

SOME REASONS

**Against making the Use of Marks
and Evidences, in order to attain the**

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR INTEREST IN CHRIST.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." I Jn.3:16.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." I Jn.5:10.

By William Cudworth

With a Recommendatory Preface by

Mr. EDWARD GODWIN.

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To The Society at the Tabernacle.

Artillery-Court, May 14, 1745.

My dear brethren and sisters,

I would simply write to you the cause of my recommending the following tract, which I believe will be much blessed to many, for sure it is given by the Spirit of the Lord, for our instruction in righteousness.

As I was this morning crossing the streets, our dear brother, the author of this piece, said to me, "I have written something concerning Marks & Evidences, and I would have you peruse it, and if you should approve of it, write a preface to it." I received it with a full intent not to do so, as I mean not to be concerned in the publication of it; but being to dine with a family that dearly love our Saviour, after dinner I took it out to read it as a treatise given me to peruse. I had not read far, before the whole family seemed extremely delighted with it, and thought it would assuredly be abundantly blessed. I too extremely pleased with the ease, and yet strength of the arguments, the great light, and yet candour of each page, the usefulness of the subject, and the persuasion I found of its being made an hereafter blessing, readily consented to publish it. And I declare that I have found in it things stated so clearly, as make me rejoice abundantly in an opportunity of setting it forth before a people I so dearly love.

In it you have my opinion concerning the Free Salvation, Justification, Sanctification, of our Perfection in the one Everlasting Righteousness Christ Jesus, which as it is so sweetly exalted in this tract, I would detain you no longer, but entreat you meekly to receive what is written for the glory of our Saviour. That he may bless you daily with deeper views of his dying love;

Is the prayer of your happy, though sinful brother,

Edward Godwin.

Some Reasons Against making Use of Marks & Evidences, &c.

It is a common received opinion, that the safest way to apply Christ to our souls for justification, peace, and assurance, is by a discovery of inherent qualities wrought in us, and accordingly the general method of answering that important question, how may I know my part in Christ, is by laying down certain marks and characters of the children of God, as the proper evidences whereby it may certainly be discovered. Though I am far from thinking that any, who perceive the love of God to their souls, are destitute of those marks and characters generally laid down, yet to make use of them for this purpose, I apprehend to be quite wrong, for the following reasons.

I. Because sinners have in the Gospel a sufficient ground or warrant to come to Christ, to receive him, to believe on him as their Saviour, without the least mark or evidence of any righteousness or goodness in themselves. Indeed if this was truly believed, it would make way for all that shall follow; but whether it is believed or no, it is a truth, "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jn.3:16. By giving, here, I understand a giving him in the word of that Gospel, which is to be preached unto every creature, that so sinners, as sinners, may warrantable receive or believe in him as their Saviour; for the giving here, {that he gave his only begotten Son,} cannot be a giving in possession, which is peculiar only to them that believe. But it must be such a giving, as warrants a man to believe, or receive the gift, such a giving, that whosoever

believeth, {or receiveth the gift,} shall not perish, &c.

It is this giving alone that makes Christ the immediate object of our faith, and the believing him to be our Saviour no presumption; which otherwise it would be, for a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. John 3:37 & 6:32. Our Saviour {alluding to the manna} says to a promiscuous multitude, "my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Where you may observe, that as the simple raining of the manna about their camps, is called a giving of it, verse 31, before it was tasted or fed upon; so Christ being declared in the Gospel as the Saviour of sinners, is called a giving of him, before he is or can be received and believed on. And the record of the Gospel, which we make God a liar in not believing, is, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; that unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. Isa.9:6.

This is the true report of the Gospel, and the Gospel, strictly and properly taken, consists only in such reports, being called therefore a word of grace, a word of promise, a word of faith, a word of life and salvation; and the only obedience we can give the Gospel, is to believe it for ourselves in particular, whereby it becomes the power of God unto our salvation, Rom.1:16, and this Gospel is to be preached to every creature.

Further, Christ is not only given that he may be received, but he is given freely, that he may be received freely, without money, and without price. Isa.55:1. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev.22:17. In Romans chapter five, Christ and his righteousness is called a gift, and a free gift, no less than six times. "But not as the

offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom.5:15-18.

