

II

THE NATURE OF JUSTIFYING FAITH

The nature of justifying faith in particular, or of faith in the exercise of it, whereby we are justified

- The heart's approbation of the way of the justification and salvation of sinners by Christ, with its acquiescency therein
- The description given, explained and confirmed:
 1. From the nature of the gospel
 - Exemplified in its contrary, or the nature of unbelief, Proverbs 1:30; Hebrews 2:3; 1 Peter 2:7; 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 4:3
 - What it is, and wherein it does consist.
 2. The design of God in and by the gospel
 - His own glory his utmost end in all things
 - The glory of his righteousness, grace, love, wisdom, etc.
 - The end of God in the way of the salvation of sinners by Christ, Romans 3:25; John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; Ephesians 1:5, 6; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 3:10; Romans 1:16; 4:16; Ephesians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 4:6
 3. The nature of faith thence declared
 - Faith alone ascribes and gives this glory to God.
 4. Order of the acts of faith, or the method in believing
 - Convictions previous thereunto
 - Sincere assent unto all divine revelations, Acts 26:27
 - The proposal of the gospel unto that end, Romans 10:11-17; 2 Corinthians 3:18, etc.
 - State of persons called to believe
 - Justifying faith does not consist in any one single habit or act of the mind or will
 - The nature of that about which is the first act of faith
 - Approbation of the way of salvation by Christ, comprehensive of the special nature of justifying faith
 - What is included there in:

- 1. A renunciation of all other ways, Hosea 14:2, 3; Jeremiah 3:23; Psalm 71:16; Romans 10:3.
- 2. Consent of the will unto this way, John 14:6
- 3. Acquiescency of the heart in God, 1 Peter 1:21.
- 4. Trust in God.
- 5. Faith described by trust
- The reason of it
- Nature and object of this trust inquired into
- A double consideration of special mercy
- Whether obedience be included in the nature of faith, or be of the essence of it
- A sincere purpose of universal obedience inseparable from faith
- How faith alone justifies
- Repentance, how required in and unto justification
- How a condition of the new covenant
- Perseverance in obedience is so also
- Definitions of faith

That which we shall now inquire into, is the nature of justifying faith; or of faith in that act and exercise of it whereby we are justified, or whereon justification, according unto God's ordination and promise, does ensue. And the reader is desired to take along with him a supposition of those things which we have already ascribed unto it, as it is sincere faith in general; as also, of what is required previously thereunto, as unto its especial nature, work, and duty in our justification. For we do deny that ordinarily, and according unto the method of God's proceeding with us declared in the Scripture, wherein the rule of our duty is prescribed, any one does, or can, truly believe with faith unto justification, in whom the work of conviction, before described, has not been wrought. All descriptions or definitions of faith that have not a respect thereunto are but vain speculations. And hence some do give us such definitions of faith as it is hard to conceive that they ever asked of themselves what they do in their believing on Jesus Christ for life and salvation.

The nature of justifying faith, with respect unto that exercise of whereby we are justified, consists in the heart's approbation of the way of justification and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ proposed in the

gospel, as proceeding from the grace, wisdom, and love of God, with its acquiescency therein as unto its own concernment and condition.

There needs no more for the explanation of this declaration of the nature of faith than what we have before proved concerning its object; and what may seem wanting thereunto will be fully supplied in the ensuing confirmation of it. The Lord Christ, and his mediation, as the ordinance of God for the recovery, life, and salvation of sinners, is supposed as the object of this faith. And they are all considered as an effect of the wisdom, grace, authority, and love of God, with all their acting in and towards the Lord Christ himself, in his susception and discharge of his office. Hereunto he constantly refers all that he did and suffered, with all the benefits redounding unto the church thereby. Hence, as we observed before, sometimes the grace, or love, or especial mercy of God, sometimes his acting in or towards the Lord Christ himself, in sending him, giving him up unto death, and raising him from the dead, are proposed as the object of our faith unto justification. But they are so, always with respect unto his obedience and the atonement that he made for sin. Neither are they so altogether absolutely considered, but as proposed in the promises of the gospel. Hence, a sincere assent unto the divine veracity in those promises is included in this approbation.

