. 4. &c.* And may find them abundantly fulfilled in the operations of truth, on the natural conscience. Now saith the apostle, if such shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

1. BECAUSE their conscience has had evidence, that there is salvation for such as they, in what CHRIST has done; they have been enlightened to that purpose.

2 BECAUSE

2. BECAUSE their conscience has perceived plainly, by evidence of truth, that such salvation was finished, and offered freely; they have tasted the heavenly gift.

3. BECAUSE their conscience has felt the influence of truth, convincing them of the sufficiency and freeness of the salvation wrought by CHRIST, and witnessed of in the bible; which influence was made by the spirit, which is in that truth; and so they have partook of the holy ghost.

4. AND as the holy ghost made this influence by the word of truth, testifying the merciful design of redemption, so they have tasted the good word of GOD.

5. AND as all this was effected on their conscience entirely by divine power, so herein they have felt the powers of the world to come.

6. BECAUSE, as the greek word for falling away, which is *parapesontas*, signifies to fall headlong, and is of the same import as the word used for the first fall, by rushing against light, to eat the forbidden fruit; so it implies only a little more of the same kind, which is found in all who oppose the evidence of the saving truth under the gospel.

7. BECAUSE, as there is no other mean of repentance, than this truth, the light and evidence of which, the conscience so repels; so this being determined against, shuts the only possible door of repentance.

THIS lays open to view *Luke xii. 10.* as saying, whosoever shall talk against CHRIST, it may be pardoned, as proceeding from ignorance, the conscience not having distinct evidence of him at that time, as the *only* and *certain* Saviour of the wicked. But whosoever, having such evidence of the truth in his conscience, indulges his natural hatred of it, to a contemptuous push against it, and exclusion of it, as what embitters his enjoyments, interrupts his joys, and is the provoking trouble of his conscience, does truly blaspheme the holy ghost, who is the author of this sensible evidence of truth; and so does as to himself crucify and put to death the son of GOD in the court of his own heart, and make an example of him, as we say in reproach of one who provokes us; which is rendered putting him to shame.

AND so this whole affair about the unpardonable sin, is represented, *Heb. vi. 7. 8.* by a similitude taken from the earth, which receives rain in common, but some spots are made to bring forth wholesome food; other spots from reasons within themselves, will only so much the readier bring forth thorns and briars; and therefore must be rejected, cursed, and burned.

This whole affair is also represented doctrinally, by the parable of the sower, in *Luke viii.* and practically by the different treatment, which the same truth met with from christians and jews, when GOD was manifest in our flesh. And consequently is acted over in fact, by all who have the gospel now.

37. WE learn from the whole, the *only* reason, and unfailling certainty of christian perseverance; it entirely consists in truth, being engaged for that purpose. GOD made manifest to the guilty in what CHRIST did, which must imply belief, in the sense of the bible, is the only possible means of conversion of a sinner; and he whose true character is *God made manifest*, has said, of such, "*they shall never perish.*" *John x. 28.* And as he said, respecting *Peter's* confession of him, "on this rock will I build my church;" so christians may say in the belief of this his own averment, concerning them; on this impregnable rock is built the infallibility of our everlasting hope; which gives occasion to remark a few things.

1. TRUTH's engagements for the eternal preservation of its subjects, cannot in consistency with itself, hold any involuntarily, or influence them as mere machines;

machines; for though of his own will he begat them, which must be so, if truth is the begetter; yet as to progression, they being now made alive, he works in them daily to will, and so to do. So he has none but a willing people. And this influence on the will, being from him, is so far from fixing the vulgar notion of mechanism in this case, as that 'tis certain, every will of all men moved to good, must be totally from that only cause, inasmuch as it is obviously a self-contradiction, to suppose the will of any man, in any case, to be its own mover; since it can't but imply, that the will in that case always moves, before it begins to move. For if the will is supposed to move upon design, or in consequence of choice, then it must design or choose, in order to move; but for the will to design, or choose to move, is an act or motion of the will; so it must move, before it begins to move. Therefore no self-determining power in the will of man.