Our Saviour has also declared, that he that believes this Gospel, that Christ is given freely to him shall be saved, and shall never be ashamed; though he that believe it not shall be damned. I John 5:10-13. That Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners; that the whole need not the physician, but they that are sick; that he came to seek and save that which was lost; that he that comes to him he will in no wise cast out; that this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, I John 3:23, and the apostle Paul proves, that a man is justified {that is, in conscience, as shall shortly be made apparent} without the deeds of the Law, by the hearing of faith, Rom.10:17, believing on him that justifies the ungodly. Rom.4:5.

Now let us sum this together, that Christ is a free gift {as above explained} to the world, to sinners, to unbelievers, and that this Gospel is to be preached to every creature, and that God commands, calls, and exhorts us to receive and believe in him for ourselves in particular, promising us salvation, and assuring us that we shall not be

disappointed; that it is sinners that are called upon, and the ungodly that are justified; surely then sinners have a sufficient revealed warrant for believing on Christ as their Saviour, without the least mark or evidence of any righteousness or goodness in themselves.

II. Faith alone is sufficient to justify the conscience, to bring true peace, and full assurance. Nay, I may say further, it is not only sufficient, but is the appointed method of the Lord for obtaining these things in truth and reality, so that whoever profess to have these things any other way than in a way of believing, deceive themselves.

Accordingly the Gospel is glad tidings of free-grace or favour to be believed, or credited, as appears from Rom.1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth," and Isaiah 53:1, "who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed," and it is observable, that the apostle Paul quotes this place to prove, that the Jews had not all obeyed the Gospel, plainly intimating, that the obedience of the Gospel consists only in believing the tidings; which tidings are thereby made the means of conveying the privileges into the possession of every one that so believeth, without waiting for any signs, marks, or evidences, to give them a better title or possession.

But that this may appear still plainer, I shall consider it more particularly; and first, that faith alone, without the concurrence of any mark, sign, or evidence, is God's appointed method of justifying the conscience; and to be acquainted with this, is a most weighty and principal matter. I say a most weighty and principal matter, for what is more the cause of all our distress, misery, and enmity against God, than the want of the joyful knowledge of a true

reconciliation with God, and a conscience cleansed from all guilt of sin. I apprehend that justification properly terminates in the conscience, and that that abstracted way which some have of considering it, as it exists in the mind of God, without being extended to, or perfected in our consciences, is but, though ever so true in itself, a mere speculation to us; for secret things belong to God alone, but to us the things that are revealed. Deut.29:29.

I mention this, because that very many, instead of seeking {by faith in the blood of Jesus} justification in the court wherein they are condemned, I mean the court of conscience, content themselves with speculations of God's eternal thoughts of his people, justifying them from eternity, &c., endeavouring to pacify their own consciences, and find themselves of the number of the justified, by marks and evidences, drawn from what they find inherent in themselves, instead of the alone perfect righteousness of our Saviour, through faith. And some again are even so weak, as to imagine, that God, in some period of time, changeth his thoughts concerning them, justifying them in his own mind, commonly called the court of heaven, and they remaining still ignorant of the matter.

These things are mere speculations to us, for where is it that God's mind concerning us is to be known, but in his revealed will? Where is it I find myself guilty, and stand in need of righteousness, but in the court of conscience, {this conscience might justly be defined to be the souls apprehension of itself, and its actions, as in the presence of God, and a subject of his Law,} and where else is it that I am to be actually and in time justified?