What belongs unto the confirmation of this description of faith shall be reduced unto these four heads: —

1. The declaration of its contrary, or the nature of privative unbelief upon the proposal of the gospel. For these things do mutually illustrate one another.
2. The declaration of the design and end of God in and by the gospel.
3. The nature of faith's compliance with that design, or its actings with respect thereunto.
4. The order, method, and way of believing, as declared in the Scripture: —

1. The gospel is the revelation or declaration of that way of justification and salvation for sinners by Jesus Christ, which God, in infinite wisdom, love, and grace, has prepared. And upon a supposition of the reception

thereof, it is accompanied with precepts of obedience and promises of rewards. “Therein is the righteousness of God,” that which he requires, accepts, and approves unto salvation, — “revealed from faith unto faith,” Romans 1:17. This is the record of God therein, “That he has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,” 1 John 5:11. So John 3:14-17. “The words of this life,” Acts 5:20; “All the counsel of God,” Acts 20:27. Wherefore, in the dispensation or preaching of the gospel, this way of salvation is proposed unto sinners, as the great effect of divine wisdom and grace. Unbelief is the rejection, neglect, non-admission, or disapprobation of it, on the terms whereon, and for the ends for which, it is so proposed. The unbelief of the Pharisees, upon the preparatory preaching of John the Baptist, is called the “rejecting of the counsel of God against themselves;” that is, unto their own ruin, Luke 7:30. “They would none of my counsel,” is an expression to the same purpose, Proverbs 1:30; so is the “neglecting this great salvation”, Hebrews 2:3, — not giving it that admission which the excellency of it does require. A disallowing of Christ, the stone “hos apedokimasan hoi oikodomountes”, 1 Peter 2:7, — the “builders disapproved of,” as not meet for that place and work whereunto it was designed, Acts 4:11, — this is unbelief; to disapprove of Christ, and the way of salvation by him, as not answering divine wisdom, nor suited unto the end designed. So is it described by the refusing or not receiving of him; all go to one purpose.

What is intended will be more evident if we consider the proposal of the gospel where it issued in unbelief, in the first preaching of it, and where it continues still so to do.

Most of those who rejected the gospel by their unbelief, did it under this notion, that the way of salvation and blessed proposed therein was not a way answering divine goodness and power, such as they might safely confide in and trust unto. This the apostle declares at large, 1 Corinthians 1; so he expresses it, verses 23, 24, “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” That which they declared unto them in the preaching of the gospel was, that “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,” chap. 15:3. Herein they proposed him as the ordinance of God, as the

great effect of his wisdom and power for the salvation of sinners. But as unto those who continued in their unbelief, they rejected it as any such way, esteeming it both weakness and folly. And therefore, he describes the faith of them that are called, by their approbation of the wisdom and power of God herein. The want of a comprehension of the glory of God in this way of salvation, rejecting it thereon, is that unbelief which ruins the souls of men, 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

So is it with all that continue unbelievers under the proposal of the object of faith in the preaching of the gospel. They may give an assent unto the truth of it, so far as it is a mere act of the mind, — at least they find not themselves concerned to reject it; yea, they may assent unto it with that temporary faith which we described before, and perform many duties of religion thereon: yet do they manifest that they are not sincere believers, that they do not believe with the heart unto righteousness, by many things that are irreconcilable unto and inconsistent with justifying faith. The inquiry, therefore, is, Wherein the unbelief of each persons, on the account whereof they perish, does insist, and what is the formal nature of it? It is not, as was said, in the want of an assent unto the truths of the doctrine of the gospel: for from such an assent are they said, in many places of the Scripture, to believe, as has been proved; and this assent may be so firm, and by various means so radicated in their minds, as that, in testimony unto it, they may give their bodies to be burned; as men also may do in the confirmation of a false persuasion. Nor is it the want of an especial fiduciary application, of the promises of the gospel unto themselves, and the belief of the pardon of their own sins in particular: for this is not proposed unto them in the first preaching of the gospel, as that which they are first to believe, and there may be a believing unto righteousness where this is not attained, Isaiah 1:10. This will evidence faith not to be true; but it is not formal unbelief. Nor is it the want of obedience unto the precepts of the gospel in duties of holiness and righteousness; for these commands, as formally given in and by the gospel, belong only unto them that truly believe, and are justified thereon. That, therefore, which is required unto evangelical faith, wherein the nature of it does consist, as it is the foundation of all future obedience, is the heart's approbation of the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ, proposed unto it as the effect of the infinite wisdom, love, grace, and goodness of God; and as that which is

