

*Now we have received not the spirit of the world,
but the Spirit which is of God,
that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

1 Corinthians 2:12

In handling the subject before us, I shall speak:

1. Of the doctrine contained in the words, *freely given to us*, and *we have received*.
2. Of the things themselves so given.
3. Of the spiritual knowledge we have of these things.
4. And so come to a practical conclusion. May the Lord bless it for Jesus Christ's sake.

For the explication of the matter contained under the first head, let us keep close to the letter of Scripture, and we shall not go very far from the spirit of it; the words are: *the things that are freely given to us of God*. From such an expression as this, did it even stand alone, we might without much difficulty come to the conclusion that whatsoever we have, is of God's free gift; and as in the department of nature, it is the Lord that giveth life, and breath, and all things; so in the department of grace, it is the Lord that blesseth us with every spiritual blessing. Now there is no subject which the man renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, delighteth more to dwell upon than that of God's free grace; and as that grace is eminently set forth here, we shall not do amiss in dwelling upon it a little at the outset.

I. First, let us observe the simple word *given*, a word so simple, that one would think it impossible to be mistaken; nevertheless, what by one man's perversion, and another man's comment, it has at length, among large bodies of professing Christians, come either to signify just nothing at all, or else the very reverse of its ordinary meaning: *to give* then means to give in opposition to every other word which may be put in its place, to

the obscuring of the lustre and glory of God's free grace. We shall best see the force of the word by comparing it with others which are sometimes used in its stead.

First, let it stand by the side of the word offer. For there are some that say God merely offers grace and salvation in the Gospel. But God says that he gives grace and salvation. There is a mighty difference betwixt the two: an offer is a good thing, but a gift is better; for a thing offered either may become the property of him to whom it is offered, or it may not; but a gift, in order to constitute it a gift, must pass from the hands of the giver into those of the receiver. It cannot truly be called a gift till it is actually given. The offer only comes half way, and there stops, but the gift comes home. So it is in the things of God. When God intends grace for any poor soul, he does not stop half way, and wait for our closing with his offer, but he comes home to our very soul, and makes a sure lodgment of the blessing. When therefore God declares that he gives Christ, he doth more than offer Christ. If God had waited for man's acceptance of Christ before he sent him into the world, Christ never would have appeared in the world; for when he did come, his own received him not. Had God offered man that Christ should come, he would have left the redemption of the world suspended upon man's corrupt will; but God having given his Son, he went beyond, and even contrary to the will of man, and acted after the counsel of his own will, and therefore made sure work of the sinner's salvation.

Further; if to give, means more than to offer, it certainly means much more than to sell; for there be some who tell us that God gives upon conditions, or, in other words, sells grace; into which error they have been drawn by their inability to perceive, that the ifs of the New Testament are not conditional, but evidential. For instance, Paul (1 Cor. 15:2) says, "Ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached;" and (Col. 1:21,23), "You hath he reconciled, if ye continue in the faith." Now though it be most true, that if we forget, and continue not in the faith, we are neither saved nor reconciled; yet it by no means follows, that our remembering and continuing are the conditions of our salvation, although they be the evidences. I know of no other condition on which sinners are saved, but the death of the Son of God; according to his own

word, "I lay down my life for the sheep:" and nothing else could move God to so great and glorious a work, but the foreview of that infinite satisfaction to be rendered by Christ to his violated law: and even this is rather the effect of God's grace towards us, rather the channel through which it flows down to us, than the condition on which it is granted; for God so loved the world, that he gave his Son. If then even the death of Christ, in some sense, may not be termed the condition of man's salvation, how much less any thing that we can do in time! Shall our works, our duties, our alms, have the least effect in moving God to save us? Shall our prayers, our tears, our repentances, be any part of the condition on which God is content to put away our sin? Can our faith, our knowledge, our love, the very highest of our spiritual attainments, do us the least good in this matter? God forbid! Nay, are not all and every one of these, if we have them, gifts which have been bestowed upon us by God himself? How then do we dare attempt to bribe him to save us with the very money which he himself hath put into our hands!

Lest we should make a mistake concerning the matter or manner of God's giving, he hath added another word here to clear it up; we read of the things *freely* given to us of God. We know the miserly disposition of some men, who though in order to preserve a decent appearance in the world they think it right to lay out some of their money in charity, yet have so niggardly a way of doing it, and such an ungracious manner in bestowing it, that an honest man would rather go without than accept any thing at their hands; yea, a guinea [£1.05] from the pocket and a drop of blood from the heart of some men is, we well know, about one and the same thing. Now God would have us know that he is not like one of these niggardly people, and therefore tells us that what he gives, he also freely gives. But in order to constitute it a free gift, two things are necessary; it must be done without compulsion, and without condition; either of these destroy the freeness here spoken of. But as for the former, we all know that God, except he compel himself, cannot be compelled, and consequently that when he gives, it must be from his free, sovereign, uncontrolled will; that he gives because he will give, because he loves to give, because he delights to give; as it is written, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." As for the latter, no one will deny that if a man

looks for a return of that which he gives, if there be any consideration which induces him to give, if he has an eye to any advantage about to accrue to himself in consequence of his act, then it can no longer be said to be a free gift. But “we have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God.”

Again, let us remark how God’s free giving is further illustrated by another word which stands contrasted with it in the sentence. “We have *received*.” Now this expression takes away all idea of any merit, power, or wisdom in the favoured objects of God’s bounty, as completely as does the former; and when both are viewed together, they give a twofold testimony to the truth of the grace of God. John the Baptist tells us, that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Is not this as much as to say, that the very power of receiving the free gift of God is likewise from God? So far is fallen man from being able to save himself, that of himself he is not able to receive salvation, or lay hold of it were it within his reach. No wonder therefore that we find a great champion of grace rebuking his brethren, who prided themselves upon their gifts, in words which taught them that they had forgot how they came by them: “What hast thou,” says he to the Corinthians, “that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?” This word received stops the mouth of all boasters. See therefore, brethren, how the Scriptures delight in exhibiting to us the glorious things of the Gospel in terms like these, that we may know that all is of grace. We “receive Christ”, says John, (1:12), “Out of his fulness have all we received” (1:16). “We receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness” (Rom. 5:17), says Paul. “We have received the atonement,” he says again (Rom. 5:11); and God hath given us his Spirit - hath given us eternal life, we find in other places; and by grace are ye saved: and we know that if it be of grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; “but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work” (Rom. 11:6). So then, brethren, when we are inclined to sing, and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, let it be to the praise of the glory of his grace, and here below as well as hereafter above, this shall be the burden of the song, “We have received, and God has freely given”; according to the words of my text, “We have

received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God.”