The consideration of justification, according to Scripture-light, I take to be this, that God our Saviour undertook his office on our behalf, before

the foundation of the world; that he has actually executed this office by his sufferings and obedience to all the demands of the Law for us, which is called his righteousness, the righteousness of God, the righteousness of faith, &c., that God justifies us when he invests us with this righteousness, that is, puts us in possession of it by faith, which righteousness so possessed, is the matter that justifies the conscience that but the moment before was accused, guilty and condemned. Hence in Scripture sometimes God is said to justify us, because he gives and imputes this righteousness to us, and declares us righteous for this righteousness sake. Sometimes we are said to be justified by Christ, because he wrought out this righteousness for us; sometimes by the free gift, and by grace; because we become possessors of this righteousness by receiving it as a free gift and favour; and most frequently we are said to be justified by faith only without the deeds of the Law, because by faith only we receive this righteousness as ours by the free gift of God, and answer the demands of God's Law therewith. This righteousness is sometimes called the righteousness of God, and sometimes the righteousness of faith, not because there are two justifications, or two righteousnesses, but from the reasons above mentioned; and this way of speaking is not peculiar to the Scripture, but is also common amongst men; for a man's innocency is said to justify him, the witnesses are said to justify him, and the judge is said to justify him, though they all concur but to one and the same, justification. And that faith is quite alone in this matter appears from God's method of putting the soul in actual possession of those things which any way concur to justify the conscience; for though God from eternity designed these things for us, and though they are

actually prepared and brought to an existence without us, yet still they are unprofitable to us, till we are actually possessed of them. Now God's method of putting us in possession of these things, is described in Scripture to be by way of gift, Rom.5:16, &c., freely, without money, and without price, that all boasting may be excluded, and on our part these things are said to be received; we are said to receive Christ himself, John 1:12, "unto as many as received him," &c., Col.2:6, "as ye have received Christ Jesus," &c., we are also said to receive the atonement that is made by the blood of Christ, Rom.5:11, the forgiveness of sins, Acts 26:18, the gift of righteousness, Rom.5:17, the word, Acts 2:41, the promise of eternal life. Heb.9:15.

Now this receiving, is in Scripture ascribed to Faith alone, John 1:12, Col.2:6, Rom.5:11, &c., and indeed how can it be otherwise, in the nature of things, for we cannot receive by desire, love, or any other disposition of mind, than believing; it being justly described, Heb.11:1, to be the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. How can any person receive and possess an estate, but by believing, that by virtue of the deeds and writings, that he has in possession, that the estate belongs to him, and so living upon it, and using it as his own. Thus he that believeth, may be said to possess Christ as really, truly, and properly, as any man ever possessed an estate, and all by virtue of crediting the writings of Scripture, containing the last dying will and testament of Jesus Christ, full of large legacies to the chief of sinners.

Hence it appears plain, that since it is by faith alone, we receive and become possessors of the free promise of God, the word of free justification, the gift of righteousness, the forgiveness of sins, the atonement made by the blood of Christ, and Christ

himself, that faith alone, without the concurrence of any mark or evidence, is not only sufficient, but is also God's appointed method of justifying the conscience.

To confirm this matter yet more fully, I would consider a few more scriptures, and first, Rom.3:28, "therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law." If any would say, that the justification here mentioned, does not include the conscience, but leaves the matter to be made manifest there by marks and evidences, I answer.

1. That there is no other justification in time, than that which is in the conscience, for all our justification in time is by faith, and neither our faith, nor any qualifications in us can cause any change in the mind of the Lord concerning us, and therefore the change must be in regard of our knowledge of God's thoughts towards us, and consequently the justification must be in the conscience, or not at all. And if any choose to call this the manifestation of our justification, I shall not differ about words, when we mean the same thing, but I choose to call it justification because the Scripture does.

2. Our justification must be where we are condemned, now we are not condemned merely in the secret mind of God, but also in our own consciences, therefore our justification must be also in our own consciences.

3. Faith justifies only as it receives and applies the righteousness of Christ for justification; now where doth faith apply this righteousness? Certainly not to the mind of God, but to our own minds and consciences; and therefore justification by faith must be justification in conscience, because faith has no other office in this matter, than to justify the conscience by the righteousness of Christ; and he

whose faith extends not unto the justification of his conscience, cannot in any sense be said to be justified by faith, but is as yet under the condemnation of the Law.

4. Faith is put in opposition to the deeds of the Law, as procuring that justification which men seek in vain by such deeds. Now the justification which men seek by the deeds of the Law, is in the conscience, they seek to have a conscience void of offence towards God, &c., and the justification obtained by faith is to be in the conscience, or there is not a true opposition. The apostle's conclusion being of this nature, that that same justification which men vainly seek in whole or in part by their works or qualifications {whether called evidences, or any other name} is to be obtained by believing, without the deeds of the Law, which justification, it is plain must be in the conscience.