2. HE who moves his people to will, and to do, is absolute LORD of all things; and as to save sinners with an everlasting salvation; and so effectuate the will of his father, or the good pleasure of truth, is his grand design; so as surely as absolute lordship can always do its will; and as infallibility can't be disappointed; so surely all his works, all his words, all his worlds, are as much and as infallibly in every view, made subservient to this one immediate design, as the deity can be fixed in his governing view. So he is *universal consistency*. In this view we should always read, "it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; and "my council shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," "none shall ever pluck them out of my hand," "all things are yours," and "all things work together for good, to them that love God."

3. IF it should be said, that faith of divine truth, is allowed to devils; and it has been said on this subject, that wicked men do believe; and indeed one may be allowed as well as the other; the faith of both being of the same sort, differing only as the degree of their light and knowledge differs; in which respect, the father of lies exceeds, vastly exceeds all his children; but in what then does saving faith differ from theirs?

ANSWER 1. Their faith is natural, and consists only of the dictates of natural conscience, enlightened by revelation; whereas saving faith, consists all of things revealed. *Heb. xi. 1.* Even of the heathen the apostle says, they knew God, tho' they glorified him not as God. *Rom. i. 21.* But by the gospel, men are exalted to heaven; and yet are thereby naturally only exposed to a proportionably more dreadful hell; for they who know the master's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

2. THEIR natural faith, even in cases where it receives much advantage from the scriptures, as in all unconverted persons under the gospel, is still employed only about things known to natural conscience; whereas true faith especially consists of such things in the divine history, as natural conscience has no knowledge of: As moral beauty; or the amiableness of divine objects: The pleasure of subjection to inflexible sovereignty: Seeing with delight, that in us dwells no good thing, and knowing that *all fulness* is in CHRIST: Sensible possession of the white-stone with a new name: Evidence of an anchor within the vail, &c. As natural conscience in no case has any knowledge of these, so these constitute the difference between the faith of un sanctified men, and of devils, on one side; and the faith of christians on the other. Hence two things arise to view; viz.

1. THE universal reason of false hopes; which is, persons judging of their moral state, by what their natural consciences know of bible things. Men find they know, and do many things, which are according to the bible, as their natural

natural consciences view the bible in those cases. And the same consciences testify these things are certainly right and good; so in that proportion exactly they are rich, and encreased in goods.

2. AN universal rule for self-examination; viz. that enquiry should be always made, in examining our moral state, not whether we have such knowledge or experience, as natural conscience has commonly of bible things, or such practice as may arise therefrom; for this is the common mean of religious delusion: But whether we know such bible things, as natural conscience never can know; some of which have been mentioned above; and whether our manners are such as the bible assures us will always arise from such knowledge. The command therefore is, "let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone," and not in the good esteem which he thinks is had of him, either in heaven or earth. *Gal. vi. 4.*

3. THEIR natural faith never works by love; and so never makes holiness; whereas christian faith never works otherwise; it never fails of as much love, as there is belief of the truth as in JESUS; or of as much holiness, as of either. And so these two sorts of faith are enough distinguishable.

38. BUT if truth is characteristic of the divine kingdom; and if the design of that kingdom is to make known, and maintain universally and forever, its own uniformity, and perfect consistency, then the subjects of that kingdom are immortal. Whatever reasons determine the divine council, and give being to the kingdom of truth, the same reasons, with equal force, must take place, to prove the eternity of that kingdom; for there can be no shadow of turning with GOD. So whatever reasons determine the design of that kingdom as to men, must equally prove them immortally subjects of it; and that "this mortal must put on immortality." *1 Cor. xv. 53.* Which brings several things to view; as,

1. THEN the nature of the kingdom of truth is invariably the same from eternity to eternity. GOD is the same from everlasting to everlasting; and the son of GOD says, I and my father are one; therefore of his kingdom there can be no end. *Dan. vii. 14.*

2. THEN truth as delineated in the scriptures, and explained in the new-testament, is in every point, of equally binding force now, as when it first became the standard for faith and practice. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the words of truth shall not pass away; they have no alteration. *Lu. xxi. 33.* Therefore he who receiveth not these words of truth, rejecteth CHRIST, and shall be accordingly judged in the last day. *John xii. 48.*

3. THEN the nature of all men is such, that tho' heaven and earth cease in the present visible state of them, they cannot cease; there can be no end to human nature. The whole present world is nothing for duration, to each person who lives upon it. 'Tis not in the will of GOD, nor in the power of all creation, to put an end to any one person's existence. Each person in the world, godly or wicked; friend or foe, old or young, will continue in being as long as angels, as long as being lasts, i. e. forever. There can be no end to any person. For men must continue as long as the kingdom of which they are subjects. Therefore expressions importing endless existence, are used of men throughout the bible.