II. Let us speak of the things themselves, which are freely given to us of God. And when we look into the Scriptures of truth, and see the glorious things there spoken of as belonging to the church, we may rather be tempted to ask, what is there which God hath not given us? For the apostle in the next chapter tells the believers in Jesus, “All things are yours; whether life, death, the world, things present, things to come, all are yours;” so that blessings of time and blessings of eternity are set before the happy objects of God’s love as their undoubted portion; and the view of them which the apostle was favoured with called forth from him these expressive words of the prophet (ver. 9). “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But sweet as this description is, and there are many more recorded in the Word, yet what would all this be, what would heaven be to him that loves God in his beloved Son, if the object of that love formed no part of the heavenly enjoyment? Therefore the spirits of the saints rise above every inferior consideration, and can find no satisfaction in the most glowing descriptions of the heavenly country, except as they stand in connection with the presence of that God, whose name is Love. Therefore also God hath abundantly revealed it to us, that of these all things we speak of, he hath given himself both as the cause, and the substance; so that we may know that as all blessings come from God, so all blessedness is centered in God, and without him heaven itself would be little better than a Mahometan paradise.

Now to show this from Scripture that God gives himself to us, we may observe that single sentence more than ten times repeated in the Bible, “I will be their God!” There is a twofold meaning in these words. First, I will give myself over to them in covenant characters. I will give myself as a husband to the wife, to love and to cherish, to keep in sickness and in health, to hold for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer. In short, I will bind myself to them by an everlasting covenant to love them for ever and for ever. All this is expressed in those words of Hosea 2:19,20, “I will betroth thee to me for ever, I will even betroth thee to me in faithfulness.” Having thus made himself over to us, he becomes bound to

us to deal with us in lovingkindness, and tender mercies. No one of God's dealings towards his chosen hath any other source or spring but that of love; it is love that sends his severest chastisements, as well as his sweetest encouragements. His smiles and frowns both proceed from the same love; the opposite to this, even his wrath, hath never yet been endured by any one of his justified people. This was reserved for a nobler object. All the vials of it were emptied upon the head of his Son, who alone was able, and did endure it to the uttermost so that not a single drop falls on us. In giving us his love, he even gives us himself; for God is love; and that love being as himself unchangeable, it follows that the whole of his dealings with us from first to last must be for our good; for love worketh no ill; therefore, says the prophet, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me; yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good" (Jer. 32:40). Such language will justify the expression that God gives himself.

But there is another meaning of it, which comes nearer to the point. God gives us himself most truly when he gives us his Christ, for "he is over all God blessed for ever, Amen." He hath been given for us, and he shall be given to us; yea, he hath already been given to us, and we to him, but the full manifestation thereof is reserved for more glorious times than these. "I will be their God," is a promise which yet waits for its complete fulfilment, and the time of it shall be when "God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces" (Rev. 21:3). But if it be asked how God will then give himself to men more gloriously, than ever hath been done yet I answer, it will be in the full-blown glory of the Godman Christ Jesus. We know nothing, and shall know nothing of God except through Jesus. He is a Being incapable of being seen but through and in a Mediator. That Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, concentrates in his own Person all the glories of the Godhead; "in him dwelleth all the fulness thereof bodily", and whosoever hath seen him hath seen the Father. Yea whatsoever there be in God, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, capable of being manifested to the creature, that will be manifested, and shine forth in the Person of the Beloved. The glorious sun of heaven collects all the light of the natural world within himself, and cherishes all creation with the warmth of his

rays. The man Christ Jesus is a more glorious Sun than this; all the light, and warmth, and glory of Godhead are concentrated in him; the whole spiritual creation is refreshed by his beams; and through him shall the Father himself smile upon the assembled multitudes of his redeemed, when they surround his throne. God in Christ and Christ in God, shall be the Sun of heaven; a Sun that shall no more go down; we shall rejoice and be glad in the warmth, and light, shed forth from him; and we shall know to the full then, what we now know only in part, what it is for God to give us himself, for we shall see then by actual vision, what we now see only by the eye of faith, the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

To proceed. If God thus make over himself, and as it were give himself up unto us, for our eternal consolation and blessedness; how can we doubt whether or no he hath also given all things together with him? Having given the greater, how could he withhold the less? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also together with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). So then we need argue that matter no further; but of the all things here spoken of I would merely select one, as being most important to be known, which is our complete justification, called by the apostle the gift of righteousness.

We hear much of these things in this our day; there is among us a sort of fashionable religion, and justification by faith is now become the watchword among many who, it is to be feared, are very ignorant both of faith, and of justification; they have been taught to repeat the phrase by the precept of men, but having none of the unctuous teaching of the Holy Ghost, they come more than all others under the condemnation of those words, having a form of godliness, but denying the power. And such men are more alarmed at the plain truth of the Gospel, though they would have it believed that they themselves preach the Gospel, and detest and contradict it more than even the open opposers of godliness. It will not be amiss then, in opposition to them and all gainsayers, to give a Scriptural definition of this grace so freely given to us of God. To be justified then, is to be made and counted perfectly righteous, and holy, without any spot or blemish of sin in the sight of God; and when we are possessed of faith to confess with our lips the Lord Jesus, and to believe with our heart that God hath raised him from the dead, we are truly justified by faith. To be

justified by faith expresses little more than this, that whoso believeth is a justified person in the sight of God; for faith is no more than the instrument whereby God conveys the benefit into our souls, and is itself his gift.

In explanation then of what is stated above concerning justification, let us proceed to the fountain of divine truth, that it may there be cleared from all the aspersions of the ungodly deniers of Christ's righteousness. There are two parts of justification, both included in the above definition. One declares in the justified person an absence of all spot or blemish of sin in God's sight; and the other declares the presence of all righteousness and holiness in the sight of God. Observe particularly, in the sight of God, not in our own sight, or the sight of men.

