

## THE CONSTITUTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Constituted the righteousness of God in Christ."

The former things being admitted, if men would be righteous in God's esteem, they must become such *by constitution* also. The "good actions" of a pious sinner are mere "dead works"; for the actions of a sinner to be of any worth in relation to the future state, he must be "constituted righteous"; and this can only be by his coming under a constitution made and provided for the purpose. A stranger and foreigner from the commonwealth of the States, can only become a fellow-citizen with Americans, by taking the oath of abjuration, fulfilling the time of his probation, and taking the oath of allegiance according to the provisions of the constitution.

Now, the Kingdom of God has a constitution as well as the Kingdom of Satan, or that province of it styled the United States. Before sinners come under it, they are characterized as "without Christ, being aliens from the *Commonwealth of Israel*, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God (*atheists*) in the world" (Ephes 2:12,13,19). They are termed "far off", "strangers and foreigners" "walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17,18). But, mark the sacred style descriptive of sinners after they have been placed under the constitution of Israel's Commonwealth, which is the Kingdom of God, "You that were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ"; "through him you have access by one spirit to the Father; and are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" -- "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise *in Christ by the gospel*" (Eph. 3:6). In this remarkable contrast is discoverable a great change in *state* and *character* predicated of the same persons. How was this transformation effected? This question is answered by the phrase, "*In Christ by the gospel*". The "*in*" expresses the state; the "*by*" the instrumentality by which the state and character are changed.

As the constitution of sin hath its root in the disobedience of the First Adam, so also hath the constitution of righteousness root in the obedience of the Second Adam. Hence, the apostle says, "As through one offence (sentence was pronounced) upon all men unto condemnation; so also through one righteousness (sentence was pronounced) upon all men (that is, Jews and Gentiles) unto a *justification of life*. For as through the disobedience of the one man *the many were constituted sinners*; so also through the obedience of the one the many shall be *constituted righteous*" (Rom. 5:18,19). The two Adams are two federal chiefs; the first being figurative of the second (v. 14) in these relations. All sinners are in the first Adam; and all the righteous in the second, only on a different principle. Sinners were in the loins of the former when he transgressed; but not in the loins of the latter, when he was obedient unto death; therefore, "the flesh profiteth nothing". For this cause, then, for sons of Adam to become sons of God, they must be the subjects of an adoption, which is attainable only by some divinely appointed means.

The apostle then brings to light *two sentences*, which are co-extensive, but not co-etaneous in their bearing upon mankind. The one is the sentence of condemnation, which consigns "*the many*", both believing Jews and Gentiles, to the dust of the ground; the other is a sentence which affects the same "*many*", and brings them out of the ground again to return thither no more. Hence, of the saints it is said, "The body is dead because of sin; but the spirit (gives) life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10,11); for "since by man came death, by a man also came a resurrection of dead persons. For as in Adam they all die, so also in Christ shall they all be made alive. But every one in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:21-23). It is obvious that the apostle is not writing of all the individuals of the human race; but only of that portion of them that become the subject of "*a justification of life*". It is true, that all men do die; but it is not true that they are all the subjects of justification. Those who are justified are "the many", who are sentenced to live for ever. Of the rest we shall speak hereafter.

The sentence to justification of life is through Jesus Christ, In being made a sacrifice for sin by the pouring out of his blood upon the cross, he was set forth as a *blood-sprinkled mercy seat* to all believers of the gospel of the kingdom, who have faith in this remission of sins through the shedding of his blood. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25); that is, for the pardon of those *who believe in the gospel*; as it is written, "He that believeth the gospel and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15,16). Hence, "*the obedience of faith*" (Rom. 1:5) is made the condition of righteousness; and this obedience implies the existence of a "*law of faith*", as attested by that of Moses, which is "*the law of works*" (Rom. 3:27,21). The law of faith says to him who believes the gospel of the kingdom, "Be

renewed, and be ye every one of you baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Here is a command which meets a man as a dividing line between *the State of Sin* and *the State of Righteousness*. The obedience of faith finds expression *in the name of Jesus* as "the mercy seat through faith in his blood". Hence the apostle says to the disciples in Corinth, "Know ye not that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners; shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you: but ye were washed, sanctified, and made righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Thus, the spirit, which is put for the gospel of the kingdom and name, renewed these profligates; the divine law and testimony attested by the spirit with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts (Heb. 2:3,4), and believed with a full assurance of conviction that worked in them by love to will and to do -- caused them to be "*washed in the name*", to be "*sanctified in the name*", and to be "*made righteous in the name of Jesus Christ*".