4. THEN, though 'tis appointed to all men once to die; yet there is no appointment, nor can be any, to bring them to an end. Death is only the end of presence, not of existence, to any person at all.

5. THEN a future state of existence is just as evident, as that there is a kingdom of truth, or that men are subjected to its laws.

6. THEN

6. **THEM** as certainly as men are not all conformed to those laws, and partakers of the truth, to the saving purposes of its kingdom; just so certain is the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; by which those who are of the truth, shall be glorified for ever, while the rest endure unquenchable fire.

7. **THEN** we see the reason of the difference of such future retributions, viz. Not barely that the subjects were in a *state* of truth, or of falshood; but that they have deliberately found their delight in the one or the other. Love or delight, is what gives character to the children of truth, and the children of falshood. Every person is, as he finds delight. He who finds his pleasure in the truth, is of the truth; and he who finds his pleasure in falshood, is a child of falshood; and this nevertheless for his way of falshood bearing a high resemblance to the way of holiness. For we must not love in word, or in tongue, but in *deed*, and in *truth*; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 1 *John* iii. 18, 19. But whosoever loveth, and maketh a lie, shall not enter the heavenly city. *Rev.* xxii. 14, 15.

39. **BUT** then, on the whole, there must be a resurrection; and that resurrection must be universal. For 'tis obvious, that truth and consistency do not, cannot perfectly take place in this state of things; and 'tis as evident, that they can't in any other state without a resurrection. And of course, whatsoever injuries, or inequalities take place in this present state of things, which is evidently imperfect, they shall be recompensed at the resurrection, *Luke* xiv. 14, and set in order when the Lord returns. And as this will naturally require the actual compleat presence of all individuals, who were ever subjected to the laws of the kingdom of truth; so truth has assured all men, that even though they are in their graves, or in the depths of the sea, or wherever, they shall come forth, those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. *John* v. 29. On which observe,

1. **THAT** as self-consistent truth is alike present every where; and as every particle of matter is directly before the eyes of that truth; so from the nature of the case, it is impossible that divine power should be at any loss to find the same bodies which died, whatever changes these bodies pass thro' after death, and before the resurrection; if he designs the raised body shall consist of the same particles of matter. And as he can be at no loss where they be, having been eye witness of their places, changes, and uses, every moment since the death of the numberless bodies they composed; so he can be at no loss how to bring them together. He who by a word, can make the earth and sea give up their dead; can by the same means, with equal ease, make the parts necessary to constitute the same body, assemble each to other, throughout the whole globe, instantly to compose the rising body. Why therefore should any think it a thing impossible for God to raise the dead? *Acts* xxvi. 8.

2. **BUT** as every human body continuing a number of years in this life, shifts and changes its constituting parts; as is evident not only by the quantities of aliment received, and the numerous very different discharges made, especially that by perspiration; but by the visible alterations of countenance, size and shapes, and various stages of life: So any of those sets of particles, as truly may constitute the same body in the resurrection, as it did in its own stage of life. But,

3. **WHY** all these inventions, since truth, both in word and fact, has made the whole affair plain enough. 1 *Cor.* xv. 35, and onward to 49. The question is proposed; "how are the dead raised," or "with what body do they come?"

come?" And instantly charges the question to the account of stupid ignorance, in the following manner; viz. Thou fool! Does not the same grain of wheat which thou sowest, spring up and grow? Yet that which grows, is a very different thing from the grain which was sowed; and to produce such growth, the grain which was sowed must die. So in the resurrection, the same body which died shall rise, although it shall have very different qualities, "it was sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body, &c." All this is also illustrated by the body of CHRIST, before and after his resurrection; or in a more striking point of light, by the body of the first Adam, whose qualities we now possess; and by that of CHRIST after his resurrection, like which the raised bodies of his people shall be. So that 'tis as easy to know what body shall live, as to know with what body CHRIST arose, who was the first fruit of them who sleep. *1 Cor. xv. 20.*