Another text fully proving this, is, Gal.2:16, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law, for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified," and Acts 15:9, where God is said to purify the hearts of the Gentiles by faith; and in I Pet.1:22, they are said to have purified their souls in obeying the truth; which purifying is by the application of the blood of Jesus to the conscience, as expressed, Heb.10:22, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," &c.

Faith alone is not only the appointed means of justifying the conscience, but also of giving all true peace and joy. This will be easily allowed where the former is allowed, for it is certain, that that which justifies the conscience, must procure true peace

and joy; according to the apostle, Rom.5:1, "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and Rom.15:13, "now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Faith is also the appointed means of obtaining a full assurance, Heb.10:22, "let us draw near - in full assurance of faith," and, Col.2:2, that you may be comforted to all the riches of full assurance of understanding.

Now if {as has been already fully proved} the appointed means for the real possession of Christ, justification in conscience, true peace with God, and full assurance, is Faith alone; then seeking these things either in whole, or in part, by evidences drawn from any righteousness in us, must be a false method, hurtful to souls, and contrary to the Spirit, and word of God.

III. A third reason against evidences in this respect, is, that they destroy the need or use of faith, and teach the soul to apply the mercy of God in Christ, by a way of natural reasoning.

It is certain, that many things belong to faith, that do not belong to reason, reason comprehends nothing but in a way of natural visible demonstration; but the object and cause of faith is the record of God, and demonstration of the Spirit; and if we seek these things that are taught by the Spirit, and believed upon the record of God, by way of natural reasoning, the Spirit, faith, and the promise are made void.

And that it is so in this case, of applying or appropriating the mercy of God in Christ upon evidences, will appear plainly, if we consider, that the evidences made use of, must be such as we apprehend are peculiar to the favourites of God; and

such as hypocrites, or those that any way deceive themselves, are not possessed of; or else they will not serve for evidences; and if I apprehend I have such evidences as these, what use has faith in the matter, natural reason can conclude from such premises, that I am a favourite of God, and entitled to all the privileges of such a one; those that are serious among Arians, Jews, and Mahometans, have what peace they possess by such conclusions.

IV. A fourth reason against evidences in this respect, is, that there is no evidence that can be drawn from any righteousness inherent in us, but what is our own righteousness, the righteousness of the Law, the righteousness which Paul counted loss and dung, and Isaiah filthy rags; and that the establishing them is the establishing our own righteousness, and contrary to the submitting to the righteousness of God by faith.

I suppose it is easily granted, that what we do in our own strength is our own righteousness, I shall therefore consider what we do by the influence of God's Spirit.

Faith itself, considered as an act, duty, or qualification, is properly our own, and so called in Scripture, Rom.1:8, "your faith is spoken of," Matt.9:2, Jesus seeing their faith, verse 22, "thy faith has made thee whole," for though God is the efficient or author, yet the denomination is from the subject. God was the author of Adam's holiness, in the state of innocency, notwithstanding that was Adam's righteousness, and not God's. So also love and every other qualification is by the Scripture accounted ours, II Cor.8:8, to prove the sincerity of your love, Col.1:4, after I had heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, Hos.14:8, from me is thy fruit found.

I have often heard a distinction of two righteousnesses of Christ, viz., an imputed one, and an imparted one; such a distinction {whatever may be meant by it} is both without foundation and very hurtful; this will appear if we consider the meaning of the word righteousness, that is, a conformity to the Law; Christ's conformity to the Law, in his obedience and sufferings, is his righteousness, and our conformity to the Law is our righteousness; now Christ has but one righteousness, or conformity to the Law, he was made under the Law but once, and this one righteousness is imparted as well as imputed, or it could never justify us; therefore such a distinction of two righteousnesses, being without foundation, must consequently be hurtful; for whilst people think that there is another righteousness to be had besides that one everlasting righteousness which makes believers perfect for ever; they cannot be perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, but hereby deny their perfection and completeness in Christ, and are seeking it in themselves.

