

THE
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF THE
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AUTHOR OF A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.

CONTAINING
THE FORCE OF TRUTH,—TREATISE ON REPENTANCE,—GROWTH IN GRACE, SER-
MON ON ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,—SERMONS ON SELECT SUB-
JECTS,—ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION, AND THE
NATURE AND WARRANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

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SERMON VI.

ON REGENERATION.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 17.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.

THE circumstances of the church at Corinth obliged the apostle to use such methods of re-establishing his authority, as he apprehended might be misunderstood and censured; he therefore says, “whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause.” The zealous servants of God have constantly been slighted and despised, as beside themselves; nay, the Son of God, the perfection of wisdom and excellency, was involved in the same charge, even by his friends and relations, as well as by his enemies. 2 Kings ix. 11. Jer. xxix. 26, 27. Hos. ix. 7. Mark iii. 21. John x. 20. The apostle therefore had no great cause to complain, if not only Festus said, “Paul thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad,” but if some of his Corinthian converts formed a similar judgment of him. Surely then we ought not to be disconcerted by such surmises, provided we give no just cause for them: and all, who attend to the Scriptures, should be very careful, lest aspersions of this kind prejudice them against the ministers and disciples of Christ.

‘But,’ says the apostle, ‘both the ardour that gives occasion to such imputations, and the wisdom which regulates its effects, spring from regard to the glory of God, and affectionate longing after your souls:’ “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea though we have known Christ after the flesh; yet now henceforth know we him no more.” No ties of blood, friendship, or gratitude, must influence the conduct of the minister of Christ, to render him partial in his pastoral office. Even the brethren, or nearest friends of Christ himself, according to the flesh, might not be regarded by the apostles, in dispensing instructions, reproofs, censures, or encouragements; but they were required, and constrained by spiritual love to him who had died for them, to do all things with unbiased impartiality. And this must be our conduct likewise in respect of our relations, benefactors, or patrons, if we would approve ourselves to be indeed their genuine successors in the sacred ministry. “Therefore,” says the apostle, “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new: and all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.”

The text contains the following subjects for our present discussion.

I. The apostle's definition or description of a real Christian; "If any man be *in Christ*,"

II. His account of that inward change, which every real Christian has experienced, "He is a new creature."

III. The effects of this change, "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

I. Then we consider the apostle's definition or description of a real Christian, "If any man be *in Christ*."

However strange this expression may seem to many who are now called Christians, it is the uniform language of the Scripture, especially of the New Testament: and whenever any set of men seem earnest to change the language of inspiration, we may be sure that they either mistake its meaning, or have some concealed objection to its doctrines. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." New terms will imperceptibly introduce new doctrines; nor has any subtlety of Satan or his servants better succeeded, in "privily bringing in damnable heresies," than that of modernizing the language of divinity.

The words under consideration commonly signify a true disciple of our Lord and Saviour. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are *in Christ Jesus*." "I knew a man *in Christ* fourteen years ago." "He was also *in Christ* before me." "Of whom are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Rom. viii. 1. xvi. 7. 1 Cor. i. 30. And in this chapter, "That we might be made the righteousness of God *in him*." Many of the epistles also are addressed "to the saints *in Christ Jesus*," or "to the church—in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ."—Which accords to the language of the prophet, "Israel shall be saved *in the Lord* with an everlasting salvation." "Surely, shall one say, *In the Lord* have I righteousness and strength." "*In the Lord* shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." 2 Cor. xii. 2. Isaiah xlv. 17, 24, 25.

The apostle John also employs similar expressions; "And now, little children, abide *in him*." "We are *in him* that is true, even *in his Son Jesus Christ*." 1 John ii. 28, v. 20. But the words of our Lord himself are most decisive; He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth *in me* and I in him." John vi. 56. Accordingly, when we administer the Lord's Supper, that outward sign of this inward life of faith in a crucified Saviour, we pray 'that we may so eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood;—that we may dwell in him and he in us.'—"Neither," saith our divine Redeemer, when interceding for his disciples, "pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us? John xvii. 20–23.

But we must endeavour to explain this language and to show its propriety and energy; lest it should be thought, that the whole argument rests upon our translation of the original particles. St Paul says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life *through*” or *in* “Christ Jesus our Lord for John says, “This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Rom. vi. 23. 1 John v. 11, 12. The salvation of Christ is completed, as far as his mediatory work is concerned: but who are they that shall eventually be “saved from wrath by him?” To this question the Scripture answers with the most decided precision; “they that receive him,” “they that believe in him,” “they that are found *in him*”—Union with Christ is necessary in order to communion with him: he saves all those, and those only, who thus stand related to him. True faith forms this union and relation, and makes the sinner a partaker of Christ and his salvation.