40. But then, in order that the rights of truth should be vindicated, and perfect and universal consistency take place, there must be a general judgment: A resurrection is of necessity, in order to a universal adjustment, which 'tis evident is not obtained in the present state; and which 'tis as evident must take place, in a kingdom, whose characteristic is natural self-consistency. But a resurrection only furnishes attendants on that grand final court of righteousness; the only immediate reason for a resurrection, is, to open the way for the following judgment. Concerning the last judgment, truth has given us a most circumstantial account, in the divine history; as that all men, both living and dead, shall be brought before that judgment seat, *2 Tim. iv. 1.* and not only their open conduct, but the secrets of their hearts shall then be judged, *Rom. ii. 16.* and these not in a private manner; for they shall be published as on the house top; for the words of the truth are, " whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed on the house tops." *Luke xii. 3.* neither will there be any exception of things supposed to be well done; or of things supposed too gross for publick light. " For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." *Ecc. xii. 14.* And just as each person's love, and its influence on his life, shall be then found to have been, so shall he be judged. *Rev. xxii. 12.* The place of this judgment, will be the vast expanse of the airy heavens. *1 Thes. iv. 15.—17.* The method of collecting this assembly, will be the conduct of angels, *Matt. xxiv. 31. Psal. l.* And as the dead in CHRIST will rise first, and be directly caught up to be with the LORD, and be openly acquitted, and admitted into their judge's joy; so they shall be assessors with him of all others to be judged, *1 Cor. vi. 2.* The three publick registers, by which the world will be judged, are the books of conscience, omniscience, and the law; as referred to, together with the book in which the elect are enrolled. *Rev. xx. 12.* The issues of judgment will be; to those who were of the truth, come ye blessed inherit the kingdom, which your dear loved truth has prepared for you; and to all others, depart ye cursed to the chains, in fire and brimstone, which self-consistency always assured you of. *Matt. xxv. 31, &c.* The same passage also intimates, the reason of these different issues to be love, and hatred to the truth, so natural and genuine, that the respective subjects are pointed out, as not having distinctly remarked these as the true springs of their past lives; so they say, " when saw we thee" in such circumstances, and did, or did not, thus and thus unto thee? The consequence of the judgment, is a never ending establishment in the love and joy of the truth; or in such an unalterable sense of confirmed aversion to that truth,

truth, which can't but be fill, and always immediately present; as must forever maintain torture in the conscience. See *Matt. xxv. 14.—30.* Then,

1. 'Tis not of so much importance to us, how temporal matters determine at present; for there is a day coming, when that which is right shall be approved, and crowned before all the world, however it was treated among men; and when that which was wrong, however supported by open violence or sly deceit, shall be overhauled, and receive its just reward. And all this is just as certain, as that **JESUS CHRIST** arose from the dead. *Acts xvii. 31.* For thereby assurance of that day's work is now given to all men, by truth itself.

2. Let those who now suffer unjustly, and can't obtain right, believe to satisfaction, the testimony of truth concerning that day, when he will judge the world in righteousness; and rowl their burthen on the **LORD**, till that day. And especially let such as suffer for the sake of truth, be assured, that when he maketh inquisition for blood, he will remember them; for he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. *Psal. ix. 12.* and let them comfort one another with these words.

3. Then let oppressors and proud boasters fear, for their day is coming; and though they cover themselves with reasons, excuses, and the strength of power, it shall not avail them. For the wicked cannot stand in the judgment.

4. As we have seen, that truth is the only fountain of happiness; and that the same truth, by means of contrariety in the subject, proves the source of all the torture of the guilty; so we find reason for several important conclusions.

1. That as from the nature of things, and from common fact, it is evident, that nothing can be more distressing to the guilty, than the truth; so this being the character of **GOD**, and of all his kingdom; there needs nothing to constitute a perfect hell, but for a guilty conscience to be sensibly confirmed in its guilt, and confined to the immediate beholding of that **GOD**, whose known character is original truth. Hence that most remarkable description of hell, as taking its finishing ingredient from the presence of **CHRIST**, who as making **GOD** manifest, was truth itself. *viz. Rev. xiv. 10.* "tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

2. We see a reason for all the fiery emblems used in scripture to describe the state of torment. Truth is the most tormenting thing, that guilt can meet with; so a consciousness of the knowledge and unavoidable presence of truth, and in that same point of view, in which it was always despised, *viz. as exemplified in CHRIST*, must make and maintain the sharpest sense of torture, which a conscience can feel. This is therefore figured by burning with fire; which is most terrible to nature, especially when kindled by brimstone.