Now with respect to the first part, which speaks of the absence of sin in the sight of God, some men have affirmed that it means that the punishment of sin is put away; and this is true; for Christ bore our punishment for us; for "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" and others say, that the guilt of sin is put away, and this is true likewise; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; and who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect; seeing it is God that justifieth? But the Word of truth makes no such nice distinctions, and declares some greater truth than this; for why is the punishment and the guilt of sin removed from the believer? Plainly because the sin itself is removed from him in the sight of God. In Isaiah 53:5,6, we have both very clearly; for, verse 5, "He was bruised for our iniquities," showing how he bore the punishment; verse 6, "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all," showing how he bore the sin itself. We have a still more forcible text, "He hath made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21); by which we understand not only that actual sins were imputed to him, but that sin itself was transferred to him in such a way, that, to use the words of Peter, "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); where it is said, not on his own body, but in his own body. But if it be here asked, was not then Christ himself a sinner, seeing he bare sin in his own body? The answer is, No! Neither the body or soul of Christ was tainted with the least spot or speck of sin. For the Lord's word is, not that which goeth into a man defileth a man; but that which cometh out of a man, that defileth a man: therefore, however the Lord of glory might have

groaned and grieved under the enormous pressure from without, and the quick sense and feeling of it within; however his righteous soul might have been tormented by its presence, yet it was a righteous soul still, and he through the eternal Spirit still presented himself without spot to God. Far be it from the heart and from the lips of him that believeth to say, that Christ's body or soul was sinful and defiled.

The above Scriptures shew us what Christ was about while he remained in the world - he was bearing sin; and he so bare it, that he bare it completely away from every soul that believeth or shall believe in his name; for once "in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26)

Brethren, there are some among us who know what it is to groan under a conscious sense of sin; whose heads and hearts are bowed down like a bulrush, and who fear the awful majesty of God, because we suppose that he is taking notice of our sin. But this the Word of God himself declares, that if any such look to the Lord Jesus, as the bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, God himself beholds not, and never will behold in them, one spot, or stain, or wrinkle of sin, or any such thing. For the strengthening of our faith in this, let us look to the Word and Testimony.

1. We have it, "Blessed is the man whose sins are covered" (Ps. 32:1). Now who alone is able to cover sins? Surely, God. Then, from whose eyes does he wish to cover them? From ours? No; he lets us see them, that we may repent and believe. It is then from his own sight that he covers them; and I know that what God doeth, it shall be for ever and completely done; so that we may be sure that an eternal veil, impenetrable even to the eye of the all-searching God himself, keeps our sins from his sight.

2. Again, God doth not behold our sins, because they are all behind his back, and so cannot be before his face; so that true justifying faith makes use of the language of Hezekiah, and cries unto God, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. 38:17).

3. God does not see our sin, because the sin of every believer was mystically put to death when Christ died; for, first, "Christ was made sin

for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), when he died upon the cross; and next, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Rom. 8:1), and the reason is, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3); that is, when Christ hung upon the cross, sin was condemned and executed in his person.

4. God sees no sin in his believing people, because it is buried out of his sight; as Abraham desired a burying-place of the sons of Heth, that he might bury his dead out of his sight; so God hath prepared a place where he hath buried our dead sin out of his sight. The grave which he hath appointed is the ocean of the blood of Christ; "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). The waters of the deluge prevailed above the high mountain-tops, yea, fifteen cubits upward did they prevail, and overtop them all. Does the blood of Christ prevail less above the monstrous mountains of our iniquity? Could Noah behold them from his ark, when such a depth of water intervened? And can God himself behold our sins when buried in the unfathomable depth of the blood of him whose name is Immanuel, God with us?

5. God beholds no sin in them that believe, because they are so far removed from him that he cannot find them. This truth is notably set forth under the emblem of the scape-goat, "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting them upon the head of the goat; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (Lev. 16:21). Now therefore, in consequence of the antitypical scapegoat, even the Lord Jesus having borne away all our iniquities and sins, they are at such a distance from God, that even his penetrating eye cannot reach them; "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed, our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12), so that God says, "Though the sins of Israel be sought for, there shall be none, and the iniquities of Judah, they shall not be found" (Jer. 50:20).

6. If then these words be true words, the conclusion we arrive at is this; that if any man here present believe in the Lord Jesus, that man is without any spot of sin before God, although in himself he may feel them to be more in number than the hairs of his head, and his heart fail him. For God sees no sin in believers, because there is none in believers

before him; and though feeling, sense, and reason, tell him that it is not so, yet the Word of God tells him that it is so; and indeed, reason itself must confess this, that if there were any sin in believers before the face of God, God must behold it; but if God does not behold it, then there is none. Now the Word of God plainly says, "God hath not beheld iniquity in his (justified) Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in his (believing) Israel" (Num. 23:21). And the reason is plain from two texts, with which I will conclude this first part, viz. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (Jno. 1:20); and, "The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jno. 1:7). These are alone sufficient to answer all the cavils of unbelievers. The first shows us what he did with sin - he took it away. The second shows us the amount of sin so taken away from all that believe in his name - even all sin. So then all sin being removed from before God, it follows, that there can be no spot of unholiness or of unrighteousness in us in his sight, for all unrighteousness is sin; and so the definition will stand good to the comfort of thousands, that he who by faith in the blood of Jesus is a justified man, is made and stands perfectly righteous and holy, by being without any spot or blemish of sin in the sight of God.

Thus far I have shown this truth in a negative way, how that we are righteous and holy in God's view by reason of the absence of sin; but now a word or two more shall be added, to show that we are really righteous before God, by the presence of righteousness.

And first it will appear from many parts of Scripture, that where there is an absence of sin, there is and must be the presence of righteousness; in short, that one cannot be without the other. This is shown plainly by Daniel 9:24 where he enumerates the blessings to be brought upon the church by the advent of Messiah, at the expiration of the seventy weeks; for he was not only to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, but to bring in everlasting righteousness. Here both the one and the other are attributed to the same event; and therefore, he that believeth in that Messiah, hath not only his sins put off, but an everlasting righteousness put on. Again, David saith, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute sin" (Ps. 32:1). But what is the Holy Ghost's comment on those words by the pen of

Paul? David, says he, "describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6); so then what can be clearer than this, that where sin is not imputed, righteousness is imputed; and this makes the believer doubly blessed.

But with respect to this imputation, it may be deemed necessary to say a word; and for this purpose, because many look upon it as though God, indeed, by his imputation, reckoned us to be righteous before him, whereas in truth we are still sinners before him. Now this might be true with respect to man's reckoning, but cannot be so with God. Man indeed may reckon another person to be righteous, whereas he may be deceived; but God cannot be deceived, and so never reckons a person to be righteous before him, except he also really make him perfectly righteous and holy. God did but reckon that the world should be made; and straightway it was made: he did but reckon that there should be light, and, lo there was light: for the word which spoke the world and light into existence, was but the effect of his counting or reckoning that so it should be; and with God a thought, word, and act, are just as one. The case is the same with respect to a sinner. He doth but reckon that such and such sinners shall become righteous, and, lo! they become righteous instantly, God bestowing upon them faith to lay hold on the robe of Christ's everlasting righteousness, and clothe themselves with these garments of salvation. God's imputation, therefore, is not a name only, and a powerless thing; but conveys the blessing he intends, more surely, swiftly, and completely, than the sun conveys to earth the light of heaven.