According to the illustrations of Scripture, the believer is *in Christ*, as the stone is in the building. God is preparing a spiritual temple, in which he may dwell and be glorified for ever. The person of Christ is the precious foundation and corner stone of this temple, and believers “come to him and as living stones are built up a spiritual house,” “an habitation of God through the Spirit.” 1 Peter ii. 4–8, Eph. ii. 20–22. But this emblem, taken from things wholly inanimate, only represents our dependence on Christ and consecration to God through him: we therefore learn more fully the nature of this mystical union, by the parable of the vine and its branches. Nominal Christians, who are related to the Saviour merely in an external manner, continue unfruitful; and at length are taken away, withered, and gathered to be burned: but true believers are vitally united to him, and abiding in him receive the fructifying influences of the Holy Spirit. John xv. 1–8. Yet even this illustration falls short of fully elucidating the subject; nay, the nearest of all relative unions does not entirely answer to it: for believers are *in Christ*, as the members are in the human body. He is the Head of the church, and every Christian is a part of his mystical body, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. All believers live spiritually by virtue of this union with their Head; they are placed under his guidance and authority; have one common interest, and fill up their stations in the church for the benefit of the whole. 1 Cor. xii. 12–31. Thus says the apostle, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”—“Your Life, is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Gal. ii. 20, Col. iii. 3, 4.

There is, however, another way of illustrating the subject, which may help us to conceive aright of this great mystery, Eph. v. 32, and explain the way in which a sinner attains to so high an honour, and so blessed a distinction. The believer is *in Christ*, as Noah was in the ark. “By faith Noah being warned of God was moved with fear, and prepared an ark.” Heb. xi. 7, 1 Peter iii. 20. He

believed the sure testimony of God, both respecting the deluge, and the appointed method of preservation; he feared the impending judgment, and revered the justice and power of God; and thus he was moved to follow the directions he had received. To prepare the ark was a vast undertaking; his labour and expense must have been exceedingly great, and his perseverance, amidst the scorn and hatred of an unbelieving world, most exemplary.—But when the deluge came, he was found in the ark, and preserved to be the progenitor of a new race of men; and even of the promised Redeemer, on whom doubtless his faith had ultimately been placed: while all the rest of the human species, however distinguished, or to whatever refuges they fled, were swept away with one common desolation. Thus the sinner, hearing of “the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” believing the divine record is moved with fear,” and takes warning to flee from the wrath to come. He hears also of Christ, the true ark, which God himself hath provided; and renouncing all other confidences, by faith he betakes himself to this sure refuge, applies for admission into the ark, and endures the self-denial, contempt, and persecution to which this may expose him. And whatever difficulties he may now encounter; his wisdom will be acknowledged, and his felicity envied, when no unbeliever shall find any shelter from the overwhelming deluge of divine vengeance, which perhaps he now despises or blasphemes.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, the *guiltless* man-slayer was exposed to the sword of the avenger of blood, the nearest relation of the deceased; but cities of refuge were provided, to which he might flee for security.—In this perilous situation an Israelite had no choice: he must scarcely turn back to take his clothes, and by no means go home to bid farewell to his dearest relatives: he must leave all his outward comforts, employments, and interests: he must flee without delay, and hardly stop for necessary refreshment: he must not yield to indolence, or sit down when weary; and could never think of loitering, to interfere with other men’s business, to view curiosities, or to join in vain diversions. With all speed he must urge his course to the city of refuge; as if he had seen the avenger of blood with his drawn sword close behind, and heard him uttering most dreadful menaces. When he had gained the appointed asylum, he was required to abide there, at a distance from all his connections, those excepted who chose to follow him; and this restriction continued, till the death of the high-priest set him at liberty from his confinement.

In like manner, the sinner, perceiving himself exposed to the wrath of God, and the curse of his violated law, must “flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him” in the gospel. Without delay he must diligently use all the means of grace, and separate from the vain pursuits and pleasures of an unbelieving world. He must not give “sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eye-lids; but flee as a bird from the snare of the fowler, and as a roe from the hand of the hunter.” He must “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling,” and earnestly

apply to Christ for an interest in his atonement; knowing that if death should overtake him, before he be made a partaker of this blessing, the avenging justice of God will prove the ruin of his immortal soul. And when he hath obtained a good hope of his acceptance, he must still keep close to his refuge; renouncing the society of all those, that refuse to join with him in his new course of life: remembering that “if any man love father, or mother, wife or children, more than Christ, he cannot be his disciple.”