3. Therefore all scriptural metaphors of *departing*, being *banished*, and such like, refer, not to real presence, for that can't be avoided, but to smiling presence, and open acceptance; such as the lovers of the truth shall enjoy for ever. So we find the most emphatical account of the happiness of the blessed, in *Rev. vii. 15.—17.* as deriving from the same divine presence, which is the source of torment in *Rev. xiv. 10.*

4. We see then a reason, why divine objects are in the bible represented by fire; *viz.* Because of that truth by which they are divine: And as the truth of **GOD**, which is the reason of torment to the guilty, is also equally the source of *heaven itself*, to such as can't find life out of the truth; so we see the native import of that sacred motive on christians, to love and serve the **LORD**, *viz.* Because their **GOD** is a consuming fire. *Heb. xii. 28. 29.*

42. BUT

42. But if God is truth, and his universal kingdom is just like himself; then divine providence is truth put in practice, by the LORD of all things; according to *Psal.* xxxiii. 4. "All his works are done in truth," and so we see,

1. A reason why no person in the world is pleased naturally, with any thing done by divine providence, unless something beside the mere expression of truth, or the will of God, can be seen in it; as that it has some favourable aspect to self-interest, or private views; then indeed we can naturally take pleasure in providences, because we consider them partial in our favour. So that the providential works of God, do naturally no further appear beautiful and lovely, than we can divest them of truth, their only native beauty. And this will be manifest to all who understand, that men are lovers of themselves more than lovers of God. *2 Tim.* iii. 2, 4.

2. We see also the heinous nature of this offence at providence, chargeable on the nature of all men; 'tis offence at the conduct of truth, and equally proves the subject to be the seed of fallhood; and that wrath is coming out. For it is the express doctrine of the bible, that the LORD cometh to execute judgment on murmurers, complainers, &c. against him. *Jude* 14.—16. This fault-finding and displeasure at the mere work of truth, throughout the kingdom of providence, is so natural, so common and fashionable; that it seems to be little more distinctly perceived, and blamed, among men; than speaking or breathing. Therefore, we find the measure and test of truth taking place among men, is, the deaf shall hear the words of *the book*; the scorner shall be consumed; *Jacob* shall fear the God of *Israel*; and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. *Isai.* xxix. 18.—24.

3. We see reason why all who are pleased with mere providence, do always feel the same sort of peace, pleasure and happiness, as in the enjoyment of God. Therefore the nature, and the works of God, are alike the matter of joy and praise. *Psal.* cvii. 8. 15. &c.

LASTLY. WE see the sum of the answer to *Pilate's* question, in these particulars, viz.

1. GOD, his nature, and all his attributes and perfections, are truth, in its first and most important sense. His proper distinction is, *GOD of truth.* *Deut.* xxxii. 4.

2. JESUS CHRIST as a divine person, and as perfectly expressing God to men, is in equal sense, *the truth.* *John* xiv. 6.

3. The holy ghost, as the great efficient of all divine purposes, and as represented in the genuine influence of all the words, and all the works of God, on the consciences of men, is *truth.* *1 John* v. 6. And for this reason styled, the spirit of *the truth.* *John.* xiv. 17.

4. THE work which JESUS CHRIST came to do, and which is the only obedience of merit, in which therefore *all the hope* of sinners lies, itself being the only perfect practical righteousness, is *truth*, in fact, through which only we are saved. *2 Thes.* ii. 13.

5. THE scriptures, as the only perfect literal description of the Godhead, and the only history of his kingdom, and its righteousness, is in the same sense, *truth* itself. *John* xvii. 17.

6. THE saving work of the spirit of GOD, through belief of the word of GOD, and by which sinners are made partakers of the divine nature, and have fellowship with GOD, is *truth.* *1 John* ii. 27.

7. THE whole kingdom of GOD, as including the creation and government of all things, is *original truth*, exemplified in facts. All his works are done in *truth.* *Psa.* xxxiii. 4.