suited unto all the wants and whole design of guilty convinced sinners. This such persons have not; and in the want thereof consists the formal nature of unbelief. For without this no man is, or can be, influenced by the gospel unto a relinquishment of sin, or encouraged unto obedience, whatever they may do on other grounds and motives that are foreign unto the grace of it. And wherever this cordial, sincere approbation of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, proposed in the gospel, does prevail, it will infallibly produce both repentance and obedience.

If the mind and heart of a convinced sinner (for of such alone we treat) be able spiritually to discern the wisdom, love, and grace of God, in this way of salvation, and be under the power of that persuasion, he has the ground of repentance and obedience which is given by the gospel. The receiving of Christ mentioned in the Scripture, and whereby the nature of faith in its exercise is expressed, I refer unto the latter part of the description given concerning the soul's acquiescence in God, by the way proposed.

Again: some there were at firsts and such still continue to be, who rejected not this way absolutely, and in the notion of it, but comparatively, as reduced to practice; and so perished in their unbelief. They judged the way of their own righteousness to be better, as that which might be more safely trusted unto, — as more according unto the mind of God and unto his glory. So did the Jews generally, the frame of whose minds the apostle represents, Romans 10:3, 4. And many of them assented unto the doctrine of the gospel in general as true, howbeit they liked it not in their hearts as the best way of justification and salvation, but sought for them by the works of the law.

Wherefore, unbelief, in its formal nature, consists in the want of a spiritual discerning and approbation of the say of salvation by Jesus Christ, as an effect of the infinite wisdom, goodness, and love of God; for where these are, the soul of a convinced sinner cannot but embrace it, and adhere unto it. Hence, also, all acquiescency in this way, and trust and confidence in committing the soul unto it, or unto God in it, and by it (without which whatever is pretended of believing is but a shadow of faith), is impossible unto such persons; for they want the foundation whereon alone they can

be built. And the consideration hereof does sufficiently manifest wherein the nature of true evangelical faith does consist.

2. The design of God in and by the gospel, with the work and office of faith with respect thereunto, farther confirms the description given of it. That which God designs herein, in the first place, is not the justification and salvation of sinners. His utmost complete end, in all his counsels, is his own glory. He does all things for himself; nor can he who is infinite do otherwise. But in an especial manner he expresses this concerning this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

Particularly, he designed herein the glory of his righteousness; “To declare his righteousness,” Romans 3:20;

- of his love; “God so loved the world,” John 3:16; “Herein we perceive the love of God, that he laid down his life for us,” 1 John 3:16; of his grace; “Accepted, to the praise of the glory of his grace,” Ephesians 1:5, 6;
- of his wisdom; “Christ crucified, the wisdom of God,” 1 Corinthians 1:24; “Might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,” Ephesians 3:10;
- of his power; “it is the power of God unto salvation,” Romans 1:16;
- of his faithfulness, Romans 4:16. For God designed herein, not only the reparation of all that glory whose declaration was impeached and obscured by the entrance of sin, but also a farther exaltation and more eminent manifestation of it, unto the degrees of its exaltation, and some especial instances before concealed, Ephesians 3:9. And all this is called “The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;” whereof faith is the beholding, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

3. This being the principal design of God in the way of justification and salvation by Christ proposed in the gospel, that which on our part is required unto a participation of the benefits of it, is the ascription of that glory unto God which he designs so to exalt. The acknowledgment of all these glorious properties of the divine nature, as manifested in the provision and proposition of this way of life, righteousness, and salvation, with an approbation of the way itself as an effect of them, and that which