It must be clear to any man, unspoiled by a vain and deceitful philosophy, that to be washed in a name is impossible, unless the individual have *faith in the name*, and be subjected to the use of a fluid in some way. Now when a man is "washed in the name of Jesus Christ", there are three witnesses to the fact, by whose testimony everything is established. These are the spirit, the water, and the blood, and they all agree in one statement. Jesus Christ was made manifest *by water* at his baptism (John 1:31); and *by blood* in his death; and *by the spirit* in his resurrection therefore, the spirit *who is the truth*, and the water, and the blood, or the truth concerning the Messiahship, sacrificial character, and resurrection of Jesus, are constituted the witnesses who bear testimony to a man's being the subject of "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17; 3:21,22,25,26) set forth in the gospel of His Kingdom. The testimony of these witnesses is termed "the witness of God", which every believer of the Kingdom and Name hath as "*the witness in himself*" (1 John 5:6-10).

Water, then, is the medium in which the washing occurs. But, although water is so accessible in all parts of the world where the gospel has been preached, it is one of the most difficult things under heaven to use it so as to *wash a man in the name of Jesus Christ*. What! says one, is it difficult to get a man to be dipped in water as a religious action? No; it is very easy. Thousands in society go into the water on very slender grounds. But going into the water, and having certain words pronounced over the subject, is not washing in the name. The difficulty lies, not in getting men to be dipped, but in *first* getting them to believe "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12); or "the exceeding great and precious promises", by the faith of which they can alone become the "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Without faith in these things, there is no true washing, no sanctification, or purification, from moral defilement, and no constitution of righteousness by the name of Jesus for the sons of men; for, says the scripture. "without faith it is impossible to please God"

It was the renewing efficacy of the exceeding great and precious promises of God assuredly believed, that changed the gay and profligate Corinthians into "the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints"; of whom it is testified that "hearing, they believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Now, to these baptized believers he writes, and tells them that "God *made* Jesus, who knew not sin, to be sin (that is, sinful flesh) for them, that they might be *constituted* God's righteousness *in Him*" (2 Cor. 5:21); so that, being introduced into Him (for an individual cannot be in a federal person unless *introduced into* Him) the crucified and resurrected Jesus became "the Lord their righteousness" (Jer. 23:6); as it is written, "Of Him, Corinthians, are ye *IN* Christ Jesus, who of God was *constituted* for us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30) So that, whosoever is in him, is said to be "*complete in him*"; in whom he is circumcised "*in putting off THE BODY OF THE SINS of the flesh*"; that is, *all past sins*; being buried with Christ in the baptism, in which also he rises with him through the belief of the power of God evinced in raising him from among the dead (Col. 2:10-12).

Now, because the unconstituted, or unrighteous, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, the law is revealed which says, "*Ye must be born again*"; for says the King, "Except a man be born again he cannot behold the kingdom of God". This saying is unintelligible to men whose thinking is guided by the flesh. They cannot comprehend "how these things can be": and, though they *profess* to be "teachers of Israel", "Masters of Arts", and "Bachelors", and "Doctors of Divinity", and of "Canon and Civil Law", they are as mystified upon the subject of "the new birth" as Nicodemus himself. But to those who understand "the word of the kingdom" these "heavenly things" are distinguished by the obviousness and simplicity of truth. To be born again, as the Lord Jesus expounds it, is to be "born of the water and the spirit" as it is written, "Except a

man be born *out of water* and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-10). This is surely very explicit and very intelligible; who can misunderstand it, unless it be against his will to receive it?