Thus the true believer is *in Christ*, as in the city of refuge: and if we do not wish to deceive ourselves, we may know whether our experience, conduct, and confidence bear any resemblance to this representation; and whether we desire to join the apostle in saying, “*Yea*, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord;—I count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found *in him*, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Phil. iii. 8, 9.

He that is thus united unto the Lord Jesus is finally delivered from condemnation; all his sins are blotted out, and buried in the depths of the sea; “being justified by faith he hath peace with God;” to whom being reconciled when an enemy “by the death of his Son, he shall be saved by his life.” He is admitted into a covenant of friendship with the everlasting God, and adopted into his family as a son and heir. “All things shall work together for his good,” and “nothing shall separate him from the love of Christ.” All the promises without exception belong to him, and shall be fulfilled in due season and order; “for,” says the apostle, “all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”—We consider, then,

II. The apostle’s account of that inward change, which every real Christian has experienced. “He is a new creature.”

“If any man be in Christ” whether he were before a Jew or a Gentile; whether he were moral, civil, learned, ingenious, devout, zealous, or superstitious and enthusiastical, a sceptical reasoner, or a scoffing infidel; when he becomes a Christian, “he is a new creature.”—“We are his workmanship, created *in Christ Jesus* unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” “For *in Christ Jesus* neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Gal. vi. 15, Eph. ii. 10. What are we then to understand by these energetic expressions?—Will any sensible man maintain, that a new creed or name may properly be called a new creation? Will he affirm that nothing more was meant, than a decent moral conduct, or an external reformation? Does this amount to anything more, than the cleansing of the outside, while the heart remains full of polluting affections? And let it be remembered, that such frigid interpretations are merely the word of man; for “the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to

the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Jer. xxiii. 29, Heb. iv. 12.

It is, however, proper to observe, that he, who is a new creature, continues in many respects the same as before. His body, with all its members and senses, is the same; though he finds himself disposed to make a new use of them: his soul and all its faculties are the same, though his judgment, inclinations, and affections are entirely changed. He possesses his former measure of capacity and learning; with the peculiarity of his genius, and the original complexion of his mind. The man of enlarged powers does not lose that superiority of talent; while he is content to be thought a fool for Christ’s sake, to seek wisdom from him with the teachableness of a little child, and to devote all his endowments to the glory of the Giver. The man of slender abilities and illiterate education makes no advances in learning or ingenuity, except as he becomes of good understanding in the way of godliness.” No alteration takes place in a person’s relative situation or rank in society: he can claim no additional civil immunities or advancement, when he is in Christ a new creature: nor does he forfeit any of his rights; though persecution may deprive him of them, and love of Christ make him willing to renounce them.—In general he abides in his calling, if lawful; but endeavours to fill it up in a new manner.

What then is especially intended?—Here again the Scripture assists our inquiry by apt illustrations. “Ye were,” says the apostle, “the servants of sin, but ye obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which was delivered you.” Rom. vi. 17. Learned men generally agree, that the concluding words would be more exactly rendered, “*into which ye were delivered* alluding to the mould, into which melted metal is poured, that it may thence take its intended fashion and impression.—When vessels of silver have been thus formed again, they are as really *new*, as if the metal had just been brought from the mine. Thus sinners are in themselves, “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,” bearing the image of fallen Adam, and disposed to imitate his rebellion and apostacy; but the new creation forms us into “vessels of mercy, prepared for glory,” stamped with the image of Christ, fitted for our Master’s use, and ready for every good work. We are the same men, yet new creatures.

The grafted tree also is in many respects the same as before: yet it is a new tree, and as the poet beautifully expresses it,

“*Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma.*”

‘It wonders at its new leaves, and fruit that is not its own.’

—Thus when the word of truth is ingrafted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, the same man becomes a new creature, and his thoughts, words, and actions also become new.

