

CHAPTER II

And this brings me to the first great proposition I would establish--*That Scripture, in the Old and the New Testament alike, detaches our ultimate confidence from man, the creature, and attaches it to God, the Creator.*

This is enforced by three parallel lines of truth: (1) by contrasting the sinfulness and feebleness of mortal man with the goodness and omnipotence of the Eternal Jehovah; (2) by direct prohibition and precept; (3) by declaration of the awful jealousy of the Creator, if any creature usurp his position in our affiance and in our regard.

(1) The most casual glance at the contrast testimony of Scripture might convince us that such is the design of God.

Scripture Testimony of Man

1. We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow (Job 8:9).
2. Ye are not able to do that thing which is least (Luke 12:26).
3. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth (Job 4:19).
4. The thoughts of man ... are vanity (Ps. 94:11). He turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish (Isa. 44:25).
5. All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field (Isa. 40:6)
6. There is none righteous, no, not one (Rom. 3:10).
7. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know

Scripture Testimony to God

- Thou art from everlasting (Ps. 93:2).
All things are naked to his eyes (Heb. 4:13).
He inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15).
- With God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).
- The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee (1 Kings 8:27).
God is a Spirit (John 4:24).
The Lord God omnipotent (Rev. 19:6).
- The counsel of Jehovah stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations (Ps. 33:11).
- The eternal God (Deut. 33:27).
The glory of Jehovah shall endure forever (Ps. 104:31).
- There is none good but one, that is God (Matt. 19:17).
- God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

it? (Jer. 27:9).
Man looks on the outward appearance
(1 Sam. 16:7)

I the LORD search the heart (Jer. 17:
10).
But the LORD looks on the heart
(1 Sam. 16:7).

8. A man that shall die (Isa. 51:12)

Who only has immortality
(1 Tim. 6:16).

9. In Him we live, and move, and have our
being (Acts 17:28).

The Father has life in himself
(John 5:26).

10. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!
Shall the clay say to him that fashions it,
What makes thou? (Isa. 45:9)

I have made the earth, and created
man upon it (Isa. 45:12).
He fashions the hearts (of the sons of
men) alike (Ps. 33:15).

This testimony might be almost indefinitely prolonged, [yet] the above may suffice. But I would venture to draw your attention to three or four passages where the contrast is forced upon our notice by the sacred writer himself.

If, for example, we turn to the prayer of Moses, he reposes supreme trust in the Eternal: ", thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:1,2); and [Moses] contrasts this immutability of the Most High with the brief life of men: "They are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers"¹ (ver. 5,6). This was the lesson so often and so painfully taught to Israel of old by a Father's solemn chastisements and forgiving love. From frequent expostulations I select one: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD" (Isa. 31:1). And what is the reason given? "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not Spirit" (ver. 3). And what is the urgent entreaty founded thereon? "Turn ye unto Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted" (ver. 6). Again, this message is sent to captive Zion: "I, even I, am He that comforts you: who art thou, that thou should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgets the LORD thy Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" (Isa. 51:12,13. See ver. 15). Observe in all these passages how much stress is laid on the creative power of God as proof of his infinite preeminence. The Maker alone is mighty to save. And if it be so in temporal

1 I would pray the reader to compare the way in which this same figure, this parable to all nations, is enlarged upon in Isaiah 40:6-8, and is enforced in the New Testament, 1 Pet. i:24; James 1:10,11.

deliverances, how much more in respect of that eternal salvation which must engross the regards of every thoughtful man, seeing that the Psalmist says of the rich men of earth, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him--for the redemption of their soul is precious!" (Ps. 49:7,8). "But God," as he shortly after cries in the rebounding exultation of faith, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me" (ver. 15).

(2) Furthermore, the prohibitions and precepts are direct and express. "Put not your trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keeps truth forever" (Ps. 146:3-6). So again, Isaiah, having spoken of the fear of the and of the glory of his majesty, says, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. 2:22). I need not multiply passages to prove that the explicit commands of Scripture with one consentient voice require, in the words of Peter, that our "faith and hope be in God" (1 Pet. 1:21).

(3) But nothing can prove this fundamental truth more solemnly than the words heard by Moses on Sinai: "Thou shalt worship no other god: for the , whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14). Jealousy, as usually understood, is that peculiar uneasiness which arises from the fear that another may rob us of our due honour or affection. And with fallen man towards his fallen fellows, this attribute of our being (from taking an exaggerated view of our own rights and claims, from unduly depreciating those of others, and frequently from unjustly suspecting their innocent conduct) becomes the readiest vent for the outflowings of selfishness. And hence the ill name of jealousy. But not always even among men. Thus we speak of a man jealous for the fair name and best interests of his friend, as Paul says of the Corinthians: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2). And thus a man may be justly jealous of his own reputation, that "good name which is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. 22:1). In this use it is closely allied to self-respect and springs from a due sense of our own position and powers, of the claims which we have upon others, and of those mutual obligations--domestic, social, national--which lie upon us all. Now in a sinless world this estimate would be exactly true, and these requirements every moment perfectly satisfied. But when sin breaks in, the claims of man on man are violated; and justice, of necessity, conceives a holy anger and a pure indignation at that which is unjust and unequal. We see a broken fragmentary image of it in man, like the sun struggling through mist and reflected on agitated waters. But in God it is without fault or flaw or cloud. He has an absolutely perfect knowledge of his own supreme majesty and goodness. He forms an absolutely perfect estimate of the claims that supremacy has on his creatures. And he conceives an absolutely perfect jealousy when those obligations are set at nought.

Now the declares himself to be Self-Existent from eternity, Omnipresent, Immutable,

Almighty, Incomprehensible, Omniscient, the Good One, the Holy One, the Creator, Preserver, and Administrator of all things in heaven and earth, the Searcher of hearts, and the most high Judge of all. These attributes, indeed, would appertain to him as governing a world which sin has never defiled, and sorrow never darkened, and death never desolated. But when man had broken his commands and trodden the seductive paths of disobedience and guilt, the gives a further and deeper revelation of his Divine goodness and grace. He reveals himself as the only Being who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; as the only Refuge for the fugitive; as the only Saviour, Deliverer, and Redeemer of his people (Isa. 26:4).

Further, He claims the supreme dependence, love, worship, and service of his creatures (Deut. 6:4,5; 10:20,21; v. 29). This you would not for a moment deny, so that you could without scruple subscribe to the language of the church of England: "My duty towards God is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him; to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life (Church Catechism).

But how does He regard it if any creature usurp his rightful prerogatives and steal away the homage of our hearts from Him who says, "I am Jehovah: that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another?" (Isa. 42:8). Let me answer in the language of Scripture: "Thus saith the LORD: Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17:5-8).

It is impossible in a brief treatise to exhibit the strength of this declaration. These verses do not stand isolated from the rest of Scripture. They only gather up and present to us in a few words its concurrent testimony from Genesis to Revelation. (O Lord, cleanse Thou the thoughts of our hearts from all creature confidence by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.) For this truth stands on the forefront of the temple of religion: "I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 46:9). The dedication stone bears this golden inscription: "To the Alone, Supreme, Eternal Jehovah." And as you bow low within its holy precincts, this is the first and great commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me." And the response of every faithful worshipper is in the spirit of the Levitical adoration: "O LORD our God, blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art the LORD alone. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preserves

them all; and the host of heaven worships thee. Thou art the LORD" (Neh. 9:5-7). Such adoration as is re-echoed in the courts of heavenly glory--"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).