The New Birth, like the old one of the flesh, is not an abstract principle, but a process. It begins with the begetting and ends with the having been born. A son of God is a character, which is developed out of the "incorruptible seed" (1 Pet. 1:23) of God, sown into the fleshy table of the heart (Matt. 13:19). When this seed, or word of the Kingdom, is received, it begins to work in a man until he becomes a believer of the truth. When things have come to this pass, he is a changed man. He has acquired a new mode of thinking; for he thinks in harmony with the thoughts of God as revealed in His law and testimony. He sees himself, and the world around him, in a new light. He is convinced of sin; and experiences an aversion to the things in which he formerly delighted. His views, disposition, temper, and affections are transformed. He is humble, child-like, teachable, and obediently disposed; and his simple anxiety is to know what God would have him to do. Having ascertained this, he does it; and in doing it is "*born out of the water*". Having been begotten by the Father by the word of truth (James 1:18), and born of water, the first stage of the process is completed. He is *constitutionally* "in Christ".

When a child is born, the next thing is to train him up in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it. This is also the arrangement of God in relation to those who are born out of water into His family on earth. He disciplines and tries them, that He may "exalt them in due time". Having believed the gospel and been baptized, such a person is required to "walk worthy of the vocation", or calling, "wherewith he has been called" (Eph. 4:1), that by so doing he may be "accounted worthy" of being "born of spirit", that he may become "spirit", or a spiritual body; and so enter the kingdom of God, crowned with "glory, honour, incorruptibility, and life" (Rom. 2:7). When, therefore, such a believer comes *out* of the ground by a resurrection from among the dead, the spirit of God, worked by the Lord Jesus, first opens the grave, and forms him in the image, and after the likeness of Christ and then gives him life. He is then an incorruptible and living man, "equal to the angels"; and like them capable of reflecting the glory of Him that made him. This is the end of the process. He is like Jesus himself, the great exemplar of God's family, born out of water by the moral power of the truth; and out of the grave by the physical power of spirit; but all things of God through Jesus Christ the Lord.

In the way described, sinners are transformed into saints; and it is the only way; their conversion being the result of the transforming influence of "the testimony of God". Those who are ignorant of "the law and the testimony", and who yet claim to be saints, and "teachers of divine mysteries", may demur *in toto* to this conclusion, because "in saying this thou condemnest us also". But truth knows no respect of persons; and while the oracles of God declare, that men are "renewed by knowledge", and "alienated from the life of God through ignorance", I feel entrenched impregnably in the position here assumed. According to the constitution of the human intellect, the knowledge of truth must precede the belief of it. There is no exception to this. If cases be cited as exceptions, the faith is spurious, and not that with which God is pleased. It is credulity; the faith of opinion, such as characterizes the spiritual philosophy of the age.

Lastly, the *act* demanded of a *renewed* sinner by the constitution of righteousness, that he may be inducted into Christ, and so "constituted the righteousness of God in him", is a *burial in water into death*. The energy of the word of truth is twofold. It makes a man "*dead to sin*" and "*alive to God*". Now, as Christ died to sin once and was buried, so the believer, having become dead to sin, must be buried also; for after death, burial. The death and burial of the believer is connected with the death and burial of Christ by the individual's faith in the testimony concerning them. Hence, he is said to be "dead with Christ", and to be "buried with Christ"; but, how buried? "*By baptism into death*", saith the scripture.

But is this all? By no means; for the object of the burial in water is not to extinguish animal life; but, by preserving it to afford the believer scope to "walk in newness of life", moral and intellectual. He is, therefore, *raised up* out of the water. This action is representative of his *faith* in the resurrection of Jesus; and of his *hope*, that as he had been planted with him in the similitude of his death, he shall hereafter be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom 6:3-11), and so enter the kingdom of God. To such persons the scripture saith, "Ye are all sons of God *in Christ Jesus through the faith*"; and the ground of this honourable and divine relationship is assigned in these words: "*For as many of you as have been baptized INTO Christ have put on Christ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal. 3:26-29). They have thus received the spirit of adoption by which they can address God as their Father who is in heaven.