The Scriptural emblems of sinners, according to their different propensities,

are taken from lions, tigers, foxes, swine, and serpents, and other fierce, crafty, ravenous, or filthy animals: but a sheep or a dove is the emblem of a Christian; and the new creation effects this marvellous change. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox: and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den: they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” Isaiah xi. 6–9. Does not every man perceive, that if Almighty God should dispose these animals to live together in perfect amity, as here described, they would be *new creatures*; though the same outward form, and many other peculiarities of each species should remain? And who can deny, that if the grace of God so change the ambitious, rapacious, covetous, fraudulent, contentious, revengeful, cruel, sensual and profane, that they willingly live together, “in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” they are to all religious purposes new creatures?

Let any considerate and impartial man compare the character and spirit of St Paul, before and after his conversion; and determine for himself whether the apostle was not a new creature. His body and soul, his abilities and ardent turn of mind continued the same; but in all other respects, he differed as much from his former self, as from any other man in the world. The change would probably appear as remarkable in the case of Matthew, Zaccheus, or Onesimus, had we as copious an account of them, as we have of the apostle.—Nay, the thief upon the cross gave evident proofs that the tree was made good; for the fruit began to be good, and would doubtless have been abundant, had his life been spared.—Even when a man’s outward conduct has been irreproachable, the internal change in his views, purposes, and desires, is clearly manifest to his own mind, though the effects be less visible to others.

The various metaphors, in which this new creation is spoken of in Scripture, confirm the explanation that hath been given. “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, saith the Lord.” Ezek. xi. 19, 20. xxxvi. 25—27. But reformation, without an inward change of disposition, would be a mere counterfeit of the promised blessing.—“Ye must be born again.” “Blessed be God who hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” John iii. 1–8, 1 Peter, i. 3, 23. The allusion is made, in this common Scriptural language, to the production of a creature, which before had no separate existence, but now possesses life, has capacities of action and enjoyment, wants nourishment, and may be expected to grow up to maturity: and it is the invariable rule of nature, that the offspring bears the image, and inherits the propensities of the parent animal. The emphatical meaning of “being born again,” “born of the Spirit,” “born of God,” must be very manifest: and had our Lord only intended an outward ordinance or reformation, when he said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except ye be born again,

ye cannot see the kingdom of God;" it could not have been denied, that he had perplexed a plain subject by a needless obscurity of expression.

"You hath he quickened," saith the apostle, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." Man, as the Lord created him, possessed animal life and its propensities; as a rational creature, he was capable of actions and enjoyments of a higher order; and as *spiritual*, he was capable of finding happiness in the love and service of God: but he has lost his *spiritual* life by the fall, and is *dead in sin*. Fallen angels possess the powers of reason to a very great degree; yet they are *spiritually dead*; they are incapable of loving and enjoying God, and finding happiness in his holy service: and, I am persuaded that sober reflection will convince any candid inquirer, that the most rational man living, is, without regeneration, as incapable of the pleasures angels enjoy in heaven, as animals are of sharing the satisfactions of the philosopher. This appears in one remarkable circumstance: when any person renounces all other pursuits for the sake of religion, it is always supposed that he leads a joyless life, and is in danger of becoming melancholy: as if the felicity of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, were wholly unsuited to man's nature on earth, and incapable of affording him delight!

The same internal renovation is called, "the circumcision of the heart to love the Lord and described under the image of "putting his law in the *heart*, and writing it in the *inward* parts." "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

This change is the beginning of that "renewing in the spirit of our mind," that "transformation by the renewing of our mind," which we read of in the apostolical epistles: "the putting off the old man," and "the putting on the new man," relate to the growth of the new creature, and the removal of everything that retards it. Regeneration is the beginning of *sanctification*, which signifies the *making of that person or thing holy, which was before unholy*. So that, while it is an undoubted truth, that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature;" it should be remembered that men's growth and attainments are immensely different: but the inward evidence of union with Christ must bear proportion to the degree in which it is manifest that this new creation has been experienced.

This doctrine therefore is clearly contained in the Scriptures; but we cannot fully explain or even comprehend *the manner*, in which the new nature is communicated. In general we may observe, that as natural life subsists in every part of the animal; so spiritual life pervades all the faculties of the soul. It is light, knowledge, and judgment in the understanding,—sensibility in the conscience,—purity, spirituality, and fervour in the affections,—and submission in the will; and this entire inward revolution produces proportionable effects upon the whole conduct and character of the real Christian. But this will appear more distinctly, while,

III. We consider the effects of the change, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The language employed is general, and no exceptions are intimated: but we can only illustrate it by selecting some particulars for a specimen.—He who hath thus "passed from death unto life," will find that his old sentiments and thoughts are vanished away. His high opinion of himself, of his abilities, actions, and heart, are no more; he ceases to shine in his own eyes, and gradually discovers that he is wretched, poor, miserable, blind, and naked; he is constrained to renounce all dependence on his wisdom and righteousness, to distrust his own heart as deceitful and desperately wicked, and to abhor himself as a guilty polluted criminal. Nor can he ever again recover those lofty thoughts of himself, which once were natural to him.

