

sized shall be saved ; he who believeth it not shall be damned." That we may ascertain precisely the very ideas presented to the understanding for its assent, demanding, by Divine authority, and upon pain of eternal ruin, our firm and unreserved belief, we shall consider first, some of the essential properties attributed to the gospel in the scriptures, or necessarily belonging to it as a message of joy from God to guilty, perishing sinners ; secondly, its identity, or real nature, together with the light in which it exhibits the Divine Being and sinful man ; and thirdly, the effect which it is calculated to produce, and necessarily will produce, on all who believe it.

### SECTION FIRST.—*The Properties of the Gospel.*

1. The gospel is good tidings of great joy unto all people. It presents to the mind of man such heart-cheering facts, as removes from the minds of those who believe it, all those gloomy fears, and dreadful apprehensions, which disturb our peace, allay our joys, render our life miserable, and our death horrible. It is said to be such glad tidings *to all people*, paying no distinguishing regard to nation, age, or character. Whatever proposition, therefore, is not recommended to our attention, by its *bringing good tidings of great joy to all people*, cannot be the gospel of the grace of God. Let not the brightness of its glory be clouded by any humanly devised limitation, condition, or guarding qualification whatever.

2. It is the truth ! Whatever is false, or implies any falsehood, cannot be the gospel. Were it not true, men would not be called upon to believe it, especially by the God of truth, who requireth truth in the inward parts, and who inflicts a judicial blindness on the wicked, by abandoning them to their own errors, so they should believe a lie, that they may perish. It is true before it is believed, it is true though it should never be believed, and it is nothing more true, in any of its bearings, for its being believed.

3. It is, like its Divine Author, unchangeable in its nature. It is not one thing to-day, and another to-morrow : it is not one thing to one person, and another to another person. As it acknowledges no man in any other capacity than that of a sinner, so it holds out the most cheering encouragement to all sinners as such. No living man at any time, in any circumstances, can say with truth that the gospel is not joyful tidings to him. It is exactly suited to his case, level to his capacity, and declared to him by the God of truth for his belief, that he may have eternal life by believing it. He may disbelieve it, and so derive no joy from it ; but shall his unbelief affect the word of God ? Nay, let God be true and every man a liar. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof faileth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever."

4. It is a rational truth. God created man possessed of certain faculties : these faculties it is his duty to exercise, in ascertaining what is truth, and on what ground he is to receive it as truth. Our faculties are not capable of discovering truth independent of revelation. Their province extends no farther than to ascertain what is revealed, what is the evidence that it is revealed, for what purpose is it revealed, what fitness has it to answer that purpose, and does the light in which it exhibits the Creator and his creature, man, accord with that sense of right and wrong