A text quoted before, in Romans 8, strikingly shows this power of God's imputation. In verse 1, we are informed, that there is no condemnation for those that walk after the Spirit; and in verse 3, we are informed of the reason, "God sending his Son in likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh," that is, executed and put to death sin in the flesh of Christ. Here was a perfect imputation of sin to Christ; our sin was really transferred to him, and he was clothed with it. But what do we gain by this? Why, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit." The believer then, by God's imputation, is truly a fulfiller of the law. And it is fulfilled, not actively by our legal workings, for no man hath ever so done, and so it is not said by us; but it

is fulfilled evangelically and passively, but no less truly, and therefore it is said in us: wherefore also it is said by Paul, he that loveth, which love is that by which faith worketh, hath fulfilled the law.

Again, this truth may be made to appear yet more clearly by comparison. There are some things in nature so completely contrary, that the one cannot exist where the other is; and the absence of the one plainly indicates the presence of the other. The absence of sickness is health, the absence of darkness is light; the absence of filth is cleanliness. So in like manner the absence of sin is righteousness. Sin is the sickness of the soul; sin is the darkness of the soul; sin is the filth of the soul. Now observe how it is, that of sick, filthy, and dark sinners, we become healthy, and clean, and saints of light. 1) By his stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5). Here is our sickness gone, and health established. 2) The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin (1 Jno. 1:7). Here is filthiness abolished, and cleanliness in its place. 3) Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8). Here "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The sun ariseth, and by the powerful conveyance of his beams makes the chamber light which before was utter darkness. So when by the grace of God we have faith to look with eagle eye to the glorious Sun of righteousness, he by the power of his beams hath conveyed the light of righteousness into the soul, the effect of which is to fill it with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And as these beams are of such power as to expel darkness from every cranny and crevice into which they come, and utterly to abolish it, so the righteousness of Jesus Christ coming unto and upon us, so completely abolishes all the darkness of sin from before God, that it is entirely removed from his sight. So then the sum of the matter is this; that whereas we see no sickness in a man, because his whole body is in a healthful state; and as we see no filthiness in a garment, because having been washed it is in a state of cleanliness; and as we see no darkness in our chamber because the sun-beams have enlightened it; so God sees no spot or blemish of sin in us that call upon the name of Jesus, because he hath covered us with the righteousness of Jesus, which is unto, and upon, and within, every one that trusteth in him. And one thing more we may say; that whereas the believer by faith hath made this righteousness his own, it is utterly impossible that he should

want any other; and whereas this righteousness is the righteousness of God, not only of God's appointing, but of God's working, for it is of Christ, Godman, it were a blasphemy for us either to say that it is not sufficient to make us accepted before God, or to affirm that any additions of man can make it more complete than it is. Therefore as many of us as trust in Christ, being thus clothed, are not only counted but made perfectly righteous and holy, without any spot or blemish of sin in the sight of God. And this is food for our faith to feed upon; for whereas by reason of sin remaining in us (for "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves") the devil tempts us to believe through the medium of our feeling, that God takes notice and is angry with us on account of sin; on the other hand, God comes in plainly and forcibly with his Word of truth, and says not only "I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob," but by one offering my Son hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). Now the office of faith is to turn a deaf ear to the temptations of Satan, and the suggestions of sense and feeling; but having her ears wide open to the Word of God's truth, to lay hold upon that, and thus bring in comfort upon the afflicted soul.

III. We will now proceed to the third position, "We know the things that are freely given to us of God," and that, not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit of God.

Could we tell the world no more than what we have already considered, we should have told them great things; for the love of the Father, and the Son, eternal and unfathomable, are therein revealed; but we have some of the Spirit's love yet to declare, who giveth us the most comfortable knowledge of these things. Did we merely declare unto men that such and such blessings are revealed in the Word of God, it would be much; but when we can say that these blessings are revealed to ourselves, and brought home to sinners' souls through the Word, this is much more. Now as many of us as are true ministers of Jesus Christ, and his faithful servants, do not only tell men that God is spoken of, that Christ is spoken of, that eternal life, and free and full justification by his blood, and righteousness, are spoken of, but moreover that they do certainly know that these things are their own. It was no doubtful story for the propagation of which the first preachers of the Gospel were sent forth;

they both knew and had seen Christ Jesus after he arose from the dead, and they were sure that his resurrection was for their justification; they did not rest upon a bare report of what others told them, but they saw for themselves; and therefore, "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 Jno. 1:1). This was the apostle's testimony then; and do we imagine that the testimony of Christ's ministers is less certain now? We grant indeed that with our bodily eyes we have never seen Christ Jesus the Lord; but the Lord giveth to his children an eye even to see clearly things in themselves invisible; for "by faith Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible;" and faith hath been of old, as it is even now to the few who possess it, "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Again, we grant that our bodily ears have never heard the Saviour in flesh declare unto us, as he did to the penitent woman, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" but the believer in the full exercise of faith discerns as plainly that his sins are pardoned, as he can discern his right hand from his left; for it is the very nature of faith to give an echo to the voice of God; so that whatsoever God saith, faith saith. Even as when God said to Abraham, that he would give him a son of Sarah when he was about an hundred years old, and Sarah barren, and past the age of childbearing; Abraham's faith received God's testimony, and was fully assured that what he had promised, though an impossibility to nature, yet he was able to perform. And so it is in the matter of justification. We feel ourselves to be all sin, and to have no good thing within us; but because God says to us, 'You are cleansed from your stains, and are perfectly holy before me,' faith fully assures us that it is even so as God hath spoken, and removes away all doubts about the matter, so dishonourable to every attribute of God.

