

True religion, or that which involves or implies salvation, is not described by a single expression in Scripture. It is represented under different expressions, and calling on the name of God is one of these. The worship of the true God is perhaps what is meant—that homage, or devotion, to God, which may be regarded as the primary or central duty of religion—the result of a saving state. To call upon the name of the Lord is thus put for all the other duties of religion—it is the effect put for the cause—a part for the whole; for as the Apostle himself immediately adds, “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” Belief in God is necessary before we will call upon him. But it may still hold good that if we call upon him we shall be saved. Perhaps there could not be a better description of true religion than is contained in these very words. Calling upon God may be considered the life of religion. It implies a recognition of God—a humble alliance in him—a reverential fear of him—a living, practical, regard for him—devout submission to his will—the desire of his favour—the dread of his wrath, and belief of his truth—faith in that which he has revealed to us as the ground of our hope, and the way of our acceptance—To call upon the name of the Lord implies all this. It is not the mere external act of calling upon the name of God. It is not the mere formal duty of worship and of prayer. That of itself would never save. As well might we call upon any other name, upon the name of a false God, upon the name of any of the objects of heathen worship. It were no more than an empty sound—the voice in such a case would spend itself on air; it would be words, and no more. But to call upon the name God must be a real, a true act. In a more restricted sense, to call upon the name of God is to call upon him for mercy; it is to cry to him for help, for salvation. “Arise, and call upon thy God.” But we must never take an isolated passage of Scripture to describe any of its doctrines—we must take the whole analogy of Scripture; and thus, to call upon the name of the Lord is to come to God in the way of his own appointment; it is to believe in Christ; in the method of salvation by him; it is to receive the message of salvation conveyed in the gospel, to comply with that message, and on the authority of God’s revealed word to go to him, to seek his favour, to confide in

his mercy,—and we are here informed that whosoever does so shall be saved.—All mankind are under the wrath of God, exposed to his curse; and there is but one way revealed in which they can be delivered from this state. God has made known to us that way—He has revealed to us the whole scheme of salvation through a crucified Saviour—He has opened up the glorious plan of mercy. Formerly the knowledge of this plan was confined to the Jews; now it is published to the whole world, and the apostle declares, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The Apostle proceeds to reason: “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?” Faith in God is necessary to our calling upon him—hearing of God, again, is necessary to faith, and preaching is necessary to our hearing, and the sending of him who is to preach is necessary to his preaching. We have thus the dependence of these upon one another; so that if the one be important, equally so must the other.—They are links in a chain. There cannot be salvation without we call upon God—we cannot call upon God unless we believe in him—we cannot believe in him if we do not hear of him—we cannot hear of him without a preacher—and the preacher cannot preach except he be sent. The sending of the preacher is the first link; salvation is the last. And what does this prove to us but the importance of the preaching of the Gospel? Salvation depends on it. *Preaching is God’s ordinance for bringing sinners to the enjoyment of salvation.* It is by the preaching of the word that this is done. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We must believe in God, but God’s word alone reveals God to us. It alone reveals God to us as he is. So little do we know, learn, or discover, of God, otherwise, that they to whom the word of God has not come are spoken of as if they had never heard of God: “How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” It is not the true God of whom the heathen nations have heard, or whom they worship. It is Gods of their own imaginations, and it may be of their own fashioning. The true God, as he is, in all His purity, in his essential attributes, in