

## RELIGION NOT CHRISTIANITY.

His blood cleanseth from all sin." Her soul was ready in full dress for the marriage supper, arrayed in the royal robe of her Redeemer's righteousness. She was, indeed, a *King's daughter all glorious within*, and she now beholds the King in his beauty.

Cain and Abel represent the two choices into which the world is divided—natural and supernatural. Natural religion may be considered either as it was in Adam, before the fall, or as it is in his posterity since the fall. Supernatural, or what is by pure revelation, was first signified in the prophetic declaration of mercy pronounced by God to the serpent—"It, the seed of the woman, shall bruise thy head."—These mystical words reveal the sum of evangelical religion, and contain the germ of Christianity, the incarnation of the Messiah and salvation by His blood. This kind of Theology was more clearly developed by those significant types, the skins of slain beasts, which our first parents wore, beautiful emblems of the blood-bought robe of salvation, the wedding garment of the redeemed; the justifying righteousness of Christ, which God puts upon His people. Abel was a believer in Evangelical religion; he approached God as a sinner, he brought blood the typical sacrifice for sin. Cain was an unbeliever in revealed religion, still he performed a religious act, he laid an offer upon God's altar, and certainly, to a natural mind, a more becoming one than the blood of an innocent animal; but he self-righteously despised the sacrifice which the Lord ordained for sin, and rationally deemed his first fruits better. Salvation by blood, was foolishness to Cain as it was to the Pharisees, and is to thousands of very religious, moral and orthodox people now, who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, who being ignorant of God's righteousness are going about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. This distinguishing truth of Christianity, which Cain stumbled at, is till the rock of offence, the hard saying, the offence of the cross to the natural mind, but to those whose senses are exer-

cised to discern spiritual things, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

"Such was the wicked reasoning Cain,  
And such by nature still are we;  
Until by grace we're torn again,  
Faithless, blind, and proud as he.

Like him, the way of grace we slight,  
And in our own devices trust;  
Call evil good, and darkness light,  
And hate and persecute the just."

What Luther said of Popery is true of self-righteousness, "Every man is born with a pope in his heart." Every man is born with a Cain in his heart. The cross has ever been to the many foolishness, but it is the wisdom of God. Philosophy never propounded this doctrine, science never discerned it, reason never guessed at it, man's wisdom never devised it—no, God revealed it.

This is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, the Gospel truth which, if a man ignorant of theology as the thief on the cross believes, and were to die the next moment, he possesses that knowledge which is essential to salvation: ignorant of all other truths of Christianity and knowing this in a very small measure, the believer knows the way of acceptance with an offended God. *How man can be justified with God.* How a holy and just God who will in no way clear the guilty does clear, pardon, justify, sanctify, glorify guilty, vile, hell-deserving sinners. Exod. xxxiv. 7. The apparent contradiction, presented in this passage, can alone harmonize God's attributes of justice and mercy in the sinner's salvation. This plan of salvation shows us how God can pardon the vilest of sinners without clearing the guilty; how God can be just to his holy law and the justifier of the ungodly; it enables the guiltiest wretch on earth to hope for pardon, and lift up his head before the tribunal of Jehovah with the confidence of an angel, not upon a plea of mercy only, but of justice, satisfied justice. Christ, as surety, became responsible for the law-debt of His people, he became amenable to law and justice for the sins of all believers.

But if God does not clear the guilty, how does He forgive iniquity; if He forgives iniquity, must He not clear the guilty. One word solves the problem—atonement; Jesus Christ as the sinners surety and sub-