The Scriptures consider those that are justified by the righteousness of Christ, to be so justified because they are one with him, not merely by a legal union, as a surety and debtor amongst men, but by a mystical union, whereby they are the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, Eph.5:30, they are the body of Christ, I Cor.12:13, and Christ is also their body, or their flesh and blood, Heb.2:14, for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, Isa.9:6, Luke 2:11, and those that believe the report receive Christ himself, John1:12, and he that is thus joined to the Lord is also one spirit with him. I Cor.6:17.

If we take this union along with us, and consider Christ, and those that believe on him, as one mystical person, or body, head, and members,

it will afford us much true scriptural light, both with respect to justification and sanctification. For in this view of things we may see that the sins of believers became properly Christ's, were laid on him, and were borne by him in his own body on the tree, {not because he committed them, but,} because they are the sins of the mystical body, and he having put them away by the sacrifice of himself, God is now just in not imputing them; the righteousness of Christ also is properly ours, and imputed to us, {not because we wrought it out, but,} because it is the righteousness of the mystical body. So we are crucified with Christ, Gal.2:20, we are dead with him, Rom.6:8, we are also risen with him, Eph.2:6, Col.3:1, and we sit together in heavenly places in Christ, Eph.2:6, and so are new created in him. Eph.2:10.

And here I cannot go on without dwelling a little upon the perfection we have in Christ's righteousness according to Scripture-light; and first, Rom.5:19, for as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Observe hence, that we are made righteous, and that not by any infused habits or qualities, but by the obedience of one, even Jesus Christ. Again, Eph.5:25-27, "husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it {with his own blood, Heb.13:12} and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word, that he might make it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blame," not by virtue of any of our imperfect habits or qualities, but by virtue of his perfect and everlasting righteousness. Again, Col.1:21-22, and "you which were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked

works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight." And, II Cor.5:21, "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And indeed how could they be justified if it were not so, a just judge amongst men cannot justify that man with whom fault is found, and shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

Now if the one righteousness of Jesus Christ, makes us righteous, holy, glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, holy and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight, what other inherent or imparted righteousness can make any addition to this one imparted and imputed righteousness. I acknowledge faith is {in this life} necessary to receive and possess this righteousness, and thereby to perfect our consciences; and hope to receive all good things on account of this righteousness, and love is the fruit of this righteousness so possessed. But we stand righteous and complete before God in no other completeness than that one everlasting righteousness of Jesus Christ; and therefore those that think justification does not make us so complete before God, but that some other righteousness must be added, do not understand justification according to the Scripture light.

The complete and perfect righteousness of Christ is not only in this manner made ours, but the Spirit of Christ is also given unto us to bear witness of this righteousness, and perfect our conscience thereby; and as the natural spirit, or soul, is the life of the natural body, so the Spirit of Christ is thus the life of the mystical body, and bears forth in them the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c., Gal.5:22, and thus the Lord being believed in as our

righteousness, becomes our strength, and we become trees of righteousness, bearing forth fruit to the glory of our heavenly Father.

I doubt not but this {though so plainly scriptural} will appear hard to be understood by some who have been accustomed to consider sanctification in a different light, namely as something different from the Spirit of Christ, infused into us by the Spirit, and abiding in us as a spiritual living principle; but this notion has no foundation in Scripture, but, on the contrary, the Spirit itself is described to be our only spiritual principle; for we believe by the Spirit itself, love is the fruit of the Spirit through believing, faith works by love, and the difference betwixt Christian obedience and other obedience, consists in one's being the fruit of the Spirit through believing, and the other being the fruit of the Law; so that it is plain, if by inherent sanctification we mean a principle of spiritual life, Christ himself is that life and our sanctification.

