

possessed of a virtue which, when thrown into the scale of infinite justice, will weigh, if not outweigh, the full amount of his guilt, and pardon will, of course, be the consequence. Our penitent would perhaps be startled to hear, that notwithstanding the correctness of his views on the atonement, his *practice* yet coincides with the views of Deists and others, who ignore the doctrines of Christianity altogether. The Deist tells us "that as obedience must be the object of God's approbation, and disobedience the ground of his displeasure, it must follow by natural consequence that when men have transgressed a Divine command, repentance and amendment of life will place them in the same situation as if they had never sinned." Such also is the argument of some supporters of the Christian religion—of some who profess a knowledge of God's method of salvation. Their views being correct on many important particulars, how comes it that in this they err, and that their *practice* in regard to it is so *corrupt* as in many instances to run parallel to those systems of error which deny the atonement altogether? We can account for this singular phenomenon upon no other principle than that furnished by the Scriptures, namely, "the carnal heart is enmity against God."

To correct, if possible, such practice, and give it a *Bible bias*, let us inquire whether the conclusions of abstract reasoning will coincide with the deductions of experience; or, to put the question in another form, whether such practice as we have noticed actually and of itself brings the forgiveness of the Almighty.

If obedience be at all times a duty, how or in what way can present repentance release us from the punishment of antecedent transgressions? Can the sorrow or contrition which the offender now feels for sins which have been lately committed, annihilate what is past? Or does the active discharge of present duty—a full and cheerful obedience to the requirements of God—effect no more than an acquittal of present obligation? "Or does the contrition we experience, added to the positive duties we discharge, constitute a surplussage of merit which may be transferred to the reduction of our former demerits?" In a word, is the acceptance of the offender or the would-be Christian to be built upon the absurdities of supererogation? "We may as well affirm," says a learned divine, "that our former obedience atones for our present sins, as that our present obedience makes amends for antecedent transgressions."

It is the unvarying practice of those who deny the possible efficacy of the mediation of Christ, to preach repentance and amendment of life as the only necessary antecedents of a sinner's acceptance with his God. And surely this comes with "ill grace" from them, since the ground on which they deny the latter equally serves for the rejection of the former, "the necessary connection between the merits of one being, and the acquittal of another, not being less conceivable than that which is believed to subsist between obedience at one time and the forgiveness of disobedience at another." But what shall we say of those who admit the possible efficacy of the mediation of Christ, who have perhaps a well-defined theoretical knowledge of the bearing and working of the Divine scheme, and at the same time are acting in direct opposition to it—who know that pardon, is and only can be dispensed by the Almighty, because a satisfaction equal to the demerit of the sinner has been made and accepted by Him; and yet with the presumption and graceless defiance of those *philosophers* who are too enlightened to be Christians, sue for pardon upon the weak ground of their own penitence and external reformation. They believe in the efficacy of Christ's mediation, and yet practically ignore it. They admit that pardon is dispensed just because an atonement has been made, and yet, in their dealings with God in the matter, they lose sight of this altogether, and strenuously en-