is safely to be trusted unto, is that which is required of us; and this is faith or believing: “Being strong in faith, he gave glory to God,” Romans 4:20. And this is in the nature of the weakest degree of sincere faith. And no other grace, work, or duty, is suited hereunto, or firstly and directly of that tendency, but only consequentially and in the way of gratitude. And although I cannot wholly assent unto him who affirms that faith in the epistles of Paul is nothing but “*existimation magnifice sentiens de Dei potentia, justitia, bonitate, et si quid promiserit in eo praestando constantia*”, because it is too general, and not limited unto the way of salvation by Christ, his “elect in whom he will be glorified;” yet has it much of the nature of faith in it. Wherefore I say, that hence we may both learn the nature of faith, and whence it is that faith alone is required unto our justification. The reason of it is, because this is that grace or duty alone whereby we do or can give unto God that glory which he designs to manifest and exalt in and by Jesus Christ. This only faith is suited unto, and this it is to believe. Faith, in the sense we inquire after, is the heart’s approbation of, and consent unto, the way of life and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, as that wherein the glory of the righteousness, wisdom, grace, love, and mercy of God is exalted; the praise whereof it ascribes unto him, and rests in it as unto the ends of it, — namely, justification, life, and salvation. It is to give “glory to God,” Romans 4:20; to “behold his glory as in a glass,” or the gospel wherein it is represented unto us, 2 Corinthians 3:18; to have in our hearts “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4:6. The contrary whereunto makes God a liar, and thereby despoils him of the glory of all those holy properties which he this way designed to manifest, 1 John 5:10.

And, if I mistake not, this is that which the experience of them that truly believe, when they are out of the heats of disputation, will give testimony unto.

4. To understand the nature of justifying faith aright, or the act and exercise of saving faith in order unto our justification, which are properly inquired after, we must consider the order of it; first the things which are necessarily previous thereunto, and then what it is to believe with respect unto them. As, —

- (1.) The state of a convinced sinner, who is the only “subjectum capax justificationis.” This has been spoken unto already, and the necessity of its precedency unto the orderly proposal and receiving of evangelical righteousness unto justification demonstrated. If we lose a respect hereunto, we lose our best guide towards the discovery of the nature of faith. Let no man think to understand the gospel, who knows nothing of the law. God’s constitution, and the nature of the things themselves, have given the law the precedency with respect unto sinners; “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” And gospel faith is the soul’s acting according to the mind of God, for deliverance from that state and condition which it is cast under by the law. And all those descriptions of faith which abound in the writings of learned men, which do not at least include in them a virtual respect unto this state and condition, or the work of the law on the consciences of sinners, are all of them vain speculations. There is nothing in this whole doctrine that I will more firmly adhere unto than the necessity of the convictions mentioned previous unto true believing; without which not one line of it can be understood aright, and men do but beat the air in their contentions about it. See Romans 3:21-24.
- (2.) We suppose herein a sincere assent unto all divine revelations, whereof the promises of grace and mercy by Christ are an especial part. This Paul supposed in Agrippa when he would have won him over unto faith in Christ Jesus: “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest”, Acts 26:27. And this assent which respects the promises of the gospel, not as they contain, propose, and exhibit the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation unto us, but as divine revelations of infallible truth, is true and sincere in its kind, as we described it before under the notion of temporary faith; but as it proceeds no farther, as it include no act of the will or heart, it is not that faith whereby we are justified. However, it is required thereunto, and is included therein.

- (3.) The proposal of the gospel, according unto the mind of God, is hereunto supposed; that is, that it be preached according unto God's appointment: for not only the gospel itself, but the dispensation or preaching of it in the ministry of the church, is ordinarily required unto believing. This the apostle asserts, and proves the necessity of it at large, Romans 10:11-17. Herein the Lord Christ and his mediation with God, the only way and means for the justification and salvation of lost convinced sinners, as the product and effect of divine wisdom, love, grace, and righteousness, is revealed, declared, proposed, and offered unto such sinners: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith," Romans 1:17. The glory of God is represented "as in a glass," 2 Corinthians 3:18; and "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel," 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:3. Wherefore, —
- (4.) The persons who are required to believe, and whose immediate duty it is so to do, are such who really in their own consciences are brought unto, and do make the inquiries mentioned in the Scripture, — "What shall we do? What shall we do to be saved? How shall we fly from the wrath to come? Wherewithal shall we appear before God? How shall we answer what is laid unto our charge?" — or such as, being sensible of the guilt of sin, do seek for a righteousness in the sight of God, Acts 2:37, 38; 16:30, 31; Micah 6:6, 7; Isaiah 35:4; Hebrews 6:18.