His hard thoughts of the divine law, as unreasonably strict and severe, are passed away: and he can no longer entertain his former palliating notions concerning the evil of sin. He perceives the commandment to be holy, just, and good; and the transgression of it to be replete with ingratitude, rebellion, and contempt of God. He dares no longer impeach the divine justice and goodness, in respect of the punishments denounced against sinners; his old thoughts and reasonings on these subjects are gone, and he is astonished at his own presumption, in having formerly indulged them.

His sentiments concerning the happiness to be enjoyed in worldly pleasures, and the gloom and melancholy of a religious life, are wholly changed.

He can no longer think of eternity as uncertain or distant; and no temptation or discouragement can henceforth prevail with him, to give up his hope of everlasting life, to rest satisfied with a portion in this world, or to risk the tremendous consequences. "He looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

His former thoughts of Christ and his salvation are passed away. He once despised the glorious Redeemer in his heart; perhaps he deemed those to be hypocrites or enthusiasts, who spoke in animated language of his love and preciousness: but these imaginations are no more; he is now ready to exclaim, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"—He counts all but loss for Christ, and fears exceedingly coming short of his salvation. He cannot think meanly of him, or be indifferent to his favour, cause, or glory; yet he continues dissatisfied with the degree of his admiring love and gratitude to such a benefactor.—His former opinions concerning the wise and happy among the sons of men are irrecoverably gone. He pities the very persons whom he once admired or envied: he courts the despised and afflicted disciples of Christ, "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight." He longs to share their privileges and felicity: yet could not recover his former aversion to them, even if he supposed

that he should be for ever excluded from their company.

When any one is in Christ a new creature, his old pursuits and pleasures also pass away.—As the man of business has done with the pastimes of childhood: so the believer ceases to relish those scenes of dissipated or sensual indulgence, which once were his element. He finds himself uneasy, when they come in his way: not only deeming them a criminal waste of time and money, and a wilful hindrance to serious reflection; but feeling them to be a chasm in his enjoyment, and an interruption to his comfort, in communion with God, and the company of his servants.

His conduct is still more decided in things directly evil; “How shall he that is dead to sin live any longer therein?” He hates and dreads sin as his worst enemy. “His seed remaineth in him, that he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” He does not indeed forsake his lawful employments; but he gradually learns to follow them from new motives, and in a new manner; not from covetousness, or on worldly principles; but as his duty from love to God and man, and according to the precepts of the sacred Scriptures.

It will readily be perceived, that the old companions of such a man will pass away. Even when relative duties, and other causes render some intercourse with ungodly persons unavoidable, it will become less cordial and intimate. When such opposite characters meet, one of them must be out of his element: all those associates therefore of the new convert’s former years, who have no interest in continuing the acquaintance, will drop off, as leaves from the trees in autumn: and he will find, that the society of his most agreeable old companions is become irksome; for they seem far more profane and frivolous than they used to be.

Time would fail, should we particularly consider how the new convert’s former discourse is passed away: and how his idle, slanderous, profane, or perhaps polluting words, are exchanged for such as are pure, peaceable, and edifying. Eph. iv. 29. V, 1. Col. iv. 6, James i. 26. iii. And it is needless to insist on it, that his old course of behaviour also is finally renounced. The particulars that have been mentioned may serve for a specimen; and it should be remembered, that in every respect in which “old things pass away, all things become new for the apostle, by inserting the word *behold*, hath emphatically demanded our attention to this circumstance.

This too might be illustrated by considering the various operations of the believer’s mind, and the objects of his affections. He hopes and fears, grieves and rejoices, feels desires and aversions, in a new manner, and concerning new objects. He fears the wrath and frown of God; he hopes for glory and immortality; he mourns for his own sins, and the miseries of other men; he rejoices in God, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and abhors that which is evil. His judgment and taste are gradually formed upon God’s word; his memory is replenished with divine truths, and his imagination employed in realizing invisible

things. The company of his choice, the places of his willing resort, the books he prefers, his select topics of discourse, the use he makes of his time and talents, the manner in which he conducts his business, and enjoys the comforts of life, might be enlarged upon, to show in what respects “all things are become new.” For the real Christian desires, “that whether he eat or drink, or whatever he do, he may do all to the glory of God.”