8. NATURAL

3. NATURAL self-consisting truth, in the last and most finished representation of it to men, is the distinguishing character of that kingdom, of which JESUS CHRIST was born lord and king. It was all represented in types, in the Jewish state of the church; and the whole of that state of the church was type, or typical. But now the *truth* is come, which was all along meant by those types. To be particular,

1. THAT state of the church was national, equally extensive as *Abraham's* blood; and is mimicked still by several ecclesiastical constitutions, who like the Jews, hold to the type, and believe not that the truth meant by it, is come. Others are only longing for it, but are unhappy in that, after extending their views of church state, and crowding into it as many, and those of the earth's great ones, as they can, are left to wait the want of the typical, *i. e.* national glory to the church. Instead of which we have now a church state, equally extensive as *Abraham's* faith; consisting only of such as appear to have that faith, which is the truth meant by that typical state of the church. *Heb. xii. 18—29.*

2. THE covenant, by which that state of the church was distinguished from other nations, as a type, with its temple, altar, holy place, and sacrifices, are all now supplanted by the *truth* meant in all those cases; *i. e.* by the new covenant, and the true temple, altar, and sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST. 8 and 9 chap. of *Heb.*

3. THEY had the typical *Jerusalem*, a seat of worship; christians have the *truth* which answers to that type; in which God, by the gospel is now seeking worshippers. *John iv. 20—24.*

4. THEY had the three great church offices, of king, priest and prophet; of all which we have now the *truth* in JESUS CHRIST. *Heb. ix. 23, 24.* and elsewhere. For the present state of the kingdom of CHRIST, is exactly the truth of those types and patterns, which constituted that state of the church, and so his kingdom is a kingdom of truth.

5. As in that state of the church, only those who were ceremonially clean, had access to the types of holy fellowship; so now, only saints or holy ones, have true fellowship with the *body one.*

6. BUT as the last scene of truth, *i. e.* heaven itself, is not yet fully come; so divers things are as instituted signs of what truth has said and done referring to that last scene, are of divine obligation now, and to be viewed as summaries, and memorials of truth; and as sure prefaces of the last and blissful scene approaching. Such are the sabbath, sacraments, &c.

7. BUT truth will never be known, and enjoyed in a perfect manner, till that last scene opens; and then that which is perfect being come, that which is part shall be done away, for ever more.

8. THEN 'tis very evident on the whole, and safe to be determined,

1. WHO are christians, and who are not, viz. such as from knowledge and possession of truth, are governed in heart and life, just as love always governs to its objects, are christians, and 'tis as evident no others are so. "He that loveth, is of GOD."

2. WHO are to be considered and treated by others as being christians, and who not, viz. such as own the truth, and walk as if they were influenced by it, will always appear to be christians, and must be treated accordingly; but none who are destitute of either, can so appear, or consequently be justly so treated. This is exactly that confessing of CHRIST, which determines this affair. 1 *John iv. 1—6.*

3. WHO

3. Who are to be admitted to visible communion; and who not, viz. such as appear to be delivered from that natural self-esteem which governs all men while subjects of falshood, and to have found their supream delight in divine truth, let all other things be as they will, must be received, and no other. This principle will distinguish and crown the *Philadelphian* state of the church described *Rev. iii. 7—13.* into which perhaps we are now entering.

4. We may absolutely determine now the character of every person who will finally possess the last and glorious scene of truth's dominion, and who cannot, viz. such as are so possessed of truth as to be engrossed by its dominion now in this life, shall infallibly continue in its glory for ever and ever. —All the rest of mankind, though they say, Lord, Lord! with ever to much devotion, yet as the sweet pleasure of their hearts here is not in the truth, so on the same account they will with certainty be excluded the glorious, delightful, and interminable scenes; which truth has prepared for all who delight in them.

So eternity depends on this short life, and that which fixes the issues is heart's delight. Nor will the least regard be paid to appearances of any sort, or in any degree, against the determining evidence of genuine love. For the language of truth still is, *John xiv. 21.* "He that *hath* my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." For *1 John iv. 7, &c.* "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,—for God is love." Whereas the multitudes of all distinctions, who receive not the love of the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, are given up to strong delusions, to believe that which is false, that they may be damned. *2 Thess. ii. 10—12.* But every person who has the truth dwelling in him, shall be kept in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord JESUS CHRIST to eternal life, who only is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to whom, as the only wise God, our saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN.



F I N I S.