On these suppositions, the command and direction given unto men being, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" the inquiry is, What is that act or work of faith whereby we may obtain a real interest or propriety in the promises of the gospel, and the things declared in them, unto their justification before God?

And, — 1. It is evident, from what has been discoursed, that it does not consist in, that it is not to be fully expressed by, any one single habit or act of the mind or will distinctly whatever; for there are such descriptions given of it in the Scripture, such things are proposed as the object of it, and such is the experience of all that sincerely believe, as no one single act,

either of the mind or will, can answer unto. Nor can an exact method of those acts of the soul which are concurrent therein be prescribed; only what is essential unto it is manifest.

2. That which, in order of nature, seems to have the precedency, is the assent of the mind unto that which the psalmist retakes himself unto in the first place for relief, under a sense of sin and trouble, Psalm 130:3, 4, “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” The sentence of the law and judgment of conscience lie against him as unto any acceptation with God. Therefore, he despairs in himself of standing in judgment, or being acquitted before him. In this state, that which the soul first fixes on, as unto its relief, is, that “there is forgiveness with God.” This, as declared in the gospel, is, that God in his love and grace will pardon and justify guilty sinners through the blood and mediation of Christ. So it is proposed, Romans 3:23, 24. The assent of the mind hereunto, as proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the root of faith, the foundation of all that the soul does in believing; nor is there any evangelical faith without it. But yet, consider it abstractedly, as a mere act of the mind, the essence and nature of justifying faith does not consist solely therein, though it cannot be without it. But, —

3. This is accompanied, in sincere believing, with an approbation of the way of deliverance and salvation proposed, as an effect of divine grace, wisdom, and love; whereon the heart does rest in it, and apply itself unto it, according to the mind of God. This is that faith whereby we are justified; which I shall farther evince, by showing what is included in it, and inseparable from it: —

- (1.) It includes in it a sincere renunciation of all other ways and means for the attaining of righteousness, life, and salvation. This is essential unto faith, Acts 4:12; Hosea 14:2, 3; Jeremiah 3:23; Psalm 71:16, “I will make mention of thy righteousness, of thine only.” When a person is in the condition before described (and such alone are called immediately to believe, Matthew 9:13; 11:28; 1 Timothy 1:15), many things will present themselves unto him for his relief, particularly his own righteousness, Romans 10:3. A renunciation of them all, as unto any hope or

expectation of relief from them, belongs unto sincere believing, Isaiah 50:10, 11.

- (2.) There is in it the will's consent, whereby the soul betakes itself cordially and sincerely, as unto all its expectation of pardon of sin and righteousness before God, unto the way of salvation proposed in the gospel. This is that which is called "coming unto Christ", and "receiving of him," whereby true justifying faith is so often expressed in the Scripture; or, as it is peculiarly called, "believing in him," or "believing on his name." The whole is expressed, John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
- (3.) An acquiescency of the heart in God, as the author and principal cause of the way of salvation prepared, as acting in a way of sovereign grace and mercy towards sinners: "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God," 1 Peter 1:21. The heart of a sinner does herein give unto God the glory of all those holy properties of his nature which he designed to manifest in and by Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 42:1; 49:3. And this acquiescency in God is that which is the immediate root of that waiting, patience, longsuffering, and hope, which are the proper acts and effects of justifying faith, Hebrews 6:12, 15, 18, 19.
- (4.) Trust in God, or the grace and mercy of God in and through the Lord Christ, as set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, does belong hereunto, or necessarily ensue hereon; for the person called unto believing is, — first, Convinced of sin, and exposed unto wrath; secondly, Has nothing else to trust unto for help and relief; thirdly, Does actually renounce all other things that tender themselves unto that end: and therefore, without some act of trust, the soul must lie under actual despair; which is utterly inconsistent with faith, or the choice and approbation of the way of salvation before described.

- (5.) The most frequent declaration of the nature of faith in the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is by this trust; and that because it is that act of it which composes the soul, and brings it unto all the rest it can attain. For all our rest in this world is from trust in God; and the especial object of this trust, so far as it belongs unto the nature of that faith whereby we are justified, is “God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” For this is respected where his goodness, his mercy, his grace, his name, his faithfulness, his power, are expressed, or any of them, as that which it does immediately rely upon; for they are no way the object of our trust, nor can be, but on the account of the covenant which is confirmed and ratified in and by the blood of Christ alone.