The extent of the apostle’s meaning may however be further illustrated, by stating how the believer does the same things in a new manner, in respect of that which was the *best part* of his former conduct, and that which is *the worst* of his present.—He used perhaps to attend on religious ordinances; and though his heart was not engaged, nor his professions sincere, he returned home well satisfied with having done his duty, or elated with an idea of his own goodness. But now, when his prayers and praises are the language of his habitual judgment and desires, and he is upon the whole a spiritual worshipper; he is continually humbled for the unallowed defects and evils of his services, and seeks to have them all washed in the atoning blood of Christ.

On the other hand, it must be allowed that sin dwelleth even in the true convert; and he may possibly fall into the same evil, in which he once habitually indulged with little remorse. But in this case he is filled with anguish, he deeply abases himself before God, confesses his guilt, deprecates deserved wrath, submits to sharp correction, craves forgiveness, and “prays to be restored to the joy of God’s salvation, and upheld by his free Spirit.” Even in these respects, “all things are become new.”

In short the proposition is universal; and the true believer, in all things acts from new motives, by a new rule, and to accomplish for other purposes, than he formerly had in view. But the more particular examination of the subject must be left to your private meditations, while we conclude at present with a brief application.

There are persons professing to be Christians, who avowedly disregard this subject; and if we speak of regeneration, or the new creature, are ready to answer, “how can these things be or perhaps to retort an indiscriminate charge of enthusiasm. But do you intend to answer your Judge in this manner? Do you expect to enter heaven, by disproving the truth of his most solemn and repeated declarations? Is your judgment the standard of truth? Can nothing be needful to salvation which *you* do not experience? If God be indeed glorious in holiness: if the society and joys of heaven be holy, and if man be unholy; an entire change must, in the very nature of things, take place, before man can possibly delight in God or enjoy heaven; were there no other obstacle to his salvation. Let me therefore earnestly beseech you to re-consider the subject: let me prevail with you to search these Scriptures, and to beg of God to show you the true meaning of them; and to grant, that if these things be indeed true and needful, you may know them by your own happy experience.

Again, some religious people profess to *know* that their sins are forgiven, and others are anxious to obtain this assurance. If then it be asked, how can any man be thus certain in this matter? I answer, by a consciousness that “he is in Christ a new creature, that old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” When our Lord forgave the sins of the paralytic, he enabled him to carry his bed; this proved his sins forgiven, both to himself and others. And in like manner, when we know that, in consequence of having applied to Christ for salvation, we abhor all sin, love the ways of God, and delight in pious company; we have a witness in ourselves, and the testimony of God in his word, that we partake of the gift of righteousness by faith. The clearer this evidence of our new creation appears, the fuller ground of assurance we possess; we are therefore exhorted “to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure but without this, all impressions and supposed revelations, declaring our sins to be pardoned, are manifest delusions; for they contradict the express testimony of God in his holy word.

Too many profess the gospel, who give no evidence of this gracious change, and stumble others by their unholy lives: but the text at once cuts off such men’s pretensions; and the reproach ought to rest on themselves, and not on the holy doctrines which they disgrace.

But as “the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” I would earnestly and affectionately caution the serious inquirer, not to undervalue the feeble beginnings which he experiences; but to take encouragement from them to press forward, in the diligent use of the means of grace; that the change may be rendered more evident, and that he may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Let discouraged souls likewise, who feel sin to be their burden, grief, and terror, and who are ready to say to the Saviour, “Lord, to whom shall I go, thou hast the words of eternal life:” let such fainting and feeble-minded believers, learn to derive encouragement from their very fears, jealousies, sighs, groans, and tears, because “of the sin that dwelleth in them;” and “because they cannot do the things that they would: for these are without doubt, effects and evidences of the new creation.

Finally, my brethren, if you can rejoice in the assurance that you are partakers of these inestimable benefits, show your gratitude to God, by endeavouring to communicate the same blessings to your fellow-sinners: knowing that his mercy and grace are sufficient for them also; that he makes use of reconciled enemies, as instruments in reconciling others also to himself; and that he preserves them in life especially for this most gracious purpose.