I know that there are many who, not having heard of these truths, and not troubling themselves to read their Bibles, fly out into a rage at the bare mention of them; all such are objects of pity: but there are also some who have searched into these things, and yet deny that we have a right to assurance except upon certain conditions; of all such let us stand in doubt. This is the way they teach: before we may have any assurance of being

accepted in Christ, and eternally saved by him, we must examine our hearts, and see whether there are sufficient evidences of our state; we must ask ourselves day by day, have we repented enough? Have we wept enough? Have we prayed enough? Have we worked enough in order to entitle us to an assured hope that Christ hath washed us in his blood, and will finally save us? And so they teach us to measure our state by our works. If we have done little, we may hope little; if we have done much, we may hope much; and so on. Now all such men are troublers of the church of Christ; and if Paul were here he would say, "I would that they were even cut off." These are legalists in disguise; while they pretend to preach the Gospel, they are drawing their hearers back again to the works of the law. But the experienced eye will see through the veil; faith, instead of looking at what herself hath done, looks out of self at what another hath done for her: faith grounds her assurance not upon her own fruits, which vary every hour, but upon the worth, value, and efficacy of the blood and righteousness of Jesus the Son of God; both of which are for sinners, the worst and vilest; so that even the chiefest of sinners coming with all his filth to Jesus might have an assured hope of salvation thereupon. Now on the contrary, while these men are looking inward for evidences on which they may rest their hope, Christ, the only true and certain ground and foundation, is left out of the question; so that the language of all such must be, when they are asked to show cause why judgment should not be passed upon them, not as the believer's is, "It is Christ that died" (Rom. 8:34); but, here are so many repentances, so many prayers, so many tears, so many performances, for each one of which, viewed apart from Christ, they deserve eternal condemnation: in short, what is the tendency of all such preaching and teaching, but to make men lean to their own righteousness, and fill them with all sorts of hypocrisy.

In opposition then to all such, the Word of God declares that faith is its own evidence - not to the exclusion of others, but above all others. Other evidences of our state will flow out of a true faith, as we find abundantly declared in Romans 5:1-11 and elsewhere. But be it recollected, that not one of these gives birth to faith, but faith gives birth to them all. Now it is very pleasing and comforting to the believer to see not only faith, but all her offspring with her around the table; but many

will be the time that he will be called upon to sit down with faith alone, and through various causes all the family of love, joy, comfort, peace, may for a while have taken flight. Nevertheless, faith being left, it is well: faith cleaves close to Christ - faith knows Christ - faith assures herself that Christ is her's and that she is Christ's. She always carries about her own evidence with her; for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 Jno. 5:10). Our state then before God is declared first to ourselves by faith, then to others by the fruits she brings forth.

If then there be this witness in faith, we need not go to any of faith's fruits in order to know our own state; if it were so indeed, how could the sinner have hope who has never yet produced any fruits? But we have indeed cause to bless God, that such is the fulness of the riches of the blood of Christ, that the veriest wretch that the earth ever produced, if he do but trust in that blood, hath as much right to the fullest assurance of his state before God, as the most advanced believer in all the family of God's elect; for there is but one and the same title to all, even the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Now that such a knowledge and assurance of our state to God-ward is vouchsafed to sinners, he that speaketh at this moment is a witness. If to have broken nearly every commandment of the ten in the very letter constitute a sinner, he is one; and if God's eternal purpose of love and mercy to sinners' souls could have been frustrated thereby, he is the man that should have done it. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved him, even dead in sins, hath quickened, justified, saved him, and given him the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. But I pass over this, lest he should be thought to preach himself, and merely bring forward a few Scriptures to illustrate the glorious truth, that sinners that believe in Jesus both know the Lord, and know him for their own. It was triumphant language used by Paul when he said, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12); it filled his soul with glorious anticipations of the future. Henceforth, says he, there is "a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:7). But some will say, this is language becoming the mouth of an apostle, but is not fit for us. Let us hear therefore whether or not an apostle expects those to whom he writes to be

behind-hand in this same grace, or whether he does not take it for granted that they are all well acquainted with this truth. Why did John write to his little children in Christ? "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 Jno. 2:13). John writes, because his very babes in grace have known the Father; not simply have known that there is such a Person as the Father, but have known him as a Father, even as their own Father. What then may not these babes expect from this most blessed relationship? What a certainty may they not have that all things shall be theirs? Therefore, says he again, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 Jno. 5:13). Surely then the Lord expects that his children shall be made acquainted with the blessings they have in Christ; and though mere professors of godliness deem it presumption for any man to be assured of his state, yet let him tremble that dares to deny it; for while he that receiveth God's testimony hath set to his seal that God is true (Jno. 3:33), he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and that record is, that God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in his Son (1 Jno. 5:10, 11). While then the world goes on in its evil course, having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof, saying that we cannot tell whether we be called, pardoned, chosen, and accepted in Christ; we know, and that with an infallible certainty, that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (1 Jno. 5:19). And while the generality of professors walk like other Gentiles, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (Eph. 4:18); we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, the true God, and eternal life (1 Jno. 5:20).

But if it be asked, how do we arrive at this most excellent and comfortable knowledge? The words of the text plainly answer, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." By the spirit of the world is here peculiarly meant worldly wisdom, which in the preceding chapter he has shown to be utterly unprofitable in order to teach us the

deep things of God. Worldly wisdom is very well in its right place; but the man that carries his worldly wisdom to the Word of God, in order thereby to get spiritual understanding, is making as fruitless and clumsy an attempt, as if he should take the key of the college gates to unlock his cabinet of jewels. Such a man is a fool, and knows nothing yet as he ought to know. We do well therefore at the very outset in acting as the magicians did, burning all our books of curious arts, let them be as costly as they may; for in matters of salvation they do no more than bewitch the people, and deceive ourselves. "Wherefore, if any man; among us seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). For the spirit of worldly wisdom never yet made an apostle of Christ, or a child of God.

But that which maketh us wise unto salvation, and teacheth us that we are sinners saved by Christ's blood, is the wisdom which cometh from above, the gift of the Spirit of God. The one is of the earth, earthy; the other is from heaven, heavenly. Earthy men use their earthy wisdom, and reap the fruits thereof, an earthy treasure; heavenly men use the wisdom of God's Spirit, and reap the fruits thereof, heavenly treasure. No man is possessed of this heavenly wisdom except he be a heavenly man, that is, except he be born from above; all such, and no others savingly receive the Spirit of God, who becomes to them an infallible teacher, so that they thereby know the things freely given to them of God. "For ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things; and the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you" (1 Jno. 2:20, 27). Two things however are to be observed, when speaking of this teaching of the Spirit; the first is, that though the Spirit be an infallible Teacher, yet those that are taught by him are not infallible, except in as far as they speak God's infallible truth; and the next is, that though the Spirit be the only Teacher, yet he teaches nothing contrary to the written Word. Away therefore with all dreams, visions, and ecstasies, which have not the testimony of the written Word to support them; away with all those enthusiasts who pretend to have received revelations from God, whose pretensions will not stand the test of the Word of God. But, keeping these things in view, we shall do well to consider, that the Spirit's testimony with the Word, and by the Word, is an infallible testimony to us. Thus, for instance, it is

written of those that believe in Jesus, God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:32): we read this, it may be, ninety-nine times, and they appear words, and no more; the hundredth time, the Spirit carries them into the soul with a power and sweetness we knew not of before. Here is the Spirit witnessing with the Word, working faith in us to lay hold of that Word, and apply it to our own individual case; and so we come to know that the words which Jesus speaks unto us, "they are spirit and they are life" (Jno. 6:63). And also be it observed, that this kind of testimony is that which the Spirit under the Gospel is continually giving to those on whom he works. For it is written, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

