

implanted in our natures, with undeniable facts, and with the display of the Divine character given on other occasions? Let reason be thus limited, and let the gospel be tried by the most enlightened reason, and it will appear, not only highly rational, but transcendantly glorious, and worthy of its Divine author. Whatever is absurd, or contradicts enlightened reason, cannot be the gospel.

5. It is a truth capable of being, and actually is, substantiated by abundance of the most satisfactory, convincing evidence. As it is a rational truth, and proposed to rational beings for their belief, and their eternal all depending upon believing, it must admit and possess sufficient rational evidence, to command our assent, and warrant our trusting our everlasting all to it. Accordingly, while many important transactions are omitted, a sufficient evidence is afforded, and afforded as evidence, that we might believe the gospel, and that believing it, we might have eternal life. Yea, God seems to take pains as it were, to give us such evidence as would warrant the firmest reliance, and afford to the heirs of promise, strong, rational, and durable consolation. As we are not called upon to believe any thing that is irrational, so we are not called upon to believe any thing, however rational in itself, without a rational evidence. Whatever therefore is not proved by sufficient rational evidence, cannot be the gospel.

6. It gives relief, peace, and joy, to the vilest and most guilty of sinful men, immediately upon his believing it, just as laid down in the Bible, without the assistance of any other consideration in order to produce this effect. Though this and the next particular, naturally belong to the third section, where they shall be treated more at large, yet I cannot omit them here as properties of the gospel. It cannot but be observed that in apostolic times, sinners uniformly received the gospel with joy. As soon as they believed, they rejoiced: and no wonder; for it was by it they were saved. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Whoever thinks he believes the gospel, and yet is not relieved from guilt, nor rejoices in hope of the glory of God, labours under a mistake; he has not yet understood the apostolic gospel.

7. It is a doctrine according to godliness. When believed, it sanctifieth the heart, and giveth the victory over the world. It worketh effectually in transforming into the image of God, every human heart which by faith receives it. Through the belief of it, the sinner dies to sin, and how can he live any longer therein? Whatever doctrine may be believed, without renewing the heart, and regulating the conduct of the believer, is not the true apostolic gospel. All these properties necessarily belonging to the true gospel; and they will not all apply to any other doctrine. Attention to them, therefore, will assist us in ascertaining what is the true apostolic gospel; for whatever doctrine to which they do not fairly apply, cannot be the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### SECTION SECOND.—*The Nature of the Gospel &c.*

1. If we attend to the Divine Record, we shall find that the gospel is the declaration of a fact, wonderful indeed in its nature, and important in its consequences. It is not every truth, nor every scriptural truth, no, nor every important scriptural truth, that can be properly called the