Whether this trust or confidence shall be esteemed of the essence of faith, or as that which, on the first fruit and working of it, we are found in the exercise of, we need not positively determine. I place it, therefore, as that which belongs unto justifying faith, and is inseparable from it. For if all we have spoken before concerning faith may be comprised under the notion of a firm assent and persuasion, yet it cannot be so if any such assent be conceivable exclusive of this trust.

This trust is that whereof many divines do make special mercy to be the peculiar object; and that especial mercy to be such as to include in it the pardon of our own sins. This by their adversaries is fiercely opposed, and that on such grounds as manifest that they do not believe that there is any such state attainable in this life; and that if there were, it would not be of any use unto us, but rather be a means of security and negligence in our duty: wherein they betray how great is the ignorance of these things in their own minds. But mercy may be said to be especial two ways: — First, In itself, and in opposition unto common mercy. Secondly, With respect unto him that believes. In the first sense, especial mercy is the object of faith as justifying; for no more is intended by it but the grace of God setting forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, Romans 3:23, 24. And faith in this especial mercy is that which the apostle calls our “receiving of the atonement,” Romans 5:11; — that is, our approbation of it, and adherence unto it, as the great effect of divine

wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, love, and grace; which will, therefore, never fail to them who put their trust in it. In the latter sense, it is looked on as the pardon of our own sins in particular, the especial mercy of God unto our souls. That this is the object of justifying faith, that a man is bound to believe this in order of nature antecedent unto his justification, I do deny; neither yet do I know of any testimony or safe experience whereby it may be confirmed. But yet, for any to deny that an undeceiving belief hereof is to be attained in this life, or that it is our duty to believe the pardon of our own sins and the especial love of God in Christ, in the order and method of our duty and privileges, limited and determined in the gospel, so as to come to the full assurance of them (though I will not deny but that peace with God, which is inseparable from justification, may be without them); (is to) seem not to be much acquainted with the design of God in the gospel, the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, the nature and work of faith, or their own duty, nor the professed experience of believers recorded in the Scripture. See Romans 5:1-5; Hebrews 10:2, 10, 19-22; Psalm 46:1, 2; 138:7, 8; etc. Yet it is granted that all these things are rather fruits or effects of faith, as under exercise and improvement, than of the essence of it, as it is the instrument in our justification.

And the trust before mentioned, which is either essential to justifying faith, or inseparable from its is excellently expressed by Bernard, Dom. 6 post Pentec., Ser. 3, “*Tria considero in quibus tota spes mea consistit, charitatem adoptionis, veritatem promissionis, potestatem redditionis. Murmuret jam quantum voluerit insipiens cogitatio mea, dicens: Quis enim es tu, et quanta est illa gloria, quibusve meritis hanc obtinere speras? Et ego fiducialiter respondebo: Scio cui credidi, missione, quia potens in exhibitione: licet enim ei facere quod voluerit. Hic est funiculus triplex qui difficile rumpitur, quem nobis a patria nostra in hunc carcerem usque dimissum firmiter, obsecro, teneamus: ut ipse nos sublevet, ipse nos trahat et pertrahat usque ad conspectum gloriae magni Dei: qui est benedictus in saecula. Amen*”.

Concerning this faith and trust, it is earnestly pleaded by many that obedience is included in it; but as to the way and manner thereof, they variously express themselves. Socinus, and those who follow him