If then there be any one that is truly looking to Jesus Christ and waiting upon him alone for life and for salvation, and hath as it were a voice in his heart telling him he is not a child of God, but a limb of Satan, it is plain from these words that it must be the voice of a lying spirit, and not the Spirit of God; wherefore it is not to be entertained or believed one moment, seeing that the Word and Spirit testify the direct contrary. Wherefore, to sum up this part of my discourse, "we are bound always to give thanks to God that he hath chosen us unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13); not only for the great gift of salvation itself, but also for that spiritual faith and knowledge whereby even here we are enabled through Christ to lay claim to it as our own; "for we have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things freely given to us of God;" and while the eye of the natural man "hath not seen, nor his ear heard, neither have entered into his heart the things God hath prepared for them that love him, God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9,10).

IV. I cannot conclude this discourse, in which the work of the Spirit has been largely mentioned, without putting two distinct questions.

The first is: are we individually, each for himself, led by the Spirit of God?

The second is: are we collectively, as a church, led by the Spirit of God?

The first of these questions cannot appear strange to members of the Church of England; nay, many of us now present have openly and

solemnly, before the face of God and man, declared that we believed ourselves to be inwardly moved by God the Holy Ghost to take upon us the work of the ministry. If this profession was true, then we shall not fail to bear about us the marks of the minister of Christ. "If, then, according to the Scripture, we both labour and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God; if we are an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; if we give attendance to reading the Word of God, to exhortation, to doctrine; if we neglect not the gift that is in us; if we meditate upon these things; if we give ourselves wholly to them; if we take heed unto ourselves, and to the doctrine; if we continue in them; then we shall both save ourselves, and them that hear us; and while we have, by faith in Christ, a clear conscience before God, our profiting shall appear to men" (1 Tim. 4:10-16). Such characters as these are good ministers of the Lord Jesus, and are led by the Spirit of God.

But the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter and the last days perilous times shall come, when men, and ministers too, shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, and proud, and, any thing but what they ought to be, having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:1,2 & 2 Tim. 3:2). If, then, there be amongst us any who have put ourselves into one of the priest's offices that we may eat a piece of bread; if we follow Christ because we have eaten of the loaves and fishes, and are full; if, instead of being well acquainted with the Word and doctrine, "we be blind watchmen, ignorant, and dumb dogs, that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber, yea, greedy dogs that can never have enough; if we be shepherds that cannot understand, all looking to our own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter; if, instead of having our conversation in heaven, we are saying one to another, Come ye, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant" (Isa. 56:10-12); why then the case is plain to the most superficial observer: we have among us those of whom Paul spake aforetime, and spake with tears in his eyes, that they were the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:18). Such men are not led by, and have not received, the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God, we know, allows of no habitual wickedness wheresoever he dwells, in ministers or people; but there are nevertheless many good livers, and holy walkers after the dead faith, who have never known Christ, nor partaken of his Spirit. Let two or three marks suffice. There are some cold, calculating religionists, who are content that what they think a form of sound words should enter into the heads of people, but are well nigh overwhelmed, if the truth as it is in Christ lays hold on the heart and affections. These are men whom at every turn we hear crying up prudence, judgment, and discretion, bidding their disciples do as much good as they can without giving any offence either to Jew, Gentile, or the church of God; keeping back the truth in order to shun the cross, and then wresting Scripture to justify their practice. Tell these men that Christ is precious to your soul; tell them that you are acquainted with him, that you love him better than all the world besides, that you are willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus - straightway they are offended; yea, the very name Jesus carries a cross with it; they don't like to hear it mentioned, except on a Sunday, and then within the walls of a church. Now though there may be plenty of hypocrites who take his name within their lips - and a bare talking of Jesus is no proof of our being in Jesus - yet herein lies the condemnation of the men of whom I speak, that though they bear his name, yet will they have none of him in their conversation, but are ashamed of him! Such men have not received the Spirit of God.

Again, Christ says, "Whosoever is ashamed of me, or of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed." The words of Christ are hateful to the formalist, as well as his Person, and they can as little bear the one as the other; therefore Scripture words and phrases are discarded from their dictionary, and morality, virtue, &c. appear in their place. Now let us meditate over some few of Christ's words, that we may try whether we are ashamed of them or not. For instance, "holiness" is one of Christ's words, "self-denial," "taking up the cross," and "good works," but these, it may be, do not offend, because we fancy we have attained to all this. But these are not all the words of Christ; there are such expressions as, "born again," "born of the Spirit," "new creatures," "new man," "children of light," "having tasted that the Lord is gracious," all which declare a state the very reverse of what we all are in by nature. Then again, there is "predestination

to the adoption. of children," "chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world," "chosen unto salvation," "God's own elect," "free grace," "rich mercy," "everlasting love," "precious blood," and "finished work," every one of which go to overthrow the pride of the natural man. Are we ashamed of these words? Of all or any of them? If so, it is most plain that we cannot have received much of the unction of that Spirit, by whose inspiration they were written. Again, besides Christ and his words, there are men who preach Christ, and use his words; are we ashamed of them? Such men are not careful to fill their sermon with hard words above the comprehension of the poor hearers. They seek not for eloquence, nor any outward ornament of expression to tickle the ears, and go no further; but speak plainly, boldly, nakedly; using the same words and phrases they find in their Bibles, preaching the same doctrines, and illustrating them by the same figures. Such are very rarely to be found among the rich and great, the wise and mighty ones of the world; and when they are, they are despised by them. Let a man have never so much wealth, let a man be born of never so good a family, let a man be never so good a scholar, let a man walk never so close with God, and be never so kind and charitable to the poor, yet if he do but testify the Gospel of the grace of God, and preach Christ and his words, that man shall be looked upon by the world, among whom he formerly lived, in one of these ways; those who are honest enough themselves to believe him to be honest, set him down for a fool; those that are without common charity, for a knave; and the world in general for a madman. And indeed it is well for him that it is so; for if men said of the allwise and holy God himself when upon earth, "He is a deceiver, he hath a devil, and is mad," how can we who speak the same words as he did expect to escape? "For the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; and if they have kept my saying they will keep yours also: but all these things will they do unto you, for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (Jno. 15:20,21). Let us therefore beware how we refuse or reject the man that speaketh unto us the words of Christ. We see what his character must be in the world's estimation. If it be not as here stated, then are they no ministers of Christ. We cannot preach Christ, and not bear his cross; never would a true Christian desire to hear any man preach, whose name is not reviled in the world, and cast out as evil; for he

knows by the infallible Word of God that such must be their portion. Let us then, who think ourselves to belong to Christ, thus think within ourselves; am I ashamed of Jesus? of his name, of his words, or of his ministers? If so, I have not yet received the Spirit which is of God, but the spirit which is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.

