

The struggle was over. Soon a Divine peace took possession of his troubled soul: old things had passed away, and all things had become new.

“A Blind Sinner,” he adds, “must put aside his own reasonings and speculations; give up attempting to solve matters which will be for ever too hard for him, and endeavour to *unlearn* many things—be willing to *stoop*; and ponder well the Saviour’s words—‘Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.’”

The philosophical difficulty is thus stated and met by the editor:—

“I may reason downwards that since God, the First Cause of all, is primarily the author of all events, including every action of His creatures, and consequently saving faith, I have no free agency in the matter, and am not responsible for not believing. Or I may reason from below upwards, that every event, including faith, necessarily flows from some cause, and that cause from some preceding cause, and so backwards in a chain of necessary causation, till I am lost in dark fate, or strike against the irresistible will of God, so that I hold myself not responsible for want of faith. Now it may be that I cannot answer this reasoning intellectually. But I am quite sure it contains a tremendous fallacy somewhere; for *it contradicts conscience*. The sufficient practical answer to it is that which has been often given, as for example by the celebrated Bishop Butler, viz., that if well-founded, it would apply not to saving faith only, but to all our actions, so as to prove that there is no such thing as moral responsibility, or sin, or holiness, or right or wrong at all. The mystery exists: but conscience bears its testimony within to the eternal difference between right and wrong, and to our personal responsibility for what we do; and woe is unto that man who allows metaphysical subtleties to dethrone, or corrupt, or silence that inward witness for God which ought to be a schoolmaster to bring him unto Christ.”

But the best answer to all such reasonings is to be found in the teaching of the Holy Scriptures themselves. “All the world has become guilty before God,” and you and we, dear reader, are “by nature children of wrath, even as others.” But the blessed Son of God has died for us; His blood “cleanseth from all sin;” and the fact that we are exhorted and commanded, under pain of God’s everlasting displeasure, to “believe the gospel,” and to accept the Divine amnesty therein offered, is proof that God offers it in good faith—that “whosoever will” may come; and that when any refuse or neglect to come, it is not because they *cannot*, but because they “*will not* come unto Him that they might have life.”

This, it may be said, is only one side of a great truth, but it is, nevertheless, the side *with which we have to do*. No impenitent sinner need perplex himself about the work of the Holy Spirit, for the office of the Holy Spirit is to *help* and not to *hinder* us, to supply the *lacking* influence, to convince of sin, and to reveal the Saviour to us. And as to the difficulty about praying *before we believe*, while yet faith is one of the essential conditions of an answer to prayer, God knew all about that