The Spirit of truth, who is sent to dwell in us, and abide with us forever, beareth witness to our spirits of Christ, that our hearts, minds, or consciences may be purified or made holy in his obedience, and the sprinkling of his blood. The Spirit beareth witness in and by the word, our spirits receive the witness by believing that word; whereby our conscience becomes clean, and purged from dead works to serve the living God; we also hereby become dead to the Law, by the body of Christ, that we may live to God; that being married to Christ, we may bring forth fruit unto God; which fruit is not to be made the object of reflection and reasoning to know our state by {for this we know by faith, before we are capable of bearing forth such fruit} but they serve to glorify God in the world, and evidence our

faith to others, or any other use but that which is the property of faith alone.

Having made this little digression, which I apprehended was somewhat necessary in order to a right understanding; I now return to the matter in hand, which, is to show, that there is no evidence which can be drawn from anything in us, or performed by us, but what is our own righteousness, the righteousness of the Law, &c. I have already proved that our faith, love, &c., are styled in Scripture our own, and, in short, as Dr. John Edwards says, in his *Veritas Redux*, pg.350, "that which is done by the divine aid is our doing, and the reason {as he says} is plain, because the divine aid consists in giving us a propensity to do and no otherwise; the Spirit moves, excites, and enables us to do our duty, and this doing is our own act."

Such evidences are also the righteousness of the Law, for the Spirit of God being the principle, renders it not less but more conformed to the Law; and I apprehend no one seeks those things as evidences, which are not required by that Law, which enjoins us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves; and we may be fully satisfied, that the apostle Paul was of this mind, for he makes a direct opposition, without any medium, between Christ's righteousness, received by faith, and every other righteousness whatever, including them under the name of our own righteousness, which is of the Law, Phil.3:8-9, "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," and by the foregoing verse, it will appear, that this was the righteousness he counted loss and dung; "yea, doubtless, I account all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on my own righteousness, which is of the Law," &c., the apostle plainly counted for loss and dung every other knowledge than the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord by faith, and every other righteousness than the righteousness of Christ. The apostle wrote these things to them, that they to whom he wrote might be followers of him in this matter, verse 17; now the apostle could not be apprehensive, that they would be apt to rely upon any other inherent righteousness than that which they professed as Christians, for every man is apt to value himself upon the righteousness he has, Rom.10:3, the Pharisees in theirs, and the Christians to whom he wrote in theirs.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 64, verse 6, in the same respect terms all our righteousness filthy rags, which from what has been said before, I suppose I need not be at any pains to prove. We may depend upon it, the prophet by the word righteousness meant the best things they had, and not merely their wickedness and hypocrisy.

And surely the establishing this righteousness of our own, by way of evidence to warrant our appropriation of Christ, or any means of justifying the conscience, &c., is contrary to the submitting to the righteousness of God by faith, for.

1. It hinders us from coming as poor sinners, as without money, and without price; as those that are ungodly, and have nothing to pay, in which way alone we are capable of receiving a free gift, such as the righteousness of Christ is, for while the mind is puffed up with a pharisaical, "God I thank thee I am not as other men," &c., the mind is not capable of stooping so low as a sinner's foundation, which is the

only one; for Christ himself must be the first foundation-stone in a sinner's heart, and not his own righteousness, and Christ upon that; which is unavoidably the case, when we seek to appropriate Christ unto ourselves from evidences of anything inherent in us.

2. It's contrary to the submission to God's righteousness, for it takes away that reliance and dependence which should be on Christ, and places it on our own righteousness. This is plain from the experience of all that are in that false way, for when they are in distress and bondage {as is most frequent with them} it is not because they apprehend any defect in Christ's righteousness, but because they question their own righteousness, which they imagine entitles them to the appropriation of Christ's, and so it is their own righteousness that supports or distresses them, their dependence upon Christ being merely distant and notional.

3. It's contrary, because it takes away that very office which is peculiar to the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith. I mean justification in conscience, peace, joy, and full assurance; as I have already proved.

V. The fifth reason against evidences in this respect, is, that they bring false peace, they cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. And this will appear, if we consider, first, that they don't bring peace from the true foundation, the righteousness of Christ, and free gift of God, but from the false unsettled foundation of our own righteousness, and therefore the peace itself is bad, unsettled, unstable as water, and like a wave of the sea; this cannot be that peace of God which passeth all understanding, nor that rest which arises from ceasing from our own works. Indeed if the peace arising from evidences

was a true peace, and from a true foundation, the peace itself would be more constant, a building upon a rock is not so easily shaken.