absolutely, do make obedience to be the essential form of faith; which is denied by Episcopius. The Papists distinguish between faith in-formed and faith formed by charity: which comes to the same purpose, for both are built on this supposition, — that there may be true evangelical faith (that which is required as our duty, and consequently is accepted of God, that may contain all in it which is comprised in the name and duty of faith) that may be without charity or obedience, and so be useless; for the Socinians do not make obedience to be the essence of faith absolutely, but as it justifies. And so they plead unto this purpose, that “faith without works is dead”. But to suppose that a dead faith, or that faith which is dead, it that faith which is required of us in the gospel in the way of duty, is a monstrous imagination. Others plead for obedience, charity, the love of God, to be included in the nature of faith; but plead not directly that this obedience is the form of faith, but that which belongs unto the perfection of it, as it is justifying. Neither yet do they say that by this obedience, a continued course of works and obedience, as though that were necessary unto our first justification, is required; but only a sincere active purpose of obedience: and thereon, as the manner of our days is, load them with reproaches who are otherwise minded, if they knew who they were. For how impossible it is, according unto their principles who believe justification by faith alone, that justifying faith should be without a sincere purpose of heart to obey God in all things, I shall briefly declare. For, First, They believe that faith is “not of ourselves, it is the gift of God”; yea, that it is a grace wrought in the hearts of men by the exceeding greatness of his power. And to suppose such a grace dead, inactive, unfruitful, not operative unto the great end of the glory of God, and the transforming of the souls of them that receive it into his image, is a reflection on the wisdom, goodness, and love of God himself. Secondly, That this grace is in them a principle of spiritual life, which in the habit of it, as resident in the heart, is not really distinguished from that of all other grace whereby we live to God. So, that there should be faith habitually in the heart, — I mean that evangelical faith we inquire after, — or actually exercised, where there is not a habit of all other graces, is utterly impossible. Neither is it possible that there should be any exercise of this faith unto justification, but where the mind is prepared, disposed, and determined unto universal obedience. And therefore, Thirdly, It is denied that any faith, trust, or confidence, which may be imagined, so as to be

absolutely separable from, and have its whole nature consistent with, the absence of all other graces, is that faith which is the especial gift of God, and which in the gospel is required of us in a way of duty. And whereas some have said, that “men may believe, and place their firm trust in Christ for life and salvation, and yet not be justified;” — it is a position so destructive unto the gospel, and so full of scandal unto all pious souls, and contains such an express denial of the record that God has given concerning his Son Jesus Christ, as I wonder that any person of sobriety and learning should be surprised into it. And whereas they plead the experience of multitudes who profess this firm faith and confidence in Christ, and yet are not justified, — it is true, indeed, but nothing unto their purpose; for whatever they profess, not only not one of them does so in the sight and judgment of God, where this matter is to be tried, but it is no difficult matter to evict them of the folly and falseness of this profession, by the light and rule of the gospel, even in their own consciences, if they would attend unto instruction.

Wherefore we say, the faith whereby we are justified, is such as is not found in any but those who are made-partakers of the Holy Ghost, and by him united unto Christ, whose nature is renewed, and in whom there is a principle of all grace, and purpose of obedience. Only we say, it is not any other grace, as charity and the like, nor any obedience, that gives life and form unto this faith; but it is this faith that gives life and efficacy unto all other graces, and form unto all evangelical obedience. Neither does any thing hence accrue unto our adversaries, who would have all those graces which are, in their root and principle, at least, present in all that are to be justified, to have the same influence unto our justification as faith has: or that we are said to be justified by faith alone; and in explication of it, in answer unto the reproaches of the Romanists, do say we are justified by faith alone, but not by that faith which is alone; that we intend by faith all other graces and obedience also. For besides that, the nature of no other grace is capable of that office which is assigned unto faith in our justification, nor can be assumed into a society in operation with it, — namely, to receive Christ, and the promises of life by him, and to give glory unto God on their account; so when they can give us any testimony of Scripture assigning our justification unto any other grace, or all graces

together, or all the fruits of them, so as it is assigned unto faith, they shall be attended unto.