Now then, for our last enquiry. Are we collectively speaking, as a church, led by the Spirit of God? And here, if the answer depended upon the majority of its members being led by the Spirit, there would be no difficulty in declaring a negative; for many are called, but few are chosen; many have the outward means bestowed, but few are chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; so there shall be many professors, and few possessors. However, the question I have here proposed I mean not to answer directly, but merely to throw out a few hints, in the hope that others will improve upon them. I shall therefore merely state a few facts, and so conclude. And here,

In the first place, I gladly lay hold of this opportunity of stating my conviction, that the Spirit of God did guide the pen of those men who drew up that sound form of words contained in the Doctrinal Articles of the English Church. I pass by all others at present, to speak only of those that so fully declare the doctrines of grace; for either of which, the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, or seventeenth, I would, by the Lord's enabling, willingly lay down my neck. In these at least the Church is pure; neither, as far as I have read, was any thing suffered to be preached in opposition to them, till about the twelfth year of King James I. In the reign of Elizabeth, her Bishops recommended her to shut up the advocates of freewill in one old castle at Wallingford, or North Wales; and in that of her successor, a preacher named Barrett,¹ of the University of Cambridge, was obliged publicly to recant for having advanced anti-Calvinistical doctrines. In those days therefore, whatsoever may be the case now, our Articles were supposed to speak what they mean, and our ministers were required to preach accordingly; and such preaching in the letter of doctrine at least was, and is, according to the Spirit of God.

¹ William Barrett who was summoned before Archbishop Whitgift in 1595. He subsequently became a Roman Catholic.

One more Article, to which I would call your attention, is the thirty-seventh, which treats of the civil magistrate. It seems by it that some "slandrous folks" were offended in those days on account of the King's allowed supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs; therefore this Article plainly affirms, that "we only allow to our King that only prerogative always given to all godly princes in the Scriptures by God himself;" and this is defined to be, that he should rule all estates, as well ecclesiastical as civil, and by the use of "the civil sword restrain all stubborn and wicked doers," whether churchmen or statesmen. Now this being all the supremacy allowed by this Article to the King, how can any man in his senses possibly object? Every loyal subject of every denomination must set his hand and heart, his "Yea and Amen," to such a reasonable declaration. But facts speak a different language, and prove that this is not the only prerogative which the King exercises in church matters; for the appointment of every one of the Bishops is entirely in his Majesty's hands; so that while the principle of the Article remains sound, and consistent with the spirit of Christianity, yet the practice of the church in this matter is unsound, and fraught with the most disastrous consequences. For mark, brethren, how the case stands. The King's minister recommends such and such a one to the King to be a bishop; it may be, because he is his relation, or his son's tutor, or because he is a good scholar; but one thing is sure, that except this minister know Christ, he is not likely to recommend one that knows Christ. Then the King recommends to the clergy, which recommendation has the force of a law. The Bishop so appointed has the ordination of a multitude of inferior clergy, and so the pulpits are filled. Now the consequences are plain to every impartial eye. A young man, either in search of preferment, or because the church is a respectable profession, or aspiring to a seat in the House of Peers, or because there is a good living which he is sure of by going into the church, beholds too many attractions in our Establishment not to catch at the gilded bait. The Articles, which were set up as barriers to keep out all but spiritual men from the ministry, are easily explained away, and made to mean any thing but what they do mean. Ordination is easily enough conferred on any man of moderate abilities, provided our Grace Articles form no part of his creed; and thus men, whose object in becoming ministers of Christ is any

thing but the glory of Christ, climb boldly over the wall, and perform a mock exercise of the shepherd's office.

How then, I ask, from such a state of things, can we be surprised, if on looking through the generation of church ministers of all orders, and at all times, we find a large proportion of them to be either men of pleasure, such as play and opera-goers, card-players, ball-frequenters, and dancers, delighting in horse-races and hunting or the more refined and seducing amusements of music, the concert, and the oratorio? Or else further than this, men that have been habitual gamblers, drunkards, misers, gluttons, fornicators, adulterers, or even worse than they? We may well ask therefore, when we see such fruits as these, whether, in allowing the possibility of such a state of things, we were or now are led by the Spirit of God?

Now that the church is and hath been in this state is notorious, and needs no proof. The world knows it, sees it, talks of it; and the world has a sharp eye to discern the inconsistencies of those who, professing themselves to be set apart for the peculiar service of God and his Christ, are to be generally found in the front rank of Baal's worshippers in his temples.

One thing more I wish now to bring before you, and which I pray God to bring with power to your souls. It is this: that the Heads and resident Fellows of Colleges in this University have had, and have now, no small share in the introduction and perpetuation of these corruptions. They know better than I can tell them, how many times they have, by recommending improper persons for the ministry, brought a reproach upon the Church of England. Almost every Bishop requires College testimonials from the young man who comes to him for ordination, and nothing can be more proper; these testimonials affirm, that during the time of his residence at College he hath behaved himself "honestly, piously, and soberly:" and now I speak not at a venture, but from my own certain knowledge, and affirm, that these testimonials of pious and sober living have been given to men notorious for nothing so much in their day as profaneness, debauchery, and all kind of riotous living; and on the other hand I also know for a certainty, that these testimonials have, been withheld from piety, honesty, and sobriety, for no other reason than that they happened to be accompanied with a profession of the Grace Articles

of the Church of England. These are heavy charges, which must one day be answered before the face of men and angels at the great tribunal of God.

I might now, in connection with this subject, speak largely concerning the persecuting spirit towards spiritual men, which has ever shown itself in the great men of our Establishment since the restoration of Charles II. even to the present day; but as time will not allow, I shall now briefly restate the two grand inconsistencies in the practice of the Church of England which call loudly for reformation.

1. Though the thirty-seventh Article denies to the King any supremacy but that of ruling all estates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, in the same way as the godly princes in holy Scripture, yet she does in fact allow to him such a power in things ecclesiastical, as those godly princes never enjoyed.