2. The evidences themselves must necessarily be false, for all true evidences are the fruits of the Spirit through believing, {even such believing as has been before described, as apprehends Christ, and takes him into possession,} and herein lies a difference between Christian obedience, and common morality. For all peace and joy is not the fruit of the Spirit, but only that which flows from believing, Rom.15:13, from being justified by faith. Rom.5:1. Every esteem of Christ is not a fruit of the Spirit, but only that which arises from our believing knowledge of him, I Pet.2:7, all love is not a fruit of the Spirit, but only that which arises from a heart purified {by faith} a good conscience, {made so by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ} and faith unfeigned, I Tim.1:5, and it is not all love, &c., even of a believer himself, that is right, but only that which is the immediate effect of his believing on Christ as his Saviour; so that where faith is not present, the fruits of faith can't be present, and where Christ is not present, faith can't be present. This brings to my mind what Luther says in his Commentary on the Galatians, chapter 3, verse 28, "Popish school-divines {says he} do dream, that faith is a certain quality cleaving in the heart, without Christ." {It would be well if many protestant school-divines did not dream so too, as seems too apparent from their teaching the people to conclude they have faith from marks and evidences.} "This is a devilish error {says Luther} but Christ should be so set forth, that thou shouldest see nothing besides him, and shouldest think that nothing can be more near unto thee, or more present within thine heart than he is, for he sitteth not idly in heaven, but is

present in us, Gal.2:20, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and here, likewise, you have put on Christ.”

Faith therefore is a certain steadfast beholding, which looketh upon nothing else but Christ the Conqueror of sin and death, and the Giver of righteousness and eternal life; this is the cause that Paul nameth Jesus Christ so often in his epistles, almost in every verse; but he setteth him forth by the word, for otherwise he cannot be comprehended but by the word. This was lively and notably set forth by the brazen serpent, for Moses commanded them that were stung, to do nothing else but steadfastly behold the brazen serpent; they that did so were healed only by that steadfast beholding and looking upon the serpent.

Faith, therefore, {which is the first apparent fruit of the Spirit, and the means by which all other fruits appear,} being nothing else but a steadfast beholding of Christ, as our Saviour, a receiving and possessing him {and not a certain quality cleaving to the heart without Christ} then consequently all evidences short of knowing that Christ is ours by faith alone, are false evidences, and speak a false peace.

It may be here objected, that the Spirit of the Lord is certainly at work with many souls for years, who can't say that Christ is theirs. I answer, it is true, that the Spirit is always at work with awakened souls, more or less before they believe; nevertheless we act not by that Spirit till we receive Christ, for till we submit to, and receive his righteousness by faith, we are continually going about to establish our own, there being no medium; and till such a submission, the conviction and working of the Spirit from time to time, is more like the angels meeting Balaam with a drawn sword to stop and turn him back, than two

walking together as those that are agreed. And therefore the voice of the Gospel is said to be a voice behind us, saying, this is the way walk in it, implying, that we have our backs upon the true way {though we are ever so sincere and zealous} till the Spirit of the Lord turn us. It is said also, that the Father must draw us to Christ, plainly showing our natural unwillingness and resistance of the Spirit, to submit to this way of salvation. So that in this sense Luther's doctrine is very true, namely, that "the fears by which sinners are terrified, either internally by God, or externally by preachers, are sins, until they are overcome by faith."

VI. The sixth reason against such evidences, is, that they have a tendency to make a man think he is rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing, when at the same time he is poor, miserable, blind, and naked. Rev.3:17. For when a man is employed about a serious examination of himself, according to such evidences he must be supposed to be in a more inwardly composed and retired frame of mind, than at other times when employed in the world, and therefore liable to think himself possessed of those things which he finds not when it comes to action and trial. Thus many while under a serious employment of reading, hearing, meditation, &c., think they can answer to such and such marks and signs, and therefore conclude themselves to be in a very safe condition. But when the persons possessed of this imaginary strength come forth to exercise it against the world, the flesh, and the devil, it proves ineffectual; and they being disappointed in the hopes they had of themselves, become distressed, suspecting {as well they may} their former experience, until they get such another opportunity of gathering up their marks and signs again; till at last, by frequent practices of this kind

they habituate themselves to a false peace, concluding from the general bent of their minds, that all is well, though they are ignorant of living in the righteousness of Christ, and by the power of his Spirit, which works effectually in them that believe; not barely in their private retirements, but in their employments, shops, and families, which works are the effects and fruits of the knowledge of our perfection in Christ our Saviour, by faith alone, and not causes of it, by way of evidence and reasoning.