And this, in particular, is to be affirmed of repentance; concerning which it is most vehemently urged, that it is of the same necessity unto our justification as faith is. For this they say is easily proved, from testimonies of Scripture innumerable, which call all men to repentance that will be saved; especially those two eminent places are insisted on, Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19. But that which they have to prove, is not that it is of the same necessity with faith unto them that are to be justified, but that it is of the same use with faith in their justification. Baptism in that place of the apostle, Acts 2:38, 39, is joined with faith no less than repentance; and in other places it is expressly put into the same condition. Hence, most of the ancients concluded that it was no less necessary unto salvation than faith or repentance itself. Yet never did any of them assign it the same use in justification with faith. But it is pleaded, whatever is a necessary condition of the new covenant, is also a necessary condition of justification; for otherwise a man might be justified, and continuing in his justified estate, not be saved, for want of that necessary condition: for by a necessary condition of the new covenant, they understand that without which a man cannot be saved. But of this nature is repentance as well as faith, and so is equally a condition of our justification. The ambiguity of the signification of the word “condition” does cast much disorder on the present inquiry, in the discourses of some men. But to pass it by at present, I say, final perseverance is a necessary condition of the new covenant; wherefore, by this rule, it is also of justification. They say, some things are conditions absolutely; such as are faith and repentance, and a purpose of obedience: some are so on some supposition only, — namely, that a man’s life be continued in this world; such is a course in obedience and good works, and perseverance unto the end. Wherefore I so position that a man lives in this world, perseverance unto the end is a necessary condition of his justification. And if so, no justified whilst he is in this world; for a condition does suspend that whereof it is a condition from existence until it be accomplished. It is, then, to no purpose to dispute any longer about justification, if indeed no man is, nor can be, justified in this life. But how contrary this is to Scripture and experience is known.

If it be said, that final perseverance, which is so express a condition of salvation in the new covenant, is not indeed the condition of our first justification, but it is the condition of the continuation of our justification; then they yield up their grand position, that whatever is a necessary condition of the new covenant is a necessary condition of justification: for it is that which they call the first justification alone which we treat about. And that the continuation of our justification depends solely on the same causes with our justification itself, shall be afterwards declared. But it is not yet proved, nor ever will be, that whatever is required in them that are to be justified, is a condition whereon their justification is immediately suspended. We allow that alone to be a condition of justification which has an influence of causality thereunto, though it be but the causality of an instrument. This we ascribe unto faith alone. And because we do so, it is pleaded that we ascribe more in our justification unto ourselves than they do by whom we are opposed. For we ascribe the efficiency of an instrument herein unto our own faith, when they say one that it is a condition, or “*causa sine qua non*,” of our justification. But I judge that grave and wise men ought not to give so much to the defense of the cause they have undertaken, seeing they cannot but know indeed the contrary. For after they have given the specious name of a condition, and a “*causa sine qua non*,” unto faith, they immediately take all other graces and works of obedience into the same state with it, and the same use in justification; and after this seeming gold has been cast for a while into the fire of disputation, there comes out the calf of a personal, inherent righteousness, whereby men are justified before God, “*virtute foederis evangelici*;” for as for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed unto us, it is gone into heaven, and they know not what is become of it.

Having given this brief declaration of the nature of justifying faith, and the acts of it (as I suppose, sufficient unto my present design), I shall not trouble myself to give an accurate definition of it. What are my thoughts concerning it, will be better understood by what has been spoken, than by any precise definition I can give. And the truth is, definitions of justifying faith have been so multiplied by learned men, and in so great variety, and (there is) such a manifest inconsistency among some of them, that they have been of no advantage unto the truth, but occasions of new

controversies and divisions, whilst every one has labored to defend the accuracy of his own definition, when yet it may be difficult for a true believer to find any thing compliant with his own experience in them; which kind of definitions in these things I have no esteem for. I know no man that has labored in this argument about the nature of faith more than Dr. Jackson; yet, when he has done all, he gives us a definition of justifying faith which I know few that will subscribe unto: yet is it, in the main scope of it, both pious and sound. For he tells us, "Here at length, we may define the faith by which the just live, to be a firm and constant adherence unto the mercies and the loving-kindness of Lord; or, generally, unto the spiritual food exhibited in his sacred word, as much better than this life itself, and all the contentments it is capable of; grounded on a taste or relish of their sweetness, wrought in the soul or heart of a man by the Spirit of Christ". Whereunto he adds, "The terms for the most part are the prophet David's; not metaphorical, as some may fancy, much less equivocal, but proper and homogeneal to the subject defined," tom. 1 book 4 chap. 9. For the lively scriptural expressions of faith, by receiving on Christ, leaning on him, rolling ourselves or our burden on him, tasting how gracious the Lord is, and the like, which of late have been reproached, yea, blasphemed, by many, I may have occasion to speak of them afterwards; as also to manifest that they convey a better understanding of the nature, work, and object of justifying faith, unto the minds of men spiritually enlightened, than the most accurate definitions that many pretend unto; some whereof are destructive and exclusive of them all.