

# The Theological Instructor.

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## PERSONAL OBEDIENCE, AND AN ENTIRE DEPENDENCE UPON THE MERITS OF CHRIST ALONE FOR SALVATION, NOT TO BE SEPARATED.

It is natural to fallen man, when he has once adopted any opinion from a persuasion of the truth of it, immediately to lay an unwarrantable stress upon it, and to magnify its importance, with the utmost jealousy against every thing that seems to oppose it. This sad disposition continually discovers itself in the common affairs of life; it infuses much of the bitterness of party spirit, and is the parent of that detestable bigotry, with which religious sects have hated and persecuted each other. A clear discernment of some dangerous error, which alarms the mind, makes it apt to suppose that safety is only to be had by keeping at the greatest possible distance from it. In consequence of this, a man retreats again and again without any suspicion, till he is overtaken and ensnared by some error, equally pernicious, though directly opposite to it. Thus some, that desire to excel in gentleness and good nature, do often become criminally complaisant, neglect their duty, and dishonour God, rather than disoblige a fellow-creature.

This weakness of mind produces the same effect, when religious truth is its object and pursuit. To be the maker of your own happiness; to be calculating the difference between yourself and others; and to fancy there is more

to be commended in you for your duties performed, than to be blamed for your failures and offences; and likewise to expect heaven; not as a free gift, but in acknowledgment for your service and duty; all this is a scheme which is highly gratifying to self-conceit, by keeping out of sight the depravity of human nature, the purity and extent of God's law, and all those self-abasing truths which Christ has revealed.

On the other hand, to extol without ceasing the all-sufficiency of Christ, his infinitely meritorious sufferings and obedience unto death, and then to suppose that all things pertaining to, and requisite for, the sinner's salvation, have been so finished by the Redeemer, that nothing is required from the sinner, but to acknowledge the unspeakable benefit thereof; no repentance, obedience, nor works of righteousness: this is a way favourable and indulgent to sin in the greatest degree; a masterly invention to pacify the guilty conscience, whilst it spares, and even cherishes the lusts of the flesh; a scheme made on purpose for those who have been enlightened, who have begun in the Spirit, and run well; but longing after unhallowed ease, forbidden gain, or carnal pleasure, have turned back again to their