I would recommend to the consideration of those that build upon evidences short of Christ himself, the experience of the apostle Paul, and others, while unconverted Pharisees, he declares of himself, that touching the righteousness which is in the Law, he was blameless, Phil.3:6, he walked blamelessly in all those things he apprehended the Lord required of him, neither was he wanting in sincerity and zeal, for he declares, Acts 22:3, that he was taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, and Rom.10:3, he bare the Jews record, that they had a zeal of God. Neither were the Pharisees a people that sought to keep the Law in their own strength, for they acknowledged that all that was good in them was from God, as appears by the Pharisees prayer, "God I thank thee I am not as other men," &c., here was also an acknowledgment of distinguishing favour; and the justification they sought by the deeds of the Law, was that in the conscience, called by some the manifestation of our justification; for nobody can imagine they sought a justification from eternity, by their works in time, nor that they sought it by way of strict merit. Now let us sum this up together. The acknowledgment of their own inability to perform what is good, and that what they did was by strength from the Lord,

sincerity, and zeal, in what they did, and universal blameless obedience, according to all they apprehended the Lord required of them, and only sought thereby as by evidences the knowledge or manifestation of a gracious reconciliation with God, and all in unconverted persecutors and blind Pharisees. It may be asked, where did their mistake lye, if they went so far? I answer, it lay here, they being ignorant of God's righteousness {freely given} went about to establish their own righteousness, and so submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God.

VII. Seventhly, such as make use of evidences in this respect, place their soul's dependence upon that which brings no glory to God, nor fruit towards man, for they place it in their own righteousness, which is contrary to a submission to God's righteousness, and which alone brings God his glory, making him just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. And they bring no fruit towards man, because they depend on an imaginary strength, that proves insufficient when put to the trial {as has been already proved} and it is observable, that such people place religion mostly in that which is unprofitable to others; for not being delivered from a selfish spirit by the free righteousness of Jesus Christ, their own safety is uncertain to them, and therefore self-preservation is their greatest care.

Thus I have given some of those sentiments that occurred against marks and evidences in this respect, and would again observe, that I do not mean to deny or exclude such true and constant effects of an assured faith in the promise, as witness to sense and reason, in a proper subserviency, that we are a people that do not deceive ourselves, that our assurance by faith is no delusion; according to

the former similitude. A gentleman is so conscious to himself, that by virtue of the deeds and writings, he is possessor of such an estate, that he cannot be more assured, he not having the least doubt. Notwithstanding the receiving the rents and effects of this possession confirm in a subservient secondary way, what he is already firmly persuaded of, but was he to be so enslaved to sense and natural demonstration, that he would not believe the estate was his, but while he was receiving rents, his life would be rendered very uncomfortable, by not having his dependence on the writings or estate, and he could not properly be said to be possessor of the estate, though by virtue of the writings he has a title to it, his support hereby being made as uncertain to him as if he lived on alms. The same may be said of that inward consciousness and knowledge a man has that he is awake or alive; his actions are a secondary argumentative evidence that he is so, but he must be looked upon as a madman, and to have lost his inward consciousness, that would not be persuaded he was alive without those actions. In short, evidences seem to have that place that John's epistle had to the church, see I John 2: 21, 26, 27, &c., and our good conversation is the only way to witness to the world that we are the people we profess to be; but if we don't keep these things in their proper place, but will be for finding evidences to bring peace to our consciences, &c., we destroy the nature, need, or use of faith, and seek those things by way of rational reasoning and self-righteousness, that God has appointed by way of divine faith and free gift.

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