2. Whereas the doctrinal Articles of the Church are all in favour of free grace and against free will, and man's work in the whole matter of our salvation; yet it is notorious that the great majority both of prelates and preachers neither teach nor preach according to those Articles, but boldly disavow them, and brand those that hold them with the name of heretic.

What shall we then say to these things? How shall we answer to such glaring inconsistencies? Who would have supposed, that with Articles so pure we should ever have degraded ourselves with practices so foul? The words of the heathen poet rise up and condemn us: "Turpiter atrum desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne." ["So that what is a beautiful woman on top ends in a black and ugly fish."] Her Articles of Grace, they are the Church's beautiful head. Her prophets that preach lies and deny them, they are the ugly and incongruous tail.

O ye, as many as have thoughts of entering into the ministry, beware lest ye be found among this number! Pause, pause and reflect before you take that awful and important step. Examine your motives, search your hearts. Ask yourselves the why, the wherefore, the reason, the inducement you have to take upon you the care of immortal souls! Is it that you may have a respectable name? Is it because you expect profit and advancement? Is it because you think that by reason of your natural talents you are likely to lift yourselves up to the very pinnacle of

ecclesiastical greatness? If so, you may perhaps gain your end, but the curse of God will go along with it, and be your final reward.

Brethren, the only thing which can make us ministers of Jesus Christ is the call of the Spirit of Christ. Man's ordination follows after, and is well in its place; but except we be first called by God, it is utterly unavailing. And again, no man can be a true minister of the Church of England except he unfeignedly believe the doctrines of that Church. Think therefore what an awful state we must be in, if in spite of what the Articles plainly declare, and what our conscience must tell us they do declare, we deliberately determine to rush into the ministry, whether we believe them or no! Think if instead of "free grace" which the church approves, we are determined to preach "free will" which she condemns! What if instead of God's "predestination and election in Christ," we insist upon the "power of fallen man!" What if instead of Christ's being "all our salvation," we mean to affirm that something is necessary on our part as a prerequisite! What if instead of the Spirit's godly movings, calls, and comfortings, and the heavenly fruits thereof, we mean to preach no more than good resolutions, moral virtues, and crown all with a few alms-deeds! The man that goeth into the ministry on such grounds and with such intentions as these, hath brought upon himself the fearful word of the prophet, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. 44:20)

Finally, it remains only for me to bring before you the inevitable consequence of the state in which we find ourselves. The truth must be told, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." And the truth is, that as in the case of individuals the wages of sin is death, so in the case of churches the wages of corruption is destruction. We boast indeed of being a Reformed Church; so much the worse; for as a body, while we take the names of the Reformers in our mouth, we neither preach their doctrine, nor imitate their practice; and if it be found, that having a form of sound words, our actions are in direct contradiction to them, what are we better, nay, are we not rather worse, than that church against which we protest, and which has never reformed herself at all? It has been much the practice to thunder against Rome in our pulpit declamations; but perhaps it might have been better for us to have looked at home, and corrected what is amiss

there; lest, while we with much truth and zeal cry out against the fornications of the Roman Aholah, she in her turn be equally clamorous against the whoredoms of the English Aholibah! (Ezek. 23).

Brethren, every candid man will confess, that both the one and the other stand in need of much reformation; but can we discover any thing in the Word of God, which, when compared with our present state, will warrant a hope that it shall take place? Would to God that we could! The whole Gentile Church, whether Romish or Reformed, is under the sentence of "excision," if "she continue not in God's goodness:" "Behold the goodness and severity of God; toward them (the Jews) which fell, severity; but toward thee (the Gentiles) goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22). The whole argument of this chapter forbids us to confine this threat to the Church of Rome, though she is the head of the apostacy; and whether she or we have continued in God's goodness, I leave to every godly man to determine; and if not, then the sentence shall most surely be executed in the total abscission, apotomy, or off-cutting of the whole Gentile Church; and however men may differ about the date and manner of her judgment, the fact itself is sure, and the time is at hand.

I cannot then bring myself into the number of those who are crying "peace, peace, when there is no peace," and amusing their hearers with the pleasing but vain hope of a progressive spread of the Gospel over the whole surface of the globe. God's purpose is different, and the voice of his ministers must be different; for now are they sent to declare that the days of vengeance are near, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. This is ever the way of God's dealings. Before the world perished by the waters of the flood, God sent a testimony. Before he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, God sent a testimony. Before Jerusalem was sacked and burned, God sends a testimony. Being shortly about to cut off the whole Gentile Church, God hath now for some few years past been constantly raising up his witnesses to testify to the fact.

God has a twofold purpose in thus acting. One is, to gather out his own elect from the midst of the overthrow; the other, to leave those that shall be overthrown without any excuse. Baruch and Ebedmelech, attending to the words of the prophet Jeremiah, must be secured together with him from

personal injury, while the stiffnecked people and their king deservedly suffer the horrors of death, or captivity. Noah and his family shall be safe within the ark yet surrounded with the floating carcasses of those that despised his preaching. Lot must give his testimony in Sodom, and gather out thereby all the righteous; but as soon as ever they enter into Zoar, the Lord shall rain fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven upon those devoted cities. Let us therefore beware lest a similar fate await us from refusing to listen to a warning voice. Noah preached, and “condemned the world who believed him not;” Lot preached to his kinsfolk, and “he seemed as one that mocked;” Jeremiah preached to his countrymen, and they threw him into prison for his faithfulness, it is an old proverb, “*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat;*” [“Whom God wishes to destroy he first makes mad;”] accordingly God has threatened (Isa. 66:4). “I also will choose their delusions;” yea God “shall send strong delusions that they may believe a lie: that they all may be damned that believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11,12). What, if the Lord hath already sent this awful judgment upon us? Is it a thing impossible? A short time will make it appear whether the church herself, or the preacher whose warning, voice would now awaken her to her danger, is the victim of delusion, and the believer of a lie; God will make it manifest in that day, when we shall appear before God, and before each other, at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Brethren, I have done; I have delivered my testimony and my soul together. I speak not from anger, malice, or enmity on the one hand; neither from a wish of appearing singular on the other; neither from a desire of worldly distinction or gain; God is witness. Being firmly assured that I am pleading the cause of God and of truth, I fear not the face of man, nor value his opposition. But my heart’s desire and prayer to God is for your profit and welfare. I could wish that the threatened destruction might not be rained down upon us in our day, and it will not, if we repent and amend in due time; and I heartily pray that the Father of mercies may pour out upon us a spirit of grace and of supplication, to which he will listen, and put off the evil day! O! may he give us grace to lay these things to heart, that “we who have forgotten God may consider them